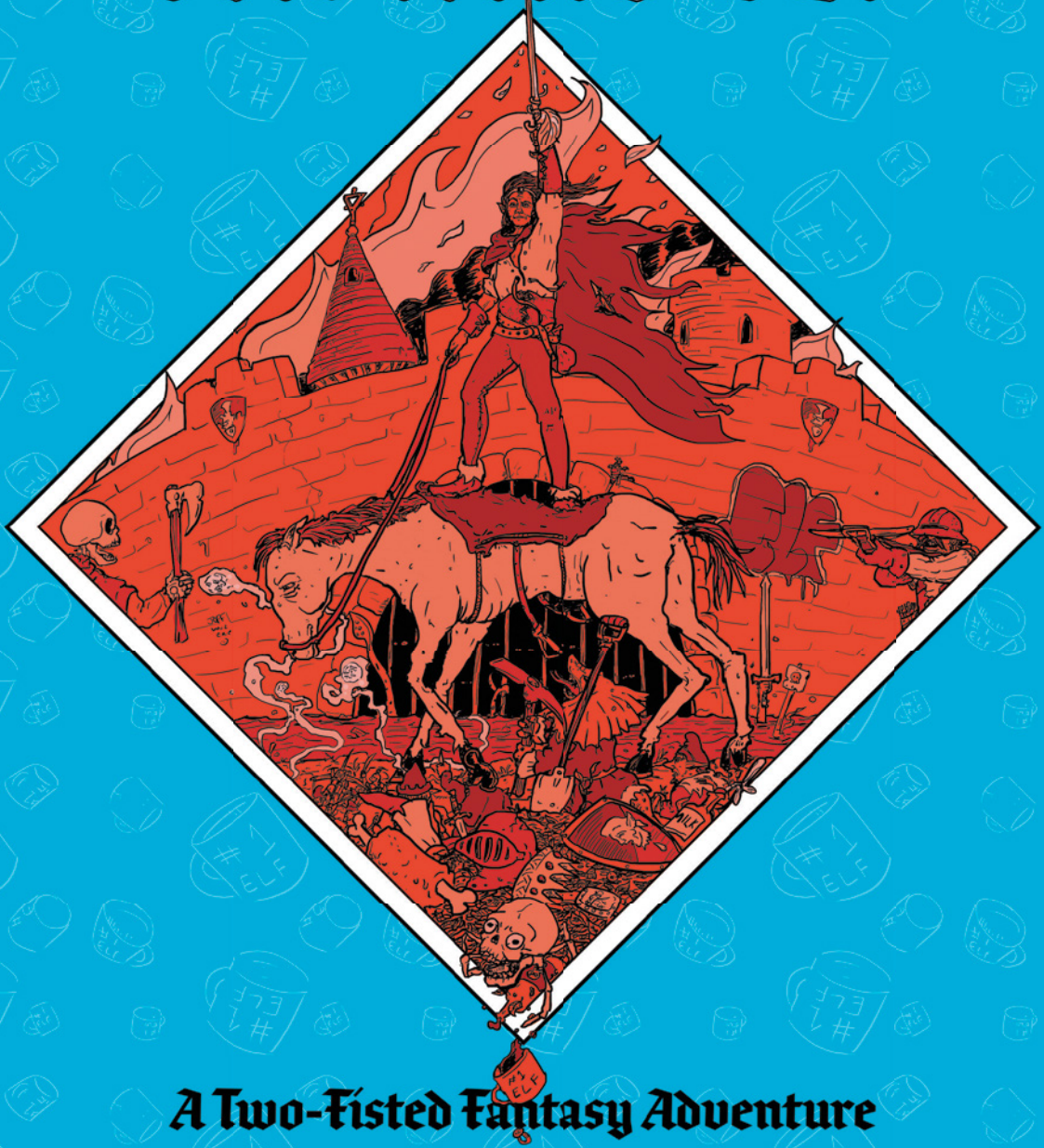
HERMAN S. SKULL

The SWORD of the BASTARD ELF



A Two-Fisted Fantasy Adventure

A noble quest in a delightful fantasy realm. Do you have what it takes to find the Elf a place to crash? You, a couple of dice and your rock-hard fists will decide how it all shakes out.

Illustrations by S. IACOB

Two-Fisted Fantasy

THE SWORD OF THE BASTARD ELF

The Bastard Elf has been kicked out of home at the cruelly young age of 60 and he needs to find a place to crash! With nothing more than the name and last known whereabouts of his human father, The Bastard Elf must set out on a perilous quest through the magical land of Nonce - a realm full of crooks, brigands, scumbags and assorted monsters - armed only with his wits and whatever he can steal from his stepfather Jeff.

You call the shots: reunite with your old man, get revenge on Jeff (who has obviously turned your mother against you somehow and has never treated you with the respect you deserve), and carve your own destiny with the Sword of the Bastard Elf. Or (more likely) fall in a pit and be eaten by something horrible. Inside you'll find a complete set of rules and items to help you battle and sleaze your way across the County of Nonce: all you need to provide is a couple of dice and your two rock-hard fists!

You'll find included a combat system for dealing with all the fist fights, sword duels and monstrous encounters that you'll come across, and details of the roughly 175 items you can pick up. You'll also find a set of rules for a role playing game for up to four players, complete with an introductory scenario to get you started. And if you're really lucky you might even find some place for the Elf to call home.

Copyright © 2016-2018 by Sam Iacob/Hermit Skull.
All rights reserved. Outside of the usual fair use
provisions this book or any portion thereof
may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever
without the express written permission of the publisher.
First Printing, 2018
hermit@hermitskull.com
www.TwoFistedFantasy.com
www.HermitSkull.com

Drafted with ZTAB Editor 2016 (2016.0.2.0)
http://sourceforge.net/projects/ztab

HERMAN S. SKULL

THE SWORD OF THE BASTARD ELF

Illustrations by S. Iacob

with additional illustrations by Tony Hough and Saul Iacob

Two-Fisted Fantasy

Dedicated to Simon

who this book is in no way about

Table of Contents

APOLOGIES	6
INTRODUCTION	7
SETTING OUT	7
ÉLAN, EFFORT and FISTS	7
HASSLES	8
MULTIPLE HASSLES	8
BUGGERING OFF	9
LOOT	9
CRAFTING	10
CASH	10
RECOVERING	10
POTIONS	11
WORDS OF POWER	12
NOTES	12
OTHER STUFF	12
HINTS AND TIPS	12
ADVENTURE SCROLL	13
ADDITIONAL RULES	15
MAPS	66
THE ADVENTURE BEGINS	70
ITEM LIST	809
PERSONAL NOTES	825
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	826

APOLOGIES

The mighty tome you now hold in your hand was the first book ever penned by Herman S. Skull. Skull was a prolific author throughout the 80s and early 90s, producing dozens of books mostly in the hopes of cashing in on the craze for adventure gamebooks that swept the United Kingdom at the time. He was never very successful: his books were mostly bought by confused grandparents for soon-to-be-disappointed grandchildren, and given the content of the books and the offensive and intrusive writing style of Skull (who would at times break off the narrative to harangue the reader at length) it was no mystery why his books didn't feature on the bookshelves or why his offices and non-union print shop were burned down. Like most of Herman Skull's oeuvre The Sword of the Bastard Elf was lost to time, rotting away in charity stores, dumpsters and the bottom of ant nests the world over.

I was one of those disappointed grandchildren who found The Sword of the Bastard Elf inside some wrapping paper one Christmas in the mid 80s, though I wasn't disappointed for long. It was a horrible, unpleasant mess about a grotesque of a protagonist doing unspeakable things. The art was hideous, disturbing and borderline pornographic in places. In other words I was immediately and powerfully drawn to the book. However, owing to crummy manufacturing and outraged religious pressure groups almost every copy of the book has since been destroyed.

In recent years single player gamebooks have been making a comeback - there have been new Fighting Fantasy titles, Lone Wolf has resurfaced and, more importantly, Star Bastards sold pretty well. I have scoured the world looking for scraps and memories of The Sword of the Bastard Elf and, with Skull's permission, rebuilt the book, adapting it where possible for the sensibilities of the 21st century. I've removed the bizarre racism, most of the rambling screeds and some of the more gratuitously revolting passages. But what you hold in your hands is still very much a product of its time - the early 80s - and I've done my best to preserve and replicate the tone and style of publications of that era.

The Sword of the Bastard Elf contains rules to determine how you proceed in the adventure contained within. You may notice the instructions section is obscenely long: this has been preserved only for historical interest. You need only read and remember the first few pages (7 to 12), and perhaps not even that much if you prefer to play your own way. I've updated the text and item descriptions so that they will direct you to the more esoteric rules as they come up. If this is your first play-through then I recommend you do not read the extended rules (page 15 onwards) until you've completed at least one game.

The original gamebook not only came with, but required, a deck of specially-made cards detailing the objects in the game, without which the book was unplayable. This naked cash grab from Skull has been rectified - you'll find the items listed in an appendix at the back of the book. Unfortunately this decision has angered Skull and I keep finding booby traps in and around my house. But Two-Fisted Fantasy is a harsh mistress and such is the life I have chosen.

This tome you hold in your hands, for all its imperfections, anachronisms and general unpleasantness, is the work of years of careful collection, collation and editing, and only now is the world once again ready to experience the troubling world of the Bastard Elf more or less as Herman S. Skull may possibly have intended it. Perhaps it will go on to disappoint a new generation of grandchildren and the cycle will begin again. Only time will tell.

S. Iacob
Illustrator and Two-Fisted Fantasist

INTRODUCTION

The Sword of the Bastard Elf is a gamebook. If you're unfamiliar with these, they're a cross between a regular book and a role playing game. After the introduction section you'll notice the text is made up of numbered paragraphs - do not read these in order! Starting with paragraph 1, the text will offer you choices and you turn to the paragraph indicated based on your decisions. Some paragraphs will have some kind of test or obstacle to overcome using the gamebook's rules, detailed in this section, and your success or failure in that test will determine which paragraph you should turn to next. These tests are settled using regular six-sided dice, and aside from a pencil, an eraser and a pen, a few dice are all you'll need to play through this adventure gamebook.

SETTING OUT

Before embarking on your adventure, you must first determine your own elf's strengths and weaknesses. The world of the Bastard Elf is an arbitrary place and you've been a worthless goldbrick most of your life, so chance will play a greater part than preparation in your starting attributes. In other words we're going to roll some dice. At the end of the introduction and rules section there's an Adventure Scroll : record your attributes in the appropriate boxes on the Scroll.

ÉLAN, EFFORT and FISTS

Roll 1 die. Divide the number that comes up by 2, rounding up halves. Now add 6. Enter this number into the ÉLAN box on the Adventure Scroll.

Roll 2 dice. Add the dice together, multiply this number by 10 and enter the result into the EFFORT box.

This is a two-fisted adventure so enter 2 into the FISTS box.

ÉLAN, EFFORT and FISTS change over the course of the adventure so keep an accurate record of these attributes. In general it's best to write on the Adventure Scroll in pencil and keep an eraser handy. There's a part of the scroll titled WORDS OF POWER where you must certainly write in pen, but we'll get to that mysterious and cool part later.

For ÉLAN and EFFORT these initial scores are your maximum scores. You may not exceed these scores unless specified by an item's description or in the text. For instance, eating food will not increase your EFFORT above your maximum score, nor will healing items boost ÉLAN above its maximum. Make sure you note the maximum scores on the Adventure Scroll. You may however gain additional FISTS above your initial score - these are metaphorical fists (mostly).

Your ÉLAN score is your general ability to do things. You're only a half elf, and a bastard one at that, so you lack much of the dash and wit of your elf half-brethren. Try to improve it if you have it in you. Your EFFORT score reflects your will to do anything and your ability to get off the couch; the higher your EFFORT score the longer your elf will be bothered to continue going about his business before he just sits down wherever he is and starts jacking off disconsolately. Your FISTS score indicates your rough, vigorous qualities and how many alcoholic beverages you can credibly drink from simultaneously. Most elfs have two hands but only one FIST; you must have inherited your deadbeat human dad's gritty, in-your-face demeanour. If any of these scores are ever reduced to 0 then your adventure has come to an end.

HASSLES

You are sure to encounter various obstacles on your quest to find some place to crash. It might be scarpering over a wall, being menaced by local greasers or fighting off your dead grandmother as she crawls up your leg with a hunting knife in her teeth. All of these are called HASSLES and, just like in real life, are best avoided. Unlike in real life, all HASSLES look and are solved in pretty much the same way, though since items give bonuses and penalties depending on whether it's a combat HASSLE or not, combat HASSLES have a little sword icon next to them (🔪).

All HASSLES have a DIFFICULTY rating. Particularly obstinate HASSLES have a TOUGHNESS rating. If you're really up against it they will also have a FISTS rating. Some HASSLES also have special CONSEQUENCES which apply if you can't overcome them.

To resolve a HASSLE you must overcome it with your efforts by exceeding its DIFFICULTY rating. To do this follow these steps:

1. Decide how much EFFORT you want to expend. You may put aside EFFORT up to a maximum of your current ÉLAN, taking into account the positive and negative effects of any equipped items. Subtract this amount from your EFFORT.
2. Roll as many dice as you have FISTS. Take any single roll of your choice (this will usually be the highest) and add this number to the amount of EFFORT you have expended.
3. If your HASSLE has any FISTS, roll as many dice as it has FISTS and add the highest single score to its DIFFICULTY.
4. Compare the scores. If your total exceeds the HASSLE's total then you have beaten it. Subtract 1 from the HASSLE's TOUGHNESS (HASSLES without a TOUGHNESS rating only need to be beaten once before they're overcome). If the HASSLE still has 1 or more TOUGHNESS then repeat from step 1.
5. If your score is equal to or lower than the HASSLE's, then you failed to overcome it. Follow the instructions given in the CONSEQUENCES (if any) then return to step 1 and try again.

Whether you succeed or fail in overcoming a HASSLE you've lost the EFFORT you put in to the attempt.

You may find it helpful to use a spare die to keep track of a HASSLE's TOUGHNESS - simply put the side with the same number of pips as the TOUGHNESS rating facing up. You could also use a piece of scrap paper.

MULTIPLE HASSLES

Sometimes several things go wrong at once and you'll find yourself facing more than one HASSLE. This dangerous situation has special rules to reflect the world of trouble you've gotten into. The book will specify when you've stumbled into a MULTIPLE HASSLE.

To deal with a MULTIPLE HASSLE, pick the HASSLE you are addressing - and follow the normal steps except you must re-roll any of your FIST dice that score 4 or higher. The second roll stands, even if it's higher than the first roll - should the re-roll come out higher it means that your opponents are getting in each other's way as they try to gang up on you.

If you overcome the HASSLE you are targeting you deduct one point of its TOUGHNESS as usual. If you fail to overcome it you take the consequences. However with the remaining HASSLES you determine each of their scores as normal and compare these to the total you scored against the first HASSLE. If your score is higher then nothing happens - you do not remove a point of TOUGHNESS from the extra HASSLES. If it's equal to or lower, you suffer whatever the CONSEQUENCES are for each HASSLE that your score is equal to or lower than.

Should you defeat some of the HASSLES and find yourself facing only one, it no longer counts as a MULTIPLE HASSLE. Accordingly, you no longer need to re-roll FIST dice.

Sometimes you will fight more than one opponent without it being a MULTIPLE HASSLE - perhaps your enemies are particularly slow or are politely taking turns. Simply resolve each fight in order, defeating the first opponent on the list as normal then moving to the next, unless the text specifies that you should be doing something else.

BUGGERING OFF

In most cases it's not worth dying over a HASSLE. The Bastard Elf is always looking for a way out of doing any work and the text will often oblige. You can usually surrender to, run away from or otherwise weasel out of a HASSLE - check the text of the section you're in for details. If the option is available you can do this before even attempting to overcome the HASSLE, so no effort has to be expended and you don't take any consequences for failure.

LOOT

You can carry an unlimited amount of stuff, or LOOT, in this game. Anything you can pick up is detailed in alphabetical order in the item list at the back of this book, or on the optional item cards which you can purchase to help manage your inventory. While a lot of the LOOT is garbage that exists only to satisfy the pack rat instincts of most gamebook enthusiasts, some of it can boost your stats above their starting values, heal your injuries or help you find the exclusive hidden content stashed throughout this book.

LOOT comes in two flavours: JUNK and EQUIPMENT.

JUNK is anything you can pick up that you can't wear or hit people with. It usually lives at the bottom of your pack or in a pouch, and if it does anything it will often be consumed by using it. JUNK that has no effect isn't necessarily worthless - at certain points in the adventure an otherwise useless object might be just what you need to solve some problem. It could also be useful in CRAFTING (see below). When you collect JUNK record it in the JUNK column on your Adventure Scroll. Junk with an effect can be used at any time unless the text is explicitly asking if you're carrying that item in that paragraph.

EQUIPMENT is anything you can wear or wield: things like helmets, swords, tools, that kind of stuff. Its effects, if any, only apply if you've equipped the item - for instance if you pick up a helmet and decide not to wear it, then record in the JUNK column. It's effect won't apply until you put it on. Even then some effects only apply in certain circumstances - for instance, some weapons only give a bonus if you're in combat.

A few special rules apply to EQUIPMENT:

- You can't check the effects of EQUIPMENT before you pick it up. No peeking!
- You can only wear one of the same kind of EQUIPMENT at a time. One helmet, one gloves, one boots, one cloak, one outfit and so on. You will have to use your common sense in this regard.
- Thanks to the vagaries of low elfish fashion you can, however, wear any number of belts and rings at once.
- The Bastard Elf is not a great warrior and so can only wield one weapon or equippable tool at a time. He is not capable of effectively wielding a shield at the same time as a weapon.
- Shields can be worn on the back instead, conferring their negative effects but not their positive ones. At least you can wield a weapon or tool if the shield is on your back though.
- You cannot change EQUIPMENT in the same numbered paragraph as a HASSLE that you haven't overcome or where there's a check to see what EQUIPMENT you've got on!

Record any EQUIPMENT you're wearing in the EQUIPMENT column on your scroll, and anything you're not currently using in the JUNK section. If you are using the item cards it might be more convenient to move them to organised piles on the table in front of you rather than writing all over your scroll.

CRAFTING

Sword of the Bastard Elf has a simple crafting system. If you look at the item descriptions some of them say they can combine with some other objects to make a third item. As long as you have all the items you need you can discard all the parts and replace them with the item indicated in the description. You cannot undo this process and recreate the items from your crafted masterpiece in case you want them for something later on, so be careful!

The slap-dash attempts the Elf makes at crafting don't use any EFFORT, but just as with changing equipment you can't craft in a section with an unresolved HASSLE or a check to see what items or equipment you have.

CASH

There are several types of currency in the County of Nonce, used by the different denizens of the realm and mostly not interchangeable. The most common and valuable are Bilgeton Guilders but you may also find leaves, teeth and other small but grisly trophies which can be exchanged for goods and services. Record the various different kinds of cash you accumulate in the CASH section of your Adventure Scroll.

RECOVERING

You will find opportunities to recover ÉLAN and EFFORT at various points through the adventure. Certain items (mostly food and other consumables) will also allow you to restore your attributes at any time but note you cannot usually exceed your maximum scores. The only way you can normally exceed those maximums is wielding EQUIPMENT or performing mighty deeds which cause you to grow as a person. The text will tell you if you somehow pull that off.

POTIONS

Just like in the real world, staggering around quaffing liquid from unlabelled bottles is a dangerous but potentially rewarding activity. During your adventures you may come across several potions. In some cases the story will specify a page to turn to if you drink the potion where the effects will be described. Other potions may be imbibed at any time so long as you have them in your inventory.

In our humdrum world medicines are measured carefully and the strong stuff is tightly regulated. In any case most of it is made for humans. In the world of The Sword of the Bastard Elf potions are made by half-mad weirdos in filthy hovels mashing weeds, animal parts and barely-differentiated slime by the fistful into dirty bottles filled with home-made booze, which are eventually peddled to numerous different species with wildly different physiologies. In short, potions rarely do what they say on the label.

When you drink a potion for any reason, lose 1 ÉLAN due to the effects of getting hammered on cheap herbal moonshine. Then roll two dice and add the totals to determine the potion's effects. These apply in addition to anything the story throws at you, and must be resolved before the adventure continues:

ROLL:	**EFFECT:**
2-3	There's something wrong with this potion - the mad old hag that brewed it forgot to wash her hands, causing it to spoil. The potion has permanently dented you: lose 2 maximum ÉLAN and 20 maximum EFFORT.
4-5	The potion causes hallucinations. Your long-dead grandma is crawling up your leg with a knife between her teeth shrieking something about you never visiting. You must fight: **GRANDMA! - DIFFICULTY 12** Should you fail to overcome this apparition you must add GRANDMA to your inventory (refer to the item description for more details). You must overcome Grandma before dealing with anything else on this page - family comes first!
6	The potion causes your bowels to twist and suddenly emit a thunderous blast of foul-smelling gas. +1 FIST for the duration of this paragraph.
7-9	This potion is a refreshing healing bevvie. Restore either 1 ÉLAN or 10 EFFORT, up to the maximum. Bear in mind that you will still have -1 ÉLAN for being drunk until you sober up.
10	A potion of Strength. You're ripped! Add 1 maximum and current ÉLAN.
11	A potion of Feelings. The sun seems to shine a little brighter. Add 20 maximum and current EFFORT.
12	A decoction of Monsterism. You sprout another arm, leg, head or other appendage and resolve to use the hell out of it. Add 1 FIST!

The negative ÉLAN effects of quaffing a potion (or any other alcohol) will only last until your next chance to rest. If the text states that you rested or a significant amount of time has passed (at least a few hours) then remove all penalties from being drugged up or drunk.

WORDS OF POWER

On your Adventure Scroll you will find a section for WORDS OF POWER. If you make a lot of really good or really bad decisions, the text may instruct you to add a note to your Adventure Scroll in ink! You might as well add them to the Words of Power section. These notes follow you from adventure to adventure and will alter your future playthroughs in unexpected ways. You'll find out how they work as you come across them.

NOTES

The text will frequently instruct you to make a note of something momentous or terrible that you've done during the course of your adventure. These things might come back to bite you right in the arse or they might not depending on which path you pick, but keep careful track of them! Unlike Words of Power they won't haunt you between adventures so you can erase them at the end of each playthrough.

OTHER STUFF

The Adventure Scroll has several other bits and pieces on it which aren't immediately relevant and, depending on which choices you make while reading this book, may never affect you at all. Simply ignore PROBLEMS, WAGONS, GUARDS and the NOBLE CREST unless they crop up - the text will explain what you need to do when the time is right.

HINTS AND TIPS

Disregard any rules you don't feel like following or don't enjoy. It's more important to have fun.

Should you start with less than 70 EFFORT and find this to be too tough then try entering your max EFFORT as usual and then make your current EFFORT 70 to reflect the rested state you begin in after many years of utter and complete idleness. You may not restore EFFORT until your current score has reduced to below your maximum, so if you have max 40 EFFORT you will not regain EFFORT from rest until you've lost at least 30 EFFORT.

There are a number of ways to get what's coming to you - if you get stuck going one way then try another next time round. It might help to keep notes if your memory is bad. If you get completely lost there are a few maps starting on page 66.

While it's possible to complete this game in one go, some of the endings and items might take multiple playthroughs to attain. Expect to play this book more than once!

It's very important to preserve your EFFORT - it runs down fast and replenishes slowly. Often it's best to weasel out of dealing with HASSLES rather than tackling them head on, even if it means using an item or taking a beating.

If you start with low ÉLAN take healing items. If you start with low EFFORT take food items. If you start with both then be ready to run from nearly everything or to cheat uncontrollably!

Crafting is not essential but there are a couple of endings you won't reach without it

You may now turn to paragraph 1 if you wish - the text and item descriptions/cards will direct you to the additional rules if and when you require them. Good luck!

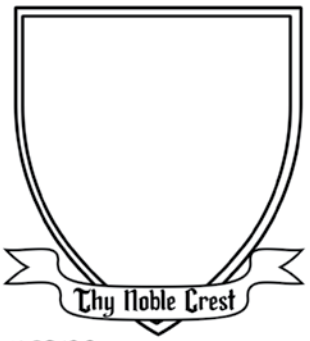
Adventure Scroll

STATS

ÉLAN
MAX
CURRENT

EFFORT
MAX
CURRENT

FISTS



LOOT

JUNK
(non-equipped items)

EQUIPMENT
(worn or wielded)

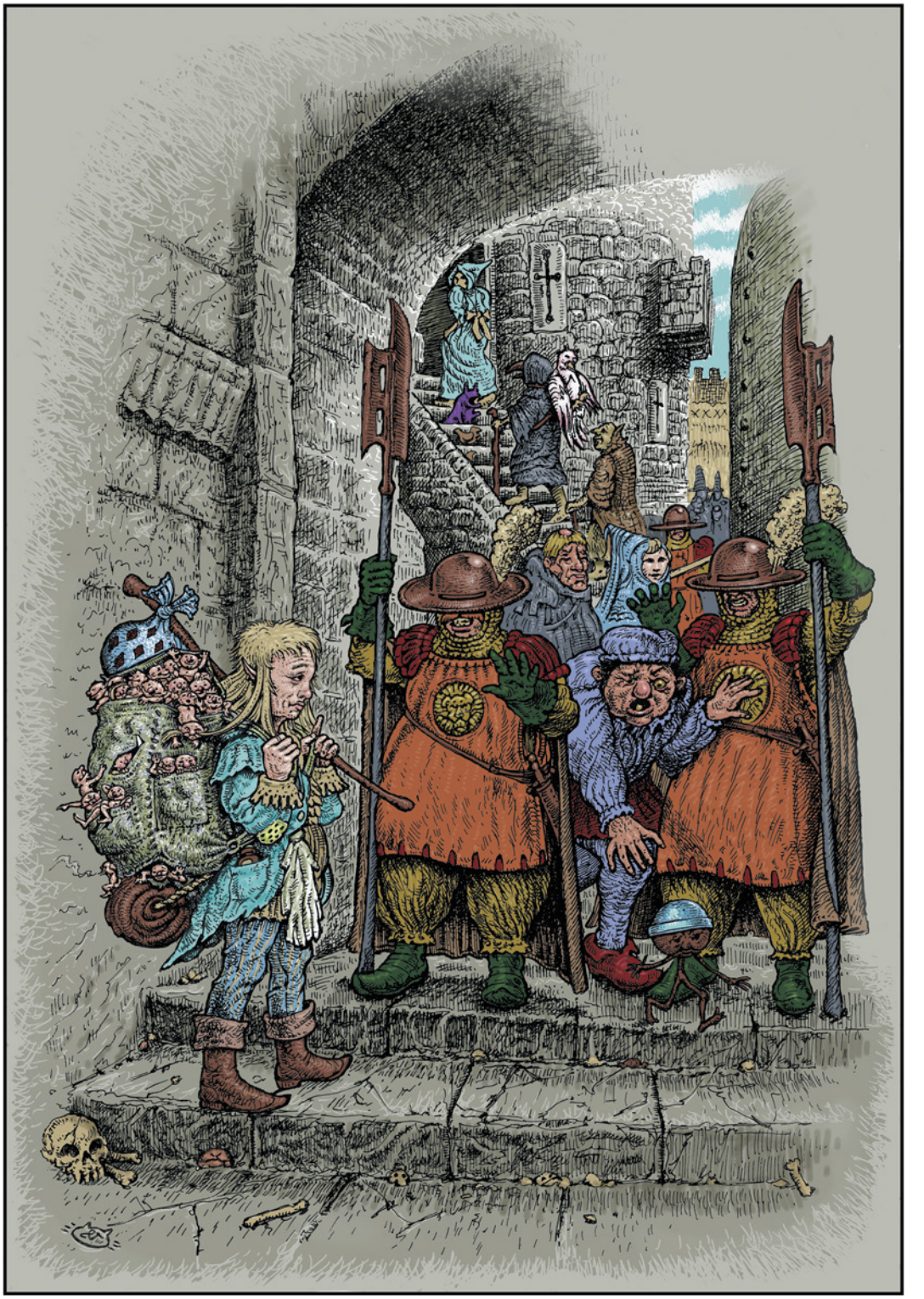
CASH

NOTES

TRIFLES

WORDS OF POWER

MISC
GUARDS
WAGONS
PROBLEMS



Role Playing Section Contents

WELCOME TO BILGETON	16
WHAT IS A ROLE PLAYING GAME	16
THE PLAYERS	16
THE DUNGEON BASTARD	16
TESTS: HASSLES, HICCUPS AND HEAVES	17
TURN ORDER	18
THE SETTING	19
THE COUNTY OF NONCE	19
BILGETON	20
EVERYDAY LIFE	20
THE GANG	20
CHARACTER CREATION	21
STATS	21
SPECIES	21
PROFESSIONS	23
SKILLS	24
TRAITS	28
MAGIC	29
SCHOOLS OF MAGIC AND POWER LIST	30
FUSSING AND FEUDING	35
ROUNDS	35
STABBING	36
MULTIPLE COMBAT	36
BUGGERING OFF	37
GETTING SHOT AT	37
ARMOUR	38
SHIELDS	40
PSYCHOLOGY	41
WRECK AND RUIN	42
WRECKAGE TABLE	42
ZERO EFFORT	43
RECOVERY	44
GETTING ILL	44
GETTING DRUNK	45
QUAFFING POTIONS	45
ARE YOU EXPERIENCED	47
LEVELLING UP	48
OLDER AND UGLIER	49
INSANITY	49
LOOT	50
CURRENCY	52
EXPENSIVE STUFF	53
CAMPAIGNING	54
WIZARDS AND WARRIORS	54
BEER RULES	56
FINAL REMARKS	56
LOYAL SUBJECT!	57
INTRODUCTORY SCENARIO	60

Welcome to Bilgeton

I have included in this edition the rules to a beer and pretzels role-playing game which will allow groups of drunks an opportunity to pretend to loiter around Bilgeton and the surrounding lands. For this to work you will need to have two or more players - one is the storyteller (known as the Dungeon Bastard) and the leftovers are the players seeking, if not fame and fortune, then at least an easy ride. Together you weave magical and exciting stories which will remain the intellectual property of Herman S. Skull.

For the unimaginative there is a sample scenario included in this chapter.

This is a relatively simple role-playing game which is suitable for quick adventures over drinks. Play through The Sword of the Bastard Elf once or twice before you give this one a whirl - you might ruin the plot or some of the jokes prematurely if you start with the role playing game.

What is a role playing game

A role playing game is like a single player gamebook, but instead of the logical and reasonable idea of the book acting as a "games master", providing descriptions of the situation and plumbing you for your reactions, this function is carried out by a human being who manages the adventure, controls the monsters and applies the rules while the players use their creativity and grit to complete the adventure and get paid. It's a multi-player single-player gamebook which then needs a minimum of two players (one to play the game and the other to run it), though to be enjoyable it needs more, typically three, four or five players in the this case. Together you'll imagine and battle your way through grand adventures (or greasy episodes) in the game's setting, which is this case is the huge metropolis of Bilgeton and its surrounds in the world of The Sword of the Bastard Elf.

The players

You will create and play the role of a group of the many chancers, nobodies and scumbags lurking around Bilgeton in the County of Nonce. A sordid collection of oafs, chumps and dilettantes you will attempt to survive and possibly profit off of whatever circumstance throws at you - usually a combination of devilment from the Dungeon Bastard and the consequences of your actions. A group of players is called a "gang". The optimum size of the gang is four players though more or less should still be enjoyable.

While playing it's important to remember that you're acting as your characters and not yourself! Your character isn't aware that he or she is in a game. Although you're trying to get your schlub of a character to be rich and famous you're also working with the other players and DB to set a scene like you'd see in a movie about dungeons or maybe a TV show about elfs.

The Dungeon Bastard

The Dungeon Bastard (DB) drives the adventure, describes the setting and sets the challenges. The DB needs a slightly better grasp on the rules and setting than the players and needs a particularly quick and creative mind. You'll work with the players to create a story, but although you're not a character yourself you will control all the people, monsters and perils the gang will encounter. You won't monopolise the story - the players have the freedom to do whatever they

want with the scenario. It's your job to make sure their inevitable bungling bites them in the arse and their more interesting exploits are rewarded. You're trying to help a group of people make a cool story and have a good time together, so if you have to fudge a roll, add a monster or two or let the adventure go completely off the rails then that's what you do.

TESTS: HASSLES, HICCUPS AND HEAVES

The central mechanic of the game is the HASSLE and its associates: the HICCUP and the HEAVE.

Every character has three core statistics: ÉLAN, EFFORT and FISTS. ÉLAN is their general competence and EFFORT is the extent to which they can be bothered carrying on. The adventurers aren't a real stoic bunch and if their EFFORT ever reaches zero they have simply given up on the adventuring life - they're either dead or they've packed it in and gone home, never to be seen again. FISTS is their ability to punch their way through problems by force of character, treachery or just plain old meanness.

HASSLES are tests that the DB sets for the players - a task that uses EFFORT. Typically draining or dangerous things like battling an enemy, casting a spell or cheating in a game of cards against the Thieves' Guild, the DB notifies the afflicted player of the DIFFICULTY of the HASSLE, and the player(s) must then beat that score. They do that by assigning EFFORT up to a maximum of their ÉLAN, then rolling as many dice as they have FISTS and adding the highest of these scores to the amount of EFFORT assigned.

HASSLES all have a DIFFICULTY rating. Particularly obstinate HASSLES have a TOUGHNESS rating. If you're really unlucky or the DB is in a bad mood they will also have a FISTS rating. Some HASSLES also have special CONSEQUENCES listed for failure which will apply if you fail to beat their DIFFICULTY on an attempt. The DB will always advise the players of the HASSLE's DIFFICULTY, TOUGHNESS and FISTS and all rolls against HASSLES are made in the open where everyone can see them. A player should normally be told if an action they're considering is going to count as a HASSLE so they have a chance to do something else if they like.

To resolve a HASSLE you must overcome it with your efforts by exceeding its DIFFICULTY rating until you've reduced its TOUGHNESS to 0. To do this follow these steps:

1. Decide how much EFFORT you want to expend. You may put aside EFFORT up to a maximum of your current ÉLAN, plus or minus any modifiers from SKILL and PROFESSION or statuses. Subtract this amount from your EFFORT.
2. Roll as many dice as you have FISTS, plus or minus any modifiers from SKILL, PROFESSION and so on. Take the highest single roll and add this number to the amount of EFFORT you have expended.
3. If your HASSLE has any FISTS, roll as many dice as it has FISTS and add the highest score to its TOUGHNESS.
4. Compare the scores. If your total exceeds the HASSLE's total then you have beaten it. Subtract 1 from the HASSLE's TOUGHNESS (HASSLES without a TOUGHNESS rating only need to be beaten once). If the HASSLE still has 1 or more TOUGHNESS then repeat from step 1.
5. If your score is equal to or lower than the HASSLE's, then you failed to overcome it. Follow the instructions given in the CONSEQUENCES (if any) then return to step 1 and try again.

Whether you succeed or fail in overcoming a HASSLE you've lost the EFFORT you put in to the attempt. Given that HASSLEs can drain a lot of EFFORT which replenishes quite slowly HASSLES should be reserved for tough, draining and/or perilous situations. Even if already committed to an action, players can and often should respond to HASSLES by not attempting them - they're not heroes after all.

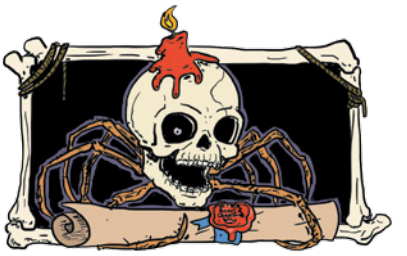
HICCUPS work roughly the same way as HASSLES but they don't have TOUGHNESS or FIST ratings and can be resolved in secret by the DB if he or she wishes - there's no need to tell the players the DIFFICULTY rating or to allow them to roll it though you may do so if you wish. These are minor, relatively effortless actions, mostly things players or critters/people controlled by the DB do reflexively or very easily - did he notice that movement? Did she strum that tune correctly? and so on. The DB might have a "screen", or a collection of crap on the table in front of him or her, behind which rolls can be made in secret. The players will hear only the sinister rolling of dice should the DB choose to roll a HICCUP in secret.

HEAVE tests are the simplest of all - the scenario or the DB might state that a certain action a player wants to do will happen automatically in return for a fixed EFFORT cost - for instance digging up a grave to inspect the skeleton within for irregularities might cost 5 EFFORT, or hunting and swatting faeries for an afternoon might cost one die of EFFORT. Players should be notified most of the time if they're about to do something that will involve a HEAVE and they should usually also be told how much it will cost them before they commit.

The distinction between HASSLES, HICCUPS and HEAVES is absolutely essential for this game to work. Remember that HASSLES are huge and/or stressful endeavours that would wear someone out if done more than once or twice a day, HICCUPS are checks against skills and HEAVES are simple but gruelling tasks that require no particular skill and don't carry a risk of failure. A round of deadly combat might be a HASSLE, a check to see if you heard something or understood some scrap of lore a HICCUP and dragging a heavy chest across a room a HEAVE.

Turn Order

Once the DB has finished describing the situation, the players can have a quick discussion about what they're going to do. The first player to tell the DB what their character is about to do takes the first action, then the next person with something to say jumps in, and so on. Once every player has committed to an action or there's been a silence of longer than a few seconds then the DB resolves all the actions. The cycle then repeats. Gangs are more than welcome to establish their own turn order among themselves but the DB should always listen to the first person to speak. Actions are considered to be carried out more or less simultaneously though they should be resolved in the order they're given. This means that the last characters to give instructions can potentially waste ENERGY on attacks on non-valid targets or spells so they should hedge their bets accordingly.



The Setting

I recommend you play through The Sword of the Bastard Elf to get a grip on the setting, and if you're the Dungeon Bastard also have a look through the Bestiary companion to this volume or track down Herman S. Skull in his isolated and fortified hut and hassle him for more inspiration. What follows is a summary:

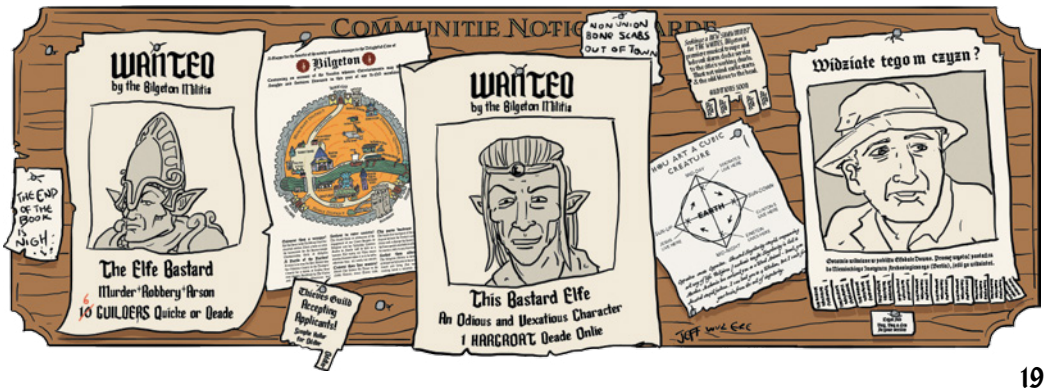
The County of Nonce

Nonce is a large province at the Western extremity of Palaver, a relatively powerful feudal kingdom. Nonce is a hereditary county ruled from the fortified city of Bilgeton, located on the river Bilge in the South-East corner of the county. From here the count and his knights ineptly and absently lord over about 7,000 square miles of trackless forests, ominous mountain ranges, deadly swamps and other various weirdnesses and terrors.

Palaver is a human kingdom and has no recognised jurisdiction over the other peoples, of which there are several in Nonce. Bilgeton is the main human settlement but there are also the towns of Bilgeford and Brunnenfeld as well as numerous isolated cottages and farmsteads. These mostly supply the food needs of Bilgeton as well as those of travellers and merchants plying their trade across the road and rivers which justify Bilgeton's existence. A single goblin city and stereotypical, non-copyright-infringing Mazyrinth exists in the hills above the Bilge to the north-west of Bilgeton. More troublesome are the elfen bands in the Schleimwald and Feewald forests, who emerge from their hidden woodland settlements to prey on traders and ruin road infrastructure. Nonce also features at least one warlock, three witches, roving hordes of the undead, various brownies, pixies, fairies, gnomes, nobolds, smorfs and other assorted woodland and subterranean filth. There are some other more dangerous monsters getting around - manticores harpies and giant forest bats for a start - along with more mundane critters like drop bears and dire wolves.

Beyond the boundaries of Nonce little is known - the Dwarfen Kingdoms to the northwest conduct a limited trade and some dwarfs live and work around Nonce, but they don't share much about their homeland with humans, who are in any case not all that interested. Far to the west lie over the Endless Plain of Fortune live the strange and terrible Taurcents who sometimes drift into Nonce to enslave peasants or work as mercenaries, and even further away are other distant human kingdoms who sometimes trade in exotic goods. There are rumours of a sea, across which are the mysterious isles of the High Elfs, but they remain a myth to the residents of Nonce.

Refer to the Bestiary (available in all reasonably good bookstores) for more details about the inhabitants of Nonce and its surrounds, and of course you can learn more by playing through The Sword of the Bastard Elf.



BILGETON

Bilgeton is a huge bustling metropolis of almost five thousand souls, and somewhere behind its tall stone walls and reasonably well-trained and properly-armed garrison anything the world produces can be found - for a price. Bilgeton straddles the mighty Bilge river and monopolises an overland trade route from the distant Muazzam Khanate - trade goods are brought into Bilgeton, packed onto ships and sent downstream further into Palaver, and vice-versa. The humans of Bilgeton, like most humans in Palaver, are a cosmopolitan lot who get along and accept with anyone as long as they're not completely worthless, which means that the streets are thronging with dwarfs, living skeletons, trolls, goblins and even the occasional half-elf.

Bilgeton is a late medieval city which means a mix of splendid wealth and squalor - outside of the town centre with its palace, parade grounds, great synod, noble residences and grand bazaar there's a trade district with its workshops and markets, giving way to the docklands and a network of winding alleyways linking slums and wasteland. Beneath all this runs an ancient sewer network, partially made of the remnants of an even older city that was built here apparently before the Bilge even started flowing.

Though there are ways in and out of Bilgeton, for the most part people have jobs and aren't supposed to be roaming the roads. It's not easy to get out and it's even harder to get in! Most adventures are designed to start and take place in Bilgeton and its immediate surrounds though in future more scenarios may be produced that take place outside the capitol. And of course you are free to come up with your own stories set in Nonce, Palaver or wherever you please.

EVERYDAY LIFE

For most people, life in Palaver revolves around food - growing it, harvesting it, storing it, eating it, selling it - a routine punctuated by various celebrations and local rituals, famines, raids and wars. Life in general is less monotonous and precarious in the larger towns, especially for the nobles , rich merchants, knights, cardinals, wizards and master tradesmen. Unfortunately the players are for the most part none of these things. They play as the humbler residents of Bilgeton: semi-employed city slickers who spend some time at trades or in the militia and the vast majority of the time chumping stuff around, drinking and dwelling in squalor in the city slums.

THE GANG

The gang is drawn from many different backgrounds but they all share a few traits - they're broke, they've got a bit of free time and they're not afraid to risk a few punches in the face to secure a decent reward. However, unlike in most adventure RPGs, the gang is barely a temporary arrangement, more a drinking club than a band of brothers and/or sisters. Adventuring is a hard way to pay the bills - very few people who can't afford full plate make it through even a single adventure, and even fewer live long enough to make adventuring a habit. The gang is an opportunistic bunch - they meet infrequently, letting months or years lapse between outings. People come and go, and the members are at least partially in it for themselves and no one else. Unlike traditional RPGs these guys aren't really cut out for herodom, ranging as they do from completely worthless gutter scum at worst to vain dilettantes at best, with little chance of improving much before a grisly death. That's OK though - often it's the little guy that saves the day in a pinch, and when the day doesn't get saved these guys are completely expendable.

Remember above all that these adventurers aren't heroes, just regular Joes. Many of them will never have held a sword before in their lives, they'll limp away even from anything resembling a fair fight, and they won't stand steady if they see their comrades getting slaughtered. Cunning and luck are far more important than bravado!

Character Creation

Before getting started each player will need to fill out the character creation sheet for their hero. You'll need roll your stats, pick your species, decide on your profession and select a couple of skills. After that you can fill out the other background details on your character's Residency Scroll if you wish.

Stats

The species you can play as in this game have fairly similar physical and mental capabilities so you create them all the same way.

Roll 1 die. Add 3. Enter this number into the ÉLAN box on the Residency Scroll.

Roll 2 dice. Add the dice together, multiply this number by 10 and enter the result into the EFFORT box.

Note that your ÉLAN and EFFORT can change throughout the adventure - the number that you've rolled here are the maximums above which you cannot increase your base ÉLAN or EFFORT. You will pick up items and skills that improve these scores in some circumstances but when you're instructed to add or subtract ÉLAN or EFFORT it comes from your base score which is recorded on the Residency Scroll.

You have only 1 FIST. Enter this into the FIST box.

Species

There are four species to pick from, each with their own associated traits. Bilgeton is overwhelmingly a human town but there are dwarfs, elfs and other beings present, so there's no limit to how the gang can be set up. Bear in mind though that every species brings its own weaknesses and some minor strengths to the table so it's a good idea to diversify at least a little. Check out the Bestiary supplement for more details about these denizens of Bilgeton.

HUMAN: Most of the people living in Bilgeton are human. Human Bilgetonians are hard-working but cheerful. They're also very, very crooked. The size of Bilgeton has meant a profligation of royal charters and offices, trade guilds and criminal fraternities which all demand their cut. Humans are therefore always on the lookout for some way to pocket some extra coin - whether to pay for their various affiliation fees, licences and protection dues or just out of sheer habit. Education and training in Bilgeton is seen as a means to your ten percent and not a lot else. As a result humans actually get worse at tasks they specialise in : they subtract one from their ÉLAN whenever they're attempting something covered by their PROFESSION or they have a SKILL in (though any other bonuses are applied after this). Fighters might be trying to leave enemies alive to ransom, builders use shoddy workmanship to guarantee a repair job later, and crooks always looking out to pocket more than their fair share. ***Humans should gain an extra experience point per adventure if they're successful in getting a bigger slice of the reward than other players, whether through bullying or subterfuge - they deserve it after all!***

DWARF: Dwarfs in Nonce are usually visiting from the neighbouring dwarfholds of Monteton and Marteaux. Many of them work in the metropolis where they're welcome for the most part. They labour alongside the human population but the dwarfen obsession with music and the arts leaves little time for martial interests. Dwarfs as a rule, though not strict pacifists, abhor violence and - when they can be found in a battle line - can usually be spotted playing dead or sneaking off at the first opportunity. The other species consider them cowardly but Dwarfs like to think of themselves as sensible. Dwarfs suffer -1 FIST (or -2 ÉLAN if that would bring the FIST total to 0) in any violent or combat-related task (including any battlefield support tasks like shooting, helping the wounded and so on) and take any psychological test from fighting with -2 ÉLAN. ***A dwarf should look forward to an extra experience point if they spend more EFFORT on singing, music or any other art form than on fighting or aggressive action in an adventure.***

ELF: Most Elfs live outside of human settlements where they're considered a nuisance, but a few have found their way inside the walls of Bilgeton. Since they're just as arrogant and lazy as they are on the outside the Elf population is treated with disdain, though some of them have made some kind of effort to fit in (if you want to play as one of these kinds of Elfs just treat them as human). For the more unreconstructed Elf, life in Bilgeton is a smorgasbord of theft and idleness until they're thrown out, though they can usually sneak back in past the walls somehow. Elfs are terminally lazy and must spend the FIST roll they accept in EFFORT unless using an elf-only skill. They also can't take a PROFESSION. ***Elfs can expect an extra experience point if they get through an adventure spending less EFFORT than anyone else.***

SKELETON: Bilgeton has a large contingent of the undead, mostly carrying out menial jobs for richer merchants and poorer nobles who have given up trying to find good help. For the profaned remains of the dead they're usually pretty easy to get along with. Unfortunately, lacking vocal cords, they can't communicate directly with other non-skeletal members of the gang except through chattering their teeth, gestures and writing (though they can still cast MAGICK if they take the skill). Being unionised they won't work in fields outside their PROFESSION : a skeleton can't choose to have no PROFESSION and they must pick their skills solely from that PROFESSION. ***A skeleton can hope for an extra experience point if her or she spends little or no effort on skills outside his or her PROFESSION.*** Leaving the union while working in Bilgeton would be unwise (see the Bestiary for more about this) so it's assumed that all skeletons are members in good standing.

PROFESSIONS

Having selected a species you must now choose a PROFESSION - this is what your character does to get by when they're not adventuring. Strictly speaking, having a profession doesn't automatically make you particularly good at your job (and in the case of humans it actually makes you a little worse) but it generally means you're less likely to mess up a task covered by that PROFESSION. You gain an additional FIST in all SKILLS covered by that PROFESSION. The PROFESSIONS are:

GOON - someone who makes their living cracking heads. In Bilgeton most goons have done a turn with the militia and received a smattering of military training. Gains a FIST when engaging in a number of violent activities - fisticuffs, intimidation, fighting with melee, ranged or thrown weapons. +1 FIST for any task involving raw strength or violence.

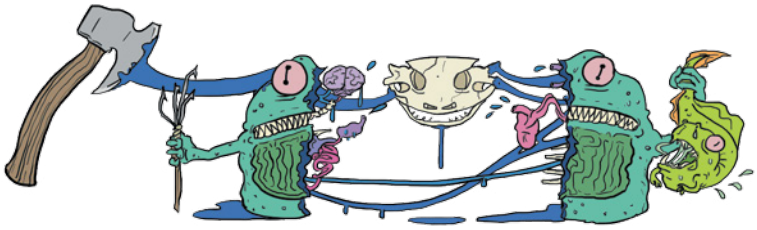
SCUMBAG - a slippery individual who makes a crust through underhanded means. Scumbags gain 1 FIST when carrying out most criminal tasks, for instance picking locks, picking pockets, sneaking, and messing around with traps, and they also get +1 FIST when carrying out any physical task involving dexterity like climbing or jumping.

NUTCASE - a savant who has developed some familiarity with the arcane through the probably unauthorised reading of sacred or profane texts. The experience has driven him or her a bit insane. Gains a FIST when casting spells from any school of magic and starts with effective knowledge of KITSCHCRAFT, MAGICK and SANCTIMONY. Must select an INSANITY when picking this profession (see the section on INSANITY below). Nutcases are usually pretty squirrelly or otherwise capable of noticing things that are out of place and so get +1 FIST to tasks involving perception.

LOUDMOUTH - someone who tries to make money by entertaining others. Gets an additional FIST when socialising or carrying out social tasks including taunting, gambling and lying and for singing, playing any musical instruments, acting or disguising themselves and for any task involving charming or convincing others.

DRIFTER - a person who makes money (or not) going city to city, peddling their wares. They're used to surviving outside city limits. Gain a FIST when using bows, slings or thrown weapons, when foraging, tracking, riding, swimming or doing any other outdoorsy task, or when fighting elves, pixies, fairies or wild animals. +1 FIST for any task involving endurance, for instance surviving poison or running a long way.

You may also choose no PROFESSION if you wish (unless you're an elf, in which case you can't have a profession anyway) - this will allow you to start with any 6 SKILLS of your choosing. As long as you have no PROFESSION you may pick 3 SKILLS when you gain a level of experience instead of the usual 2. Sadly, this bonus doesn't apply to elfs, who aren't exactly known for spreading their wings.



SKILLS

You may now pick two additional skills from the list below. While a PROFESSION gives a bonus to a whole swathe of actions you can take, SKILL applies only to the task related to the SKILL. You may pick the same skill twice, or pick a skill that's covered by your PROFESSION. This gives you the status of being GOOD at that skill (useful for gameplay purposes, some tasks may be hard or impossible to succeed at if you're not GOOD in a particular skill). This doesn't give you another FIST though, instead it gives you +2 ÉLAN when attempting that task (cumulative with the extra FIST). For example:

Wretched Bob the Skeleton Goon (ÉLAN 7, EFFORT 80, FISTS 1) picks Axe as a SKILL. Axe is a type of WEAPON which is covered by his PROFESSION already. This means that Wretched Bob is considered to be GOOD with an axe. When he wields it he gets +1 FIST and +2 ÉLAN on top of any bonuses from the weapon itself, if any. If he goes into battle with a basic axe his stats become (ÉLAN 9, EFFORT 80, FISTS 2).

Any further increases in SKILL add +1 ÉLAN when using that skill.

While most activities are possible for someone with no training (just about anyone can swing a club, even if not all that well), a few aren't. Picking locks and casting spells for instance are completely beyond someone without the requisite training. Skills of this type are marked with a * next to the name.

There are a few skills that are only available if you have other prerequisite skills. For instance, horseback combat requires riding. For skills of this type if you don't have the prerequisite skill and you try to take the associated action (for instance trying to fight on horseback without having the riding skill) you get -2 ÉLAN. If you do have the prerequisite skill then you just don't get the bonus (someone with riding trying to attack from horseback would use their basic ÉLAN and FISTS scores). If you have the skill you get +1 FIST as usual - if you pick it a second time you become GOOD and also get +2 ÉLAN when using the skill. Skills of this type tend to be fairly powerful if a bit specialised, hence the extra messing around. These skills are listed with the prerequisite skills in brackets. Note that just like other skills, if they're marked with a * you cannot attempt them even if you have the prerequisite. Skills which require prerequisites are marked with † and the skill required in brackets.

Finally please feel free to devise your own SKILLS if you can think of some action that isn't covered by an existing ones. So long as it covers a sufficiently narrow area of expertise and fits with the setting it should be allowed. As with all other skills it confers 1 FIST when selected or +2 ÉLAN if it belongs to a range of behaviour already covered by your PROFESSION (for instance if you're a GOON and you take WEAPON(Axes) as a skill you'll receive +2 ÉLAN when using axes on top of the +1 FIST you already have when using weapons.

GOON-RELATED SKILLS

BASH: The use of corrective force in sticky situations. In other words a knack for smashing open locked doors, chests and other things that get in your way without hurting yourself.

FISTICUFFS: Fighting with your bare hands. A very useful skill for an unpleasant person to have. Note: subtracts 1 from any WRECKAGE rolls you make when you win an unarmed fight - see the sections on FUSSING AND FEUDING and WRECKAGE below.

INTIMIDATION: Plausibly threatening people into doing something that you want them to do without absolutely having to wave a weapon in their face.

WEAPON(*pick one*): Fighting with a particular weapon type - a partial list of options here include swords, axes, spears, bows, crossbows, pole-arms, throwing axes, javelins, spears, staves, slings and so on. You can pick weird weapons here - chair legs, zweihanders (two-handed swords), scythes, anything that you could conceivably hurt another being or object with.

SCUMBAG-RELATED SKILLS

CASING: The ability to check out a place, assess its security and the likely value of the crap within and come up with a decent way to get in there and get the crap without being busted.

LOCKPICKING*: Ability to open a lock without breaking it when you don't have the keys.

PICKPOCKETING*: The ability and inclination to steal directly off of people. Unless they're asleep you'll need to sneak up on them or otherwise distract them first.

SNEAKING: The ability to skulk in the shadows, creep up on folk and to be places without being spotted. Sneaking with armour on incurs a penalty: see the ARMOUR section for details.

TRAPS*: Setting and disarming simple urban traps like dart traps, spike traps and simple alarms. More complicated or magical traps are beyond your abilities.

NUTCASE-RELATED SKILLS

CANTRIPS† [prerequisites: KITSCHCRAFT. MAGICK and/or SANCTIMONY]: You've gained the ability to cast minor magical spells. You may pick three effects from the magic school in which you have a power (or six in total from any combination of the three schools if you are a NUTCASE). When you become GOOD at cantrips you may pick another 3. Any additional skills gain in CANTRIPS beyond that will not add any extra powers. See the section on MAGIC for more details.

KITSCHCRAFT*: Some knowledge of the brewing of potions and a limited ability to converse with a single class of small animals (for instance rats, mice, bats, cockroaches). Optionally comes with a familiar of the type that you can communicate with. You cannot take this skill along with Sanctimony or Magick unless you are a NUTCASE.

MAGICK*: An initial study of the wizardly and warlockly arts. Allows you to read magical scrolls and tomes and to cast magic from them. You cannot take this skill along with Sanctimony or Kitschcraft unless you are a NUTCASE.

SANCTIMONY*: A basic grasp on the catechisms and liturgy of the worship of The K-NG, the only deity tolerated in Nonce. Allows the reading of simple holy texts and to summon the attention of The K-NG through reciting the words found there. You cannot take this skill along with Kitschcraft or Magick unless you are a NUTCASE.

LOUDMOUTH-RELATED SKILLS

DISGUISE: Altering your appearance to look different than you normally do. Someone skilled at disguise has a better chance of being able to actually do this properly.

GAMBLING*: Skill with dice, cards and other games of chance, and cheating at the same. When you have this skill you can pass a HASSLE test to re-roll any one lost roll. Failing the test means you'll be found out.

HAGGLING*: Getting a better deal when buying or selling through force of personality. Generally passing a HASSLE while haggling (and wasting an hour or so) will decrease the cost of an item by 25% when buying or increase the sale price by 25% when selling, though scenarios will be more specific.

LYING: Your ability to string people along with ridiculous lies.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENT(pick one)*: The ability to play a musical instrument in a way that doesn't cause people to want to throw chairs and offal at you to get you to stop. Allows you to read sheet music and replicate the tunes found there, assuming you have the ÉLAN to do so.

SINGING*: The ability to hold a tune. Allows you to read sheet music and replicate the tunes found there, assuming you have the ÉLAN to do so.

SMALLTALK: Ingratiating yourself with folk and wheedling useful information out of them through the fine art of banal chatter.

TAUNTING: Annoying people to the point where they physically attack you. Failed taunts will usually cause the target to dislike you but won't necessarily earn you a punch on the nose. Useful for forcing enemies to attack you rather than someone else in combat, too.

DRIFTING-RELATED SKILLS:

FORAGING*: The ability to search for food in the wilderness or in caves and to avoid poisonous berries and mushrooms. In normal country this means you can pass a HASSLE check to find rations for the gang. People without this skill can try to find food in the wild but run a good chance of bringing back poisonous stuff or a bunch of twigs. This skill is very useful for anyone with KITSCHCRAFT because it makes it a lot easier to find potion ingredients.

RIDING: Doing anything much more complicated than cantering on a horse or other tame monster.

TRACKING: The skill involved in following a creature or person through the wilderness. Very handy if you want to hunt for food. Big creatures and oafs are relatively easy to track, people who know how to avoid detection and small animals are much harder.

SWIMMING: Despite the Bilge flowing through the city, not many city residents know how to swim. Probably for the best, because it's not the most hygienic dip. This skill makes it far easier to swim in deep waters and is especially useful if you want to avoid drowning while wearing armour.

ELF-ONLY SKILLS:

GRASSWATCHING*: Elfs are one with nature and the world. Grasswatchers embrace elfen philosophy and their love of nature by playing dead whenever possible like the noble possom. A skilled grasswatcher drops to the ground and stays there until danger has passed, making it unlikely that they will be attacked or targeted in a battle. A successful grasswatching test means the elf got away with their deception and can either lie there until the danger's gone, attempt to crawl away unobserved or rise up at an opportune moment to get a stab in. Unfortunately, skilled elf hunters have taken to pole-axing elf corpses after battle.

LOREWARDENING*: Elf society depends on the skilled lorewardens to preserve items of importance to elf heritage and well-being. In other words this elf has attained to the status of lorewarden by robbing battlefields even more enthusiastically than most elfs. By passing a HASSLE you can get first dibs on the loot pile after a battle - even if your side loses. The other characters will not know that you've done this unless they have the lorewardening skill themselves. If another elf takes lorewardening and wants to loot then whoever gets the highest score picks their item first, the other goes second (and on a tie they pick at the same time, which could lead to a fight). Failure of the test doesn't have any particular consequence though you'll look like you're a bit eager to get to looting.

WHIMSYFLICKERY*: An ancient and noble elf art, known only to the prick-eared pricks. There's a lot of associated woo which non-elfs wouldn't be able to understand, but essentially it involves wrenching up cobblestones and flinging them with astounding force in a single smooth movement, using only a spoon-like wooden tool called a "whimsywand" which the elf is always assumed to have on his or her person somewhere if this skill is taken. This skill covers stealing the stones and hurling them. They have a similar range to a sling or any other ranged weapon but can only be used in urban environments or when there are lots of cobblestones around.

MISCELLANEOUS (NON-PROFESSION) SKIILS:

CLIMBING: Scaling trees, walls and other vertical surfaces without falling to your death.

JUMPING: Leaping a long way without landing on anything between you and your destination.

LANCE†* [prerequisites: MOUNTED COMBAT]: The specialised skill of fighting from the saddle with a lance, giving you the ability to deliver a huge amount of damage during a charge. Very few beings can withstand this. The attack counts as winning three times against the target and you roll one die twice on the WRECKAGE table, selecting the lower of the two rolls. Although this is a combat skill Goons do not automatically receive a FIST in this ability and must select it as a SKILL as usual. Jousting is outside their pay scale.

MOUNTED COMBAT†* [prerequisites: a WEAPON skill and RIDING] The ability to fight from the saddle in any meaningful way. Replaces any bonuses you get to your WEAPON skill (for instance if you are GOOD at your weapon and only SKILLED at HORSEBACK COMBAT you only get +1 FIST and don't receive your +2 ÉLAN bonus). If you don't have this skill and you're attacked while in the saddle you fight with -2 ÉLAN and run a good chance of being thrown off your mount. Although this is a combat skill Goons do not automatically receive a FIST in this ability and must select it as a SKILL as usual.

TRAITS

There are a few traits you can take as well if SKILLS don't appeal. These can be picked up through gameplay as well, and also when you gain an EXPERIENCE level - see the section on EXPERIENCE below. You can pick no more than one TRAIT during character creation or per level. Unlike SKILLS they aren't related to PROFESSIONS and don't stack - you can't take DISCIPLINED multiple times. It's up to the DB if you can take a trait instead of a SKILL.

ARMOURMAN: Perhaps influenced by goblin styles, you never take your damn armour off. This is endlessly annoying in social situations but you insist it's a comfort thing. Reduce any penalties you get from wearing armour by 1 (see the section below) - this means that light armour costs 1 ÉLAN for some tasks and no extra EFFORT per task, and heavy armour costs 3 ÉLAN and 1 extra per task, and so on. Your character will generally try to wear their armour all the time and loses 1 FIST on all tasks while not clad in armour (to a minimum of 1 FIST). Also they get antsy and weird. You can choose to take this trait for free if you go through an entire adventure wearing a suit of armour.

ARTISTE: +1 ÉLAN for any music, writing or other artistic pursuits, but adds 1 to WRECKAGE rolls inflicted on opponents. If you spend more ENERGY on music or art than on any other thing during an adventure you gain this trait.

DISCIPLINED: Once per battle if you fail a psychological HASSLE or HICCUP you may immediately re-roll your FIST dice. All of these HASSLES and HICCUPS are also at -1 DIFFICULTY. You get awarded this trait after you've passed three psychological HASSLES in battle. This trait is the opposite of YELLOW - if you receive YELLOW it replaces DISCIPLINED.

HARD DRINKER: Treat being DRUNK as having no effect, HAMMERED as being DRUNK and BLOTTO as being HAMMERED. If you continue drinking from there you then become properly BLOTTO and from there you can pass out as normal. Warning : if you get to your new version of BLOTTO you count as having a level 2 POISON (see the section on GETTING ILL below). (you earn this trait if you survive being BLOTTO three times)

HALE AND HEARTY: Your recent exertions have made you incredibly fit! +10 maximum EFFORT and all diseases and poisons have -1 rating. (only available at character creation or at level up if you've spent at least some ENERGY on climbing, running etc during the adventure. You lose this if you become wounded more than three times or if you ever roll 8 or higher on the OLDER AND UGLIER table.

UGLY SCARS: You're the poster boy for why soldiers should wear a helmet. You've got a bunch of visible and badly-healed scars from the various beatings you've taken over the years. -2 DIFFICULTY to intimidate, scare or upset people but +2 DIFFICULTY to any checks involving friendly social interactions. (you earn this trait for being WOUNDED twice and somehow surviving - or receiving one WOUND to the face).

YELLOW: You're so quick to flee from combat that your opponents don't get a chance to hit you on the way out. If you flee from close combat you don't suffer the CONSEQUENCE, if any. However your keenness to get away makes you far less useful in combat - you get -1 ÉLAN on all psychological tests in combat. (you earn this trait after fleeing close combat three times, whether by choice or accident). This trait is the opposite of DISCIPLINED - if you receive DISCIPLINED it replaces YELLOW.

There are two routes to using magic - either you've picked the NUTCASE as a character class and are preternaturally attuned to all forms of magic at the cost of your sanity, or you've studied enough to pick up some minor skill in one school or another.

As a schlub you don't have access to the magic missiles, charms, smitings and doomsday curses which some very few skilled magic users learn over years and decades of dedicated (and expensive) private training and adventuring. Even so, you've got a powerful tool at your disposal - if you can remember how to use it under pressure. Each school has several powers which you choose from, and you can combine these any way you like to solve situations.

If you are a NUTCASE you automatically have an understanding of the three schools of basic spellcasting and can pick your powers as you wish from one, two or all of the schools and even combine their abilities. Otherwise when you pick the CANTRIP skill you must decide which school you are going to be able to cast spells in. If you have only one of the prerequisites then that's your school. If you have two or more then you must pick one, though you will still be able to use the abilities that come with the other skill(s): for instance if you have both KITSCHCRAFT and MAGICK and you decide to take your cantrips from MAGICK you will still be able to brew potions and talk to small animals.

Each school of magic and its effects are briefly discussed below but in general the process for casting a cantrip in any school is the same. A cantrip can be put together from any combination of POWERS you have access to (usually 3 if you have the SKILL and 6 if you're GOOD at it). For a cantrip to work the player must tell the DB what they intend to do based on the available powers, correctly assemble the spell and then pass a HASSLE based on the components of the spell. If any component is off - the cantrip is put together in an impossible way, or powers are missing, or the HASSLE score identified by the player is wrong or the HASSLE is failed then the spell fizzles, taking all the EFFORT used. Spells must be assembled quickly, which rewards knowledge of the spell section or pre-designing the cantrips so you can be sure they'll work. Spells will continue to have effect for as long as the caster is able to devote a reasonable amount of concentration to them, though HEX, BLESS and RUNE are designed to carry on without the caster's continued efforts and can be used to bind other cantrips to objects or people.

Steps to creating a cantrip:

First, figure out what you want to do and what POWERS you'll use to accomplish it. CANTRIPS aren't incredibly powerful - they're little more than magical tricks, though that doesn't mean they can't be useful.

Next, identify the means by which you're going to cast it. KITSCHCRAFT cantrips require the evil eye so they can be cast only if you can see the target. SANCTIMONY cantrips require a spoken prayer so you must be able to speak. MAGICK requires a gesture so won't work if your hands are bound. If you're using a combination of powers then you must be able to perform every action - for instance a spell drawn from KITSCHCRAFT and MAGICK requires you to see the target and to make an elaborate gesture. If you are unable to meet all of the requirements to cast a cantrip it will fail, taking all the EFFORT involved with it.

Once you've identified the means for casting the CANTRIP it has to be structured which means figuring out the HASSLE level required to cast it successfully.

- Casting a cantrip, any cantrip, has a base DIFFICULTY of 6.
- If the cantrip takes effect only by touch add 1 to the DIFFICULTY.
- If it's at medium range (up to 10 feet or 3 metres) then add 2.
- If it can be cast at long range (up to 50 feet/ 15 metres) then add 3.
- Add 2 DIFFICULTY per POWER involved in the CANTRIP.
- Add or subtract any other relevant modifiers to the HASSLE - for instance being drunk, wearing heavy armour or the like.
- Subtract 2 from the DIFFICULTY if you can spend an entire round unbothered, preparing the spell, or if time is not an issue. In combat you will do nothing this turn and if you're left alone the spell will activate and the HASSLE roll made when actions are resolved next turn.

Once you have this score then you tell the DB what you're doing and roll to defeat the HASSLE. Assuming your character can make the correct gestures, has assembled the spell correctly from POWERS they have, add up the correct HASSLE score and pass the HASSLE, then the DB will apply the cantrip's effects in the game. This sounds complicated but in practice it shouldn't be - you can design the cantrips in advance and clear them with the DB. Where the difficulty comes in is making up spells on the fly - you have no more than the usual amount of time to describe what you're going to do! It might help to plan while other players are taking their turns.

A final note: multiple cantrips of the same type don't stack. You can't cast SOOTHE over and over again to rid someone of a poison, nor can you cast multiple CURDLEs to blast someone with a really nasty poison. More powerful spellcasters may be capable of this kind of thing but they have better things to do than patching up boo-boos and spoiling milk, at least most of the time anyway.

SCHOOLS OF MAGIC AND POWER LIST

Anyone who has a skill in any of these three schools can understand what skeletons are saying. There's a natural affinity between magic users and the wandering dead which eases communication. For their part the skeletons are normally able to understand what people are saying.

KITSCHCRAFT

There are at least a few full-fledged witches getting around Nonce - the Sisters Weird are the most powerful of this coven - but hedge witches and wizards are common throughout the Kingdom of Palaver, brewing their potions and casting their glance into crystal balls when they're not using it to shoot someone the evil eye. KITSCHCRAFT is a kind of folksy and accessible version of the more powerful witchcraft, usually picked up by people studying from coven dropouts and traditional village healers. Someone who has taken KITSCHCRAFT as a skill can read simple potion recipes and brew potions against a HASSLE test of 12. If they succeed the potion will be OK quality. If they fail then the potion will still be created but its quality will be one lower per point it failed the test: if your roll is exactly 12 the potion will be bad, at 11 it'll be rotten, 10 toxic, 9 or less - lethal. See the section on POTIONS for more on this.

KITSCHCRAFT cantrips are cast through glowering - this means you have to be able to see the target so you can give it the evil eye. You don't need to see it particularly clearly though so night time isn't a big disadvantage, though pitch blackness makes casting KITSCHCRAFT basically impossible.

CURDLE - Causes food, drink or any other perishable thing to spoil immediately. If this stuff is consumed it inflicts a weak poison on the victim. It causes a level 1 poison though it should be obvious enough to anyone that the stuff is rotten. See the section on GETTING ILL for more details.
FILTH - Summons a loathsome creature which crawls out of the ground or a crevice near the target. If irritated it will deliver a distracting bite.

HEX - Curses a person or object with your malign influence. The next action taken by the affected person or with the targeted object is done with -1 ÉLAN and costs 1 extra EFFORT.

SLIME - A horrible sticky liquid reminiscent of bog water oozes up through the floor. If cast on dirt it may cause someone to become stuck or at least slowed (conferring a minor ÉLAN/DIFFICULTY penalty)

SNUFF - Smothers a target light source immediately. Works on anything up to the size of a torch. Might cause a bonfire or beacon to flicker but not much else.

SMOG - A cloying, greenish mist rises out of the floor, enough to flood a 10'* 10' room (about 3 metres by 3 metres) up to chest height.

SQUEAK - Communicate directly with an animal for a few minutes. Bear in mind it will have the intelligence level and priorities of that animal and it might or might not obey your commands. Knowledge of this power allows you to take a small creature (an insect, small rodent, lizard or bird) as a familiar who will accompany on your adventures. They will always follow your commands to the extent of their capabilities if you communicate to them with this spell.

STING - Flings a tiny, sharp dart at the target extremely quickly. More distracting than dangerous though a lucky hit could be temporarily blinding. Causes a sharp pain and digs in if it hits exposed skin.

SUFFER NOT - Causes the target to develop a (possibly irrational) hatred of the caster which fills them with the urge to harm them immediately, ignoring anything else that's going on.

WITHER - The victim is cursed with a taste of their mortality. Any WRECKAGE rolls taken by the victim until sunset of the next day must subtract 1.

MAGICK

Simple magic tricks drawn from the schools of Wizardry and Warlockery are dismissively called Magick, with a k (and the k is pronounced just to rub it in). Practitioners of Magick are fairly common - wizards' apprentices that drop out of training often give classes in simple parlour tricks to idiots so they can keep an inn roof over their heads, and of course some people just have an unnatural talent in the magical arts that could have been encouraged in a better world but instead have been left to lie fallow. Someone with an understanding of MAGICK can usually read basic wizard and warlock spells off of scrolls, though the scroll will disintegrate as soon as it's used whether or not it's cast successfully. MAGICK cantrips are cast through elaborate hand gestures so can't be cast by someone whose hands are bound.

FLAME - A blast of elemental fire which travels from the caster to the target. It will gradually heat things up and set stuff on fire. It's possible to maintain this spell long enough to boil a kettle of water but the target has to be completely still for the spell to keep working. It's more likely

to scare and annoy living things.

FREEZE - Create a small block or dart of ice, or cool down a target rapidly. Wasting enough EFFORT on a small body of water like a puddle or bath will eventually freeze it solid.
GOLDBRICK - An illusion spell which can be used to make an object look better or worse than it is. For instance, can make an ugly person look pretty or a ripe apple look rotten. Cannot change the type of object, just its general appearance. Watch out - most peddlers are wise to this scam and anyone with HAGGLE will realise what you're up to.

HURRY - A crappy version of HASTE that slightly hurries the target up for a couple of seconds, maybe giving them the edge in some task requiring haste. Any action taken immediately after HURRY is cast (ie in the same or the next round) costs 1 less EFFORT.

JOSTLE - A very basic telekinesis spell, this power allows the caster to rattle an otherwise unreachable object around as though it is being shaken in an earthquake for up to ten seconds. Not particularly effective on people so long as their armour or equipment is properly attached.

OPEN - Magically open or close an unlocked door or box. Can't unlock anything with a lock or more mechanically complicated than a simple latch. Useful for avoiding traps and ambushes or testing trapdoors and secret walls.

POP - Creates a large build up of air pressure in a small localised sphere a foot or so in diameter which quickly bursts outwards with a large popping sound. Like most MAGICK this spell is annoying and distracting but not particularly dangerous.

RUNE - A series of glowing enchanted runes can be magically and permanently inscribed on any object. Useful for labelling your stuff. If combined with another effect the runes will fade once that effect has been activated.

TEXT, or **TWEET** - Pass a short secret message on via telepathy. 140 characters maximum.

ZAP - A jolt of electrical force, not a lot more powerful than a large static burst though lasting a second or so rather than an instant. Very distracting and travels through metal, water and other conductors.

SANCTIMONY

The only organized religion in Bilgeton is the worship of The K-NG. Rarely a particularly zealous churchgoer may receive a Calling, other particularly talented types may have pieced together a special knowledge out of the holy texts left unattended by some careless priest. Either way practitioners of SANCTIMONY are able to read some of the simpler liturgies employed by priests, so long as they have the texts to hand. Such documents will crumble to dust as soon as they're used, whether the prayer is successful or not. SANCTIMONY works through mumbling prayers and sometimes hollering about The K-NG so can't be cast if the practitioner is silenced or unable to talk.

BLESS - Allows you to permanently infuse an object with holiness in the eyes of The K-NG. Particularly useful for making holy water and wafers which can damage demons and the undead. Also removes any minor hexes that may be in place.

BRAVERY - Fills the hearts of the affected with divine certainty about the rightness of their cause, or whatever floats their boats. Allows a failed psychological HASSLE in this turn to be re-rolled immediately at -1 DIFFICULTY (though it will take the usual commitment of EFFORT again).

CALM - A soothing spell that causes a target to temporarily drop any hostile intent towards the caster. Wild animals will wander off and intelligent creatures will have to remember why they were angry in the first place.

CONFESS - The target has a sudden urge to say whatever is currently uppermost in his or her thoughts. Lasts one or two seconds - just enough to blurt out a couple of words at most. Won't work on anyone with DISCIPLINE or who is otherwise busy or concentrating on something.

IGNITE - A holy heat that causes something flammable to spontaneously burst into flames. This works on very dry and flammable things like kindling, candle wicks and hair. Should work on alcohol too. Not long-lasting or powerful enough to cause damage to anyone but could conceivably be used to dry damp objects.

LIGHT - A holy light floods the room beaming in through any available windows or cracks in the floor, walls and ceiling, illuminating everything in the area before fading away. The flash is temporarily blinding if anyone is looking right at it when it appears.

SMACK - A weaker version of smite that channels some of the K-NG's force of character and slams it into a target person or animal, causing him or her to stop in his or her tracks, stagger backwards (losing one DIFFICULTY/ÉLAN until they regain their footing) or fall over if particularly unprepared.

SOOTHE - Gets rid of aches and pains and subtracts 1 from the level of any ongoing illnesses or poisons (can only be used once on a poison or illness). Unfortunately it also denatures alcohol, including that found in potions which renders them worthless).

TURN! - Causes a sudden, overwhelming fear of The K-NG in the target. Most small creatures will flee, humans might be distracted (and particularly scummy ones might freak out) and undead or weak demons will unaccountably find themselves turned 180 degrees though otherwise unharmed.

THE WORD - The K-NG increases the clarity of the caster's voice. Anyone who can hear the caster at all will hear the next couple of sentences he or she says very clearly as if the caster was right next to them, no matter the noise level.

A FEW CANTRIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

KNOCK - *components: JOSTLE+OPEN, means: gesture, range: touch, DIFFICULTY: 11*. Touch the lock mechanism on a door or chest and this CANTRIP will spring the lock and swing the door open. This works because OPEN puts pressure on the door and latch while JOSTLE rustles the pins in the lock. Will only work on cheap or old locks - expensive locks are beyond the capabilities of this spell.

SCORPION - *components: FILTH+STING. means: sight, range: 50'. DIFFICULTY: 13*. This spell summons a scorpion in a location you specify within 50'. Any people who are surprised by the sight of a scorpion digging out of the floor are likely to freak out and earn a painful sting.

FIRE RUNES - *components: FLAME, RUNE. means: gesture, range: touch, DIFFICULTY: 11.* Touch a weapon and cast this spell to inscribe flame runes on that weapon. Next time this weapon hits anything the runes will be activated and the weapon will becomes blazing hot, causing extra heat damage. Subtract 1 from the WRECKAGE roll if this attack defeats an enemy.

TWITTER - *components: TEXT, SUFFER NOT, means: gesture and sight, range: 10', DIFFICULTY: 12.* This cantrip sends a brief, smug and extremely aggravating message to anyone within range, filling the recipients with the irrational urge to seek out and kill the sender.

HOLY TERROR - *components: LIGHT, TURN!, means: spoken, range: 10', DIFFICULTY: 12.* The room floods with a holy light and all within become briefly affeared of the K-NG, if they aren't already. Any cowardly enemy (for instance faeries or dwarfs) may try to make a break for it if they don't pass a psychological HICCUP.

POISON CLOUD - *components: SMOG, CURDLE, means: sight, range: 10', DIFFICULTY: 12.* A poisonous smog fills the room. Any food or drink within the room rots instantly and everyone who breathes in the smog becomes slightly poisoned as per the effect of CURDLE.

FIERY SERMON - *components: IGNITE, THE WORD, means: speech, range: 50', DIFFICULTY: 13.* The caster rants and raves about the glory of the K-NG and the burning hell awaiting for anyone who doesn't embrace the true faith. Anyone within earshot hears the words as clear as day and some of the sinners start to feel their scalps heating up - and a few of their heads start smouldering as their hair starts burning!

FIREWORKS - c*omponents: POP, FLAME, means: gesture, range: 50', DIFFICULTY: 13.* The mage explodes a firework high in the air, flinging embers and flames everywhere overhead and delighting small children.

DRAGON - *components: POP, FLAME, GOLDBRICK means: gesture, range: 50', DIFFICULTY: 15.* The caster creates fireworks which take on the shape of an immense glowing dragon, which the caster guides through the sky, delighting small children even more than regular old fireworks.

As you can see most CANTRIPS are more useful for their non-combat effects and aren't incredibly powerful as attacks, though they can be very irritating or distracting. They are particularly handy in schemes involving other players - for instance a Kitsch could cast SUFFER NOT on a guard, and as the guard charges forward to kill the caster another player who had hidden themselves around the corner could leap out and crack him over the back of the head with a chair leg. Be sure you clear any cantrips you invent with the DB or be prepared for them not to work as expected!

Fussing and Feuding

Fighting is pretty abstracted in this game. The characters and often the enemies aren't all that tough, good at fighting or even all that brave. As a result winning a round of combat doesn't necessarily, or even probably, result in hurting or killing anything.

There are two ways of resolving combat - in the traditional way, where you are given the enemy's statistics and defeat them using HASSLE tests (see the section on HASSLES). Every round of combat represents a pile of hacks, slashes, guards, taunts, kicks and shoving lasting thirty seconds or so at the most. Winning or losing this kind of combat doesn't automatically mean you've killed the enemy. They must roll on the WRECKAGE table (see below) to find out what happens to them, and then the DB interprets this into the adventure in the most interesting and probable way. Though you won't always get injured fighting in this way, you're eventually going to run into something dangerous, or something you can't kill.

The other way of resolving combat is the more strategic way of breaking the battle down into a bunch of discrete actions. If faced with a knight errant (a deadly opponent for any gang), for instance, a player might cast SLIME under his feet and another might pelt him with arrows while a third creeps up behind him and crouches down, making a HASSLE test against SNEAK to see if she gets away with it. Assuming she passes then in the next round the knight struggles free of the slime underfoot, ready to close in on his assailants but this time the spellcaster casts SMACK, striking the knight and causing him to stumble backwards over the crouching player, clattering to the ground noisily...

In a straight-up fight, every round is a HASSLE and saps ENERGY. Fighting is exhausting and even winning can leave a character limping away, unable to get a lot done for a day or two. For the more strategic approach the DB must decide if a particular action is a HASSLE or a HICCUP and inform the players accordingly. It's important to take the situation into account - whereas sneaking isn't ordinarily all that exhausting, in the example above the stress and danger involved in the situation and the consequences of getting caught place a strong strain on the character and so it should be treated as a HASSLE. One of the main challenges in this game for the DB is to identify when situations are HASSLES and when they're HICCUPS consistently and to be able to explain to the players why that is the case in a way that adds to the story. Remember that players should always be able to pull out of a HASSLE before attempting it without consequence so long as they have some other course of action in mind.

It's important to note the all actions in a fight happen simultaneously, so from the player's point of view it's not terribly important who initiates an attack. Unless a fight is ended by one side or the other being defeated it will continue into the next round.

Rounds

A round in combat is twenty or thirty seconds - enough time to move position, fire a couple of shots from a ranged weapon, fire and reload a crossbow, chuck a spear, get a spell off, sheath or shoulder a weapon and draw another, fossick around in your backpack for an item and possibly use it, hit someone a couple of times or call someone a prick in a particularly flowery manner. There's no reason to be too strict about round lengths - ideally each character has time to move a reasonable distance, try an action or make an attack each round. The scenario will give considerations and ideas of events that could happen during the combat but it's best not to get too hung

up on mechanics at this level of abstraction. The loss of EFFORT involved in straight combat - while sometimes necessary- is very punishing, so players should attempt and be rewarded for attempting creative solutions.

While a battle between duelling heroes or armoured battle-lines can drag on all day, the players are more likely to find themselves in cheap and nasty brawls and knife fights. Just like in real life these battles are usually short, brutal affairs.

STABBING

Once in melee range with an enemy very little remains to be done aside from repeated HASSLE checks until someone is beaten (the player is reduced to 0 EFFORT or the enemy to 0 toughness) or the player surrenders or because they fail a psychological test. Unless the scenario or DB says otherwise, once the battle is resolved you must roll on the WRECKAGE table for the defeated party to see what the outcome of the battle was. See the section on WRECK AND RUIN for more about this.

There are a few modifiers to the enemy's DIFFICULTY which can be applied in certain circumstances at the DB's discretion. They are as follows:

- If you attack from above, like on a staircase or incline: -1 DIFFICULTY in the first round only
- If you attack from behind: -2 DIFFICULTY in the first round only
- The opposites apply as well:
- If you're attacked from above: +1 DIFFICULTY in the first round only
- If you're attacked from behind: +2 DIFFICULTY in the first round.

The DB is free to use these or not, or modify them as needed.

Most importantly of all, if your opponent is armed and you're not, the fight is at +4 DIFFICULTY. If you're armed and they're not then it's at -4 DIFFICULTY. For the purposes of melee combat, ranged weapons like rocks, whimsyflickers, slings and bows don't count as being armed though hatchets, javelins and other throwing weapons do. If you're attacked it's assumed your character draws whatever pigsticker they're equipped with and fights back.

Some particularly nasty enemies can force a roll on the WRECKAGE table each time they win a round so be careful. Either side being WOUNDED, MAULED or KILLED ends the battle immediately and usually triggers a psychological HASSLE for all player characters if it's one of their gang being pulped (see the bit on PSYCHOLOGY below). Most characters will be incapable of ever scaling these heights of deadliness but see the section on WIZARDS AND WARRIORS for more on this.

MULTIPLE COMBAT

If one character is fighting more than one enemy at a time, pick the foe you want to attack and follow the normal steps for close combat. The main difference is that the outnumbered party must re-roll any FIST dice which scored 4 or higher, and the second roll stands. While this will ordinarily be a disadvantage it may sometimes lead to a higher score - this represents the possi bility that enemies stumble over each other while trying to get at you.

If you defeat the targeted opponent you deduct one point of its TOUGHNESS as usual, if you fail to overcome it you take the consequences as usual. However with the remaining enemies you determine each of their scores and compare these to the total you scored against the first opponent. If your score is higher then nothing happens - you do not remove a point of TOUGHNESS from the extra enemies. If lower then you suffer whatever the CONSEQUENCES are for each enemy that you have an equal or lower score than.

Buggering Off

It's hard to get out of combat once you're stuck in it but if you absolutely have to be somewhere else then you can break away. To do this instead of fighting in a round you have to declare that you're nicking off. You then roll to fight as normal but if you win you don't inflict a hit, you turn your back and run. You automatically take the CONSEQUENCE, if any - and assuming you're still running you must take an immediate psychological HICCUP. If you pass that then you're in the clear a fair distance from your opponent and with your back to them: you can act as normal in the next turn, if you fail then panic and momentum overcome you and your only concern is getting the hell out of there. Should this happen, everyone else will have to take a psychological test or start fleeing as well! See the PSYCHOLOGY section below for more on this. Bear in mind that if you flee an opponent that's faster than you and there's nothing stopping them running you down then they are very likely to do that.

In short it's a really bad and dangerous idea to get into a battle you don't think you can win so try not to do that. Of course you can bugger off at any time during battle that you're not engaged directly in combat - just tell the DB that you're making a break for it. You might still get shot at by anything that can see you on the way out but it's safer than sticking around to get slaughtered like the other idiots in the gang.

Getting Shot At

Ranged weapons like bows, crossbows, slings, whimsyflickers and thrown weapons work slightly differently from melee weapons mainly because they don't give the opponent a chance to hit back. All fired weapons (so bows, slings and flickers) have a maximum range of 100' (about 30 metres). The reason for this is that ranged weapons of the period, though powerful and able to fire a lot further, were not designed for accuracy at range but rather to be fired rapidly in volleys into masses of enemies. Most hunting with bows was done at ranges of less than 100'.
Thrown weapons like big rocks, throwing axes, knives and javelins have a far shorter range - the maximum range is 30' or 10 metres.

To hit someone with a ranged weapon it's a HASSLE vs. their DIFFICULTY and FISTS as usual. This round of combat represents the shooter taking as many aimed shots as they can while the defender rushes for cover. Assuming they're not hit the defender will have scrambled behind some sort of cover if any is available nearby. Someone in cover can't be shot at by archers until they emerge or are flushed out somehow. Shooting at more than half of the maximum range (50'/15 metres for bows and slings) is +1 DIFFICULTY (or -1 if you're the one being fired upon at long range). Thrown weapons do not suffer this penalty: they're accurate to their full range.

Most archers are responsible enough not to fire into combat or anywhere near where their allies will be, but they can if they're completely horrible and negligent beings. Generally non-player characters shouldn't do this and if they do the scenario will detail the scene, but the rule is included in case players want to display lax ranged weapon safety.

Firstly, the attacker announces they're shooting into a particular melee combat and announces how much EFFORT they're putting into it. The round of combat is then resolved as usual but a record is made of the EFFORT + FIST scores of the combatants. The shooter then rolls his or her FIST dice and adds the highest of these to the amount of EFFORT he or she put aside. Then this score is compared to those of the combatants - the shooter has hit anyone in the combat that his or her score exceeds.

Ammunition isn't taken into account in this game for bows, slings and crossbows - you're assumed to have enough ammo to hand unless there's some reason in particular not to (gambled away your quiver, etc). Thrown weapons are finite and, unless recovered after the battle, are gone once thrown. Whimsyflickers are considered to have infinite ammo so long as a supply of cobblestones or flagstones are at hand - generally a given on main roads or in large towns.

Although not every ranged attack is automatically a direct hit, ranged weapons are particularly dangerous. The speed and weight of the projectiles can often even punch right through armour. All ranged weapon attacks have the CONSEQUENCE of a roll on the WRECKAGE table and 1 is subtracted from the score. Any hit from a ranged weapon that doesn't cause a wound also causes a psychological HICCUP (see PSYCHOLOGY below).

Someone with a crossbow must take a whole round to reload and cannot move or take any other action in that round. They also don't benefit from any cover they need to crouch behind while reloading since they have to stand up to do it. However these fearsome weapons ignore the effect of shields and treat ARMOUR as being a category lower than it actually is - plate is treated as heavy, heavy as light and light armour as unarmoured (see the section below).

The even more fearsome and rare arquebus takes two entire rounds to reload without any other action, and also must be done standing. It fires with +1 DIFFICULTY to reflect its inaccuracy, however it complete ignores all armour, treating even a knight as unarmoured. Anyone who is shot at by an arquebus must immediately take a HICCUP regardless of whether they are struck due to the horrifying noise of this doomsday device. The arquebus deducts 2 from the WRECKAGE roll instead of 1 should it hit.

ARMOUR

Armour is fairly uncommon among the denizens of Nonce. It's expensive to make, restrictive to wear, difficult to maintain and, given the huge variations in shapes and sizes of people wandering around, it's hard to find something off the rack that'll fit. More importantly, most people don't spend a lot of time fighting and so have no use for the stuff - and even those that do fight as a profession often prefer to be unencumbered. Light armour is the preserve of guards and the richer soldiers heading off to battle, whereas a full suit of plate is beyond the means of all but the richest merchants and noble houses.

Still, a suit of armour is useful for keeping you alive and lots of adventurers pick up at least enough scraps of maille and padding to count as wearing a suit of light armour. Some even come across full harnesses of plate in their roaming, and sometimes these even fit. Usually characters will buy or find entire suits of armour at a time and it'll be clear what kind of armour they're dealing with.

A person is considered to be wearing a suit of light armour if they're mostly or entirely covered in some combination of padded cloth or cured leather, maybe with a short-sleeved maille shirt or the like. Some suits of light armour include breastplates, metal gorgets, gauntlets and other

bits of metal sewn on though the majority is still light armour. They must be wearing a hood or helmet as well. If the player is only partially armoured - for instance, wearing a metal helmet - they may get some damage reductions or bonuses if hit in that location depending on the item description but will not count as being armoured. A person wearing light armour adds 1 to any WRECKAGE rolls they're forced to take but all cantrips, sneaking, climbing or other dexterity- or endurance-related tasks suffer a penalty of -1 ÉLAN and all HASSLES cost 1 extra EFFORT (applied before all other modifiers).

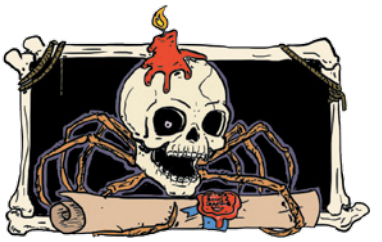
A character is in heavy armour if wearing at least a maille hauberk with heavy boots, and gloves, usually with a gorget, breastplate or other bits of metal to protect vital areas. They will normally be wearing light armour underneath as well (maille is murder on the skin). If putting the armour together piecemeal, as long as the character is completely covered by light armour and has on top of that at least a mail hauberk or equivalent and helmet (covering head, arms, torso, groin and upper legs) they will count as wearing heavy armour. A person wearing heavy armour adds 2 to any WRECKAGE rolls they're forced to take but all cantrips, sneaking, climbing or other dexterity- or endurance-related tasks suffer a penalty of -2 ÉLAN and all HASSLES cost 2 extra EFFORT (applied before all other modifiers).

A character is in plate armour if wearing a full plate harness. Plate armour can be bought off the rack or custom built but will always be a complete set, including the helmet. Anyone wearing full plate will be completely immune to wreckage rolls from battle and many other sources of damage though not from falling or attacks that bypass armour. An enemy in plate is nearly impossible to defeat through direct combat and like the players would be immune to wreckage rolls if they are defeated in a straight battle. Someone in plate must be helped into their armour by a volunteer (usually the poor bastard who also has to carry it when it's not being worn, a significant endurance HASSLE - roughly 12 - every day). While worn all cantrips, sneaking, climbing and other dexterity- or endurance-related tasks suffer a penalty of -3 ÉLAN and all HASSLES cost 3 extra EFFORT (applied before all other modifiers).

Please note that you can't really sleep in armour - if you attempt to sleep in light or heavy armour you regain 5 less EFFORT from rest. If you try to sleep in plate armour you get none at all. Take this stuff off before you go to bed.

A final note on armour - it comes in fixed sizes. While an average-sized human might have little difficulty buying a harness of plate off the rack, the squat dwarfs and lanky elfs are going to have trouble in Bilgeton. If a store has only one maille hauberk in stock it's not going to fit everyone in the gang! However skeletons, being used to their gear not fitting, can wear armour made for any roughly human-sized species without penalty.

While armour might appear to cause a significant disadvantage in the low-stakes fighting you're likely to encounter most of the time, it's useful when the stakes suddenly increase. The more serious and heavily-armed enemies are capable of causing a WRECKAGE roll every time they hit you, which can turn you into a pile of mincemeat pretty fast if you tangle with them without a bunch of metal between you and their swords and sorceries.



SHIELDS

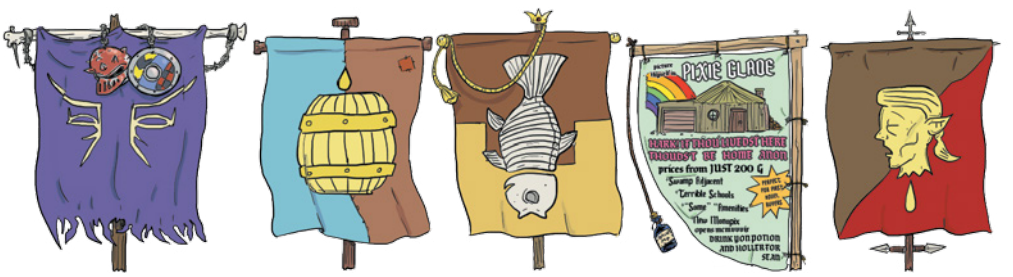
Shields are very uncommon among Bilgetonians mainly because of their weight and the hassle of carrying them around when you're not immediately going to be attacked. They're also awkward when trying to squeeze through the narrow passages that comprise most of the town's streets and alleyways. Still, some particularly paranoid or knightly types might want to lug them around. They come in two flavours - small and large.
Small shields are similar to bucklers. They don't weigh much, are pretty easy to attach to a belt or stuff in a bag, and they're used in combination with a hand weapon mostly for duelling. Unfortunately duelling is very illegal in Bilgeton unless you're a noble or at least rich, so it's hard to find anyone willing to sell these things and if you get caught with one you're usually going to wind up in the stocks. They don't have a lot of protective value but they don't cramp your style much either: a small shield will prevent you from suffering the CONSEQUENCE of losing a round of combat if you scored equal to the DIFFICULTY (but not less than it) but each time you spend EFFORT while the thing is equipped it costs 1 extra EFFORT due to its weight making things awkward.

For instance say you're fighting a DRUNK ORC, DIFFICULTY: 9, CONSEQUENCE: WRECKAGE(2). You assign 6 EFFORT and get a 3 from your FIST rolls. Usually this would earn you a punch on the nose and possibly a trip to the floor but you have a buckler equipped, which allows you to count this one as a draw. You lose the 6 ENERGY assigned plus 1 extra for having a buckler, but you avoid having to roll two dice on the WRECKAGE table (see below).

This ability also works if you're defending against ranged attacks. Finally, you can use thrown weapons or a sling with a buckler but bows, crossbows and whimsyflickers are out of the question.

Big shields are those huge slabs of wood and metal knights and guardsmen carry around. They offer fantastic protection against attacks but are pretty exhausting to use. They're also conspicuous and are completely worthless in enclosed spaces, and probably more trouble than they're worth most other times too. As long as you're facing the direction of the attack you can count any result that winds up within 4 of the DIFFICULTY as a draw - you do not damage your opponent but you don't take any damage either. Unfortunately you lose 1 FIST while you have the shield equipped (there's a shield in that fist!), and every time you spend EFFORT it costs 2 extra EFFORT.

Finally, enemies with spears, pole-arms and other long weapons sometimes get a free shot at you while you close in for combat, depending on the scenario and the DB. The large shield negates this bonus so they have to fight you normally from the first round. You cannot use any ranged weapon at all with a big shield (guardsmen might possibly have a pavise and crossbow but that kind of specialised gear is not in the adventuring kit of a Bilgeton scumwad).



PSYCHOLOGY

A shared love of money isn't the kind of glue that sticks a group of people together when they get in hot water. Adventurers tend to be pretty how's it going about their affiliation to their fellow gang members and can't always be counted on to risk their necks when their erstwhile buddies are in trouble. In short, being an undisciplined mob of opportunists, gangs are prone to fleeing in the face of danger.

Psychology tests come in two flavours - HICCUPS and HASSLES, depending on how badly the tide is turning against the gang. The base DIFFICULTY for any psychology test is the highest DIFFICULTY of all of your opponents plus 2.

So if you're up against a GOBLIN MAN (DIFFICULTY 6) and 3 GOBLIN MANCHILDREN (DIFFICULTY 4), the HASSLE level for any psychology tests is 8. If the GOBLIN MAN goes down then the psychological HASSLE level drops to 6. The HASSLE level is increased by 1 for each fled or wounded gang member and by 2 for each killed member.

There are several times in battle when you might have to face a psychology test. These are done as normal - HICCUPS are relatively minor freak-outs which are taken at maximum ÉLAN and don't cost EFFORT. HASSLES are serious terrors that sap your courage and need to be fought back before they overwhelm you. They may be deliberately failed by opting not to spend any EFFORT on fighting them - you give in to your fears and run for it.

A failed HICCUP is always followed immediately by a HASSLE at the same level. If a psychological HICCUP is failed in a battle all further HICCUPS in that battle must be treated as HASSLES. Psychological HICCUPS and HASSLES in combat are considered combat-related so Goons get +1 FIST on them.

You take a HICCUP whenever:
- One of your gang flees from battle.
- You're outnumbered in close combat (directly in battle only, and only taken once so long as enemy reinforcements don't arrive - take the test again in any round where more enemies join in).
- You get hit but not wounded by a ranged attack.
- You get shot at by an arquebus, a catapault or some other heavy or exotic weapon.

You take a HASSLE whenever:
- A gang member is wounded.
- A gang member is killed - this is taken with a +2 modifier to the DIFFICULTY.
- Any more members of your gang flee after the first.
- You attack or are attacked by an overwhelmingly dangerous opponent (for instance an armoured knight, a manticore, a great daemon, etc - the bestiary and scenarios will detail this). This effect only happens once per battle - if you pass you have conquered your fears for now.
- If you're already outnumbered in combat, each time a new enemy joins the fight.

You can only ever take one HASSLE roll per round. If you pass the first one you will pass any other that round. You can take multiple HICCUPS per round.

If you fail the HASSLE then you flee in the general direction of safety. If you're in close combat you must immediately take the CONSEQUENCE of losing a round of combat to the thing you're fighting. If you're not in close combat you may be a target for any enemy with a ranged

attack, and bear in mind that your opponents might pursue you if they're faster than you or particularly bloodthirsty.
Assuming you survive that you'll keep running in a blind panic! The DB will inform you of where you washed up after the rest of the battle is resolved. If you're an elf with the Grasswatching skill then you can at any point play dead by passing a HASSLE test against the DIFFICULTY of the best of the pursuers - if the grasswatcher's score is higher they should stay unnoticed.

Under most circumstances it's not possible to recover from a failed psychological HASSLE until you've cleared the danger zone. Anyone who is panicking and can't escape will automatically be defeated with the consequences stated in the scenario or devised by the DB.

Wreck and Ruin

Unlike the clash of disciplined armies or battles between duelling rivals, fights in this game aren't usually to the death. A beaten opponent may have lost his bottle and scampered off, taken a bit of a kicking but lived to fight another day or just be knocked out cold to recover a bit later. They can also be seriously wounded, horribly maimed or even killed, even if that wasn't the intention.

In this game you and your gang don't want to just roam around killing people - murder is frowned upon by the Bilgeton town guard. Elfs, pixies and other assorted crap are fair game from a legal standpoint though even they resent people killing their friends and may come after you. In general it's best to stay out of scuffles but if that's not possible then most of the time you should avoid butchering your enemies if you want to stay away from the gallows.

If you win a combat against anyone (i.e. reduce an enemy's toughness to zero through fisticuffs, hacking and slashing, shooting or sorcery) you must roll on the WRECKAGE TABLE to see what happened to them. Under most circumstances you roll 2 dice but if you are fighting using a weapon in which you have any skill then it's 1 die. If you are GOOD with a weapon you can pull your punches if you want but you have a penalty of 2 ÉLAN. This will allow you to roll 2 dice on the WRECKAGE TABLE. You must do this throughout the whole fight - if you use your full ÉLAN at any point in the fight then you must roll only 1 die as normal.

Some enemies will inflict WRECKAGE rolls on your characters - archers, very tough foes, monsters and so on can hurt you as a CONSEQUENCE or if you are defeated by them. You can also be forced to take WRECKAGE rolls due to falling into traps, tumbling drunkenly down staircases or drinking unlabelled potions. The scenario and Bestiary has more information on most of these dangers.

Wreckage Table

1-2: ***KILLED***. The victim is slain, or maimed so badly that he or she won't survive for much longer.
3-4: ***WOUNDED***. The victim receives a horrible and potentially life-threatening injury.
5+ : ***A WHUPPING***. The victim is beaten, thrashed, knocked out or chased off. While they may be scuffed, bloody and missing a few teeth they'll live to fight on. If the player characters win the HASSLE is dispersed, one way or another, though depending on what the DB has the beaten party do the gang can go looking for more trouble. If one of the player characters receive a whupping they'll be feeling it for a few days. If it's part of a combat where the enemy causes wreckage rolls they can carry on as usual. If they receive a wreckage roll after being laid out in a fight then they're usually knocked out cold or forced to flee.

There are a few modifiers to the wreckage table. Armour increases the roll - heavy armour in particular with the +2 modifier to the roll makes it nearly impossible to even be wounded by the kind of bar brawling simulated by this game, though ranged attacks, heavier weapons, powerful spells and some monsters can stab, chop, zap and chew their way through even the thickest plate.

Being killed is self-explanatory. You're dead or so close to dead as to make little difference. Given the limited medical technology of the setting anything that cuts you from shoulder to crotch or dents your skull is probably going to destroy you. Skeletons are pulverised to the point where recovery is impossible - they literally give up the ghost. Their EFFORT is instantly reduced to 0. See the section on ZERO EFFORT for more info on this sad occurrence.

Wounds are very serious, representing very large and life-altering injuries and usually affecting multiple parts of the body. Anyone who is wounded is immediately out of the battle - they're dropped to the ground bleeding and must be rescued. If they're lucky their fellow gang members will save them by defeating their enemies, or the victorious enemies will spare them and move on. Once rescued the wounded person isn't capable of much except lying down, crawling and maybe limping until he or she's bandaged up. This can be done when the party makes camp. Once patched up he or she suffers -20 maximum ENERGY, -2 ÉLAN and has at most 1 FIST. They may only use one-handed weapons and can't carry a shield, and any additional WRECKAGE rolls subtract 2 from the roll.

The healing process for a wound is quite long, although healing potions and skilled doctors can speed it up. Once bandaged up roll one die - this is how many weeks it will take to get back to relatively normal. In most cases this is far longer than an adventure will run, but it's useful to know in case other adventures take place in the near future. As soon as the healing period is elapsed all of the negative effects while healing are removed and replaced with -1 and -10 maximum and current ÉLAN and EFFORT respectively, plus an immediate roll on the OLDER AND UGLIER table.

Skeletons can be wounded, their bones pulverised to the point of uselessness. They don't need to be bandaged (though they may be patched up with twigs and strips of metal) and the length of time it takes to heal represents the length of time it'll take their union to find replacement bones for them plus their sick leave entitlement.

While the location and effect of injuries has been deliberately generalised, the DB can feel free to impose special injuries based on the type of weapon used and the likely location it hit. A spear for instance is very likely to inflict a gut wound which might count as -1 ÉLAN and a permanent level 1 ILLNESS until healed.

The first time you receive a wound you gain an EXPERIENCE POINT (see ARE YOU EXPERIENCED, below).

ZERO EFFORT

EFFORT represents the will of the character to carry on and to put up with the scratches, bruises, inconveniences and annoyances of adventuring life. Once a character's EFFORT reaches 0 their quest has come to an end - they caught an axe blade with their face, they're too tired and hurt to go on, or they've just given up and gone home. Whichever way it goes the character's done and will never adventure again though he or she can potentially appear as a non-player character in future quests. The player however will need to roll up a new character who's a little keener to make a bit of coin adventuring.

If possible and the player's up for it the DB should try to bring the new character into the ongoing game in some capacity. Since characters are fragile and sometimes disposable, especially at the lower levels of experience, players may find it worthwhile to have a few characters rolled up and ready to go in case their main guy bites it.

RECOVERY

Recovery of lost EFFORT is quite slow in this game and therefore it's worth trying to keep your exposure to HASSLES minimal.

A good meal and a sit down, taking an hour or so, will restore about 10 EFFORT. A rushed meal with cold or lousy food eaten standing up will restore 5 EFFORT. A lavish meal will restore 15 EFFORT. You can only regain EFFORT from food at most twice a day.
A full night's sleep will usually restore 15 EFFORT. A broken or uncomfortable sleep, for instance in the rain or in a cold place, 10 EFFORT. A long sleep on a luxurious bed, 20 EFFORT. You can only regain EFFORT in this way once a day.

So long as the gang has sufficient rations available and a reasonably safe place to park up they'll gain about 30 EFFORT each a day, though in practice they may be too busy too eat or the adventure will take less than an entire day. Therefore be careful about overcommitting EFFORT early on in the adventure because it takes a while to recover from extreme exertions!

It's possible for anyone with SINGING, MUSICAL INSTRUMENT or any other entertainment-related skill to greatly increase the amount of EFFORT other gang members gain from their evening rest by playing for their gang - they may set a HASSLE at any level and the rest of the gang may add that amount of EFFORT. This HASSLE is removed from the musician's EFFORT in the morning AFTER they've recovered EFFORT from sleep. The minimum amount of EFFORT this will cost is 5, even if the HASSLE is set lower.

GETTING ILL

Poisons and illness all have a rating that indicates their severity. While the illness or poison is in effect you lose that much ÉLAN and 10 times as much EFFORT. Every action that costs you EFFORT costs an additional amount equal to the illness or poison's rating. The next day you subtract 1 from the rating as the illness or poison subsides. ÉLAN loses aren't cumulative - each day you regain 1 ÉLAN until you're all better. EFFORT losses are cumulative and steep so it's best not to over-exert yourself if you're unwell. Dangerously, while you suffer from any level of poisoning or illness, EFFORT recovery is halved.

Some of the nastier illnesses and poisons have additional effects which must be applied alongside their rating penalties.

Skeletons don't suffer from poisons and illnesses at all despite the generous sick leave provisions secured by the Skeleton Workers Union.

Getting Drunk

There are a few levels of drunkenness in Sword of the Bastard Elf: DRUNK, HAMMERED and BLOTTO. Each one is more drunk than the last.
When you're DRUNK you suffer a penalty of -2 ÉLAN but get +1 FIST. Previously stupid ideas begin to seem like good ones, including the idea of getting another drink. Player characters should act drunk - whatever the player wants to do the DB should filter it through beer googles. At this point you're visibly drunk.
If you continue drinking you'll become HAMMERED which retains the penalty of -2 ÉLAN and you lose the free FIST. At this point speech is very slurred, you're staggering around and the guards might nab you if they see you.
If you carry on you become BLOTTO which is -2 ÉLAN and -1 FIST.

If you're already DRUNK and you do something else that gets you DRUNK, for instance drinking a potion, you'll immediately progress to HAMMERED. Likewise if you continue to drink while HAMMERED you'll become BLOTTO.

The effects of drunkenness last until you knock off the drinking, dropping by one level per 3 hours or so. If you get a night's sleep all effects of alcohol wear off. You will probably have an abominable hangover the next day though.

Note that although Skeletons can't physically get drunk they appear to get spiritually drunk somehow, even though most of the booze they drink just goes straight onto the floor. Warlocks have been scratching their heads over this behaviour for years. Some think that the wandering spirits that have been bound into the skeletons remember the sensation of tying one on and act accordingly whenever they're around booze, but the most commonly accepted theory is that skeletons are just huge posers. In any case they're affected by alcohol like their meatier gang buddies and they can even get drunk off potions, though they don't suffer the wracking hallucinations and risk of poisoning.

Quaffing Potions

Potions made in Nonce very rarely do what they say on the label, if they have a label to begin with. Products of a completely unregulated industry, just about the only thing potions have in common is that all made by steeping gross and sometimes unwholesome things in strong alcohol. Most people avoid them except in the worst emergencies - the side-effects can be lethal if, say, a dwarf with gout drinks a potion made for an elf with constipation. Potion-making is a pretty opaque process and it's impossible to identify what a potion does by looking at it.

Potions are usually sealed into small bottles and have to be drunk in their entirety to get any effect. Most commonly they're poured into the milk bottles which are ubiquitous around Nonce. Larger bottles may hold more than one dose but will spoil quickly - if not shared and consumed immediately leftovers will denature and just taste disgusting.

The scenarios will usually detail what kind of potion is found and what its effects should be, but the players will not necessarily be aware of what they've picked up. The DB should make sure they know who has what potion. Each potion will have an effect, a species it's for and whether its quality is lethal, toxic, rotten, bad, OK or good. Some potions also have one or more side effects.

A potion will always get you DRUNK, increasing your drunkenness level by 1 instantly. For instance if you're sober you become DRUNK, if DRUNK you become HAMMERED, and so on. See GETTING DRUNK above.

If the potion is not made for your species then roll on the WRECKAGE table with two dice. Assuming you survive you check to see its quality - if the potion is lethal you receive a level 5 poison(!), if toxic you get a level 4 poison, rotten a level 3 poison, bad a level 2 poison, OK a level 1 poison and if good then no further damage (see GETTING ILL above). Almost all potions will range from bad to good, rotten or worse ones tend to fizz, ooze or bubble ominously.

At this point assuming you're not dead you get the effects and the side effect!

An example potion would be a Potion of Health. Effects: heals 2 weeks worth of wound overnight, given a full night's rest. Side effects: lose 20 EFFORT and suffer mild paranoia for one whole day (see the INSANITY section for details). Quality: OK.

A human with a wound who drank that would get DRUNK. They'd receive a level 1 POISON, immediately lowering the character's EFFORT by 10. They'd become paranoid for the next day and if they had a wound with 2 or weeks left of healing time it would heal while they were resting overnight.

An elf who drank it would get the same effects but would have to roll on the WRECKAGE table.

Skeletons can't make use of potions and don't suffer any negative effects but will still get DRUNK for reasons that still baffle spellcasters.

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED

Though characters are supposed to be fairly disposable, should one survive an adventure or two they'll get better at what they're doing to the point where they'll start putting on swaggering airs and holding out for more cash.

All players begin the game at level 1 and gain a level of experience every time they earn 5 experience points. The DB's in charge of parcelling these out but here's a list of things that grant an EXPERIENCE POINTS:

Surviving one adventure from beginning to end, regardless of how you did it
Fulfilling or at least trying hard to fulfil your species objective in an adventure
Most Valuable Player - optionally the DB can award an extra experience point to the star player(s) of the adventure if they went above and beyond the call of duty to make the game a good time.

Beyond that EXPERIENCE POINTS are given for firsts - the first time the character has done a particular, relatively major thing. You will typically get an experience point the first time your character:

- Leaves Bilgeton
- Goes into combat
- Wins a combat
- Sees someone wounded
- Wounds someone (or helps wound someone)
- Casts a spell in anger
- Pickpocketing an awake person
- Sneaking up on someone who wants to kill you
- Winning a bar fight
- Survives a wound
- Sees someone killed
- Kills someone (or helps kill someone)
- Survives an encounter with a huge monster
- Slays a dangerous monster
- Commits a serious crime
- Drinks an unlabelled potion
- Survives poisoning
- Survives an illness
- Summons a greater demon

And so on. If it seems like a significant occurrence then the characters should earn some experience. Scenarios should usually indicate when the characters gain an EXPERIENCE POINT.

A list of EXPERIENCE POINTS awarded and the reasons should be kept by the player on the back of their Residency Scroll. Over time it'll get harder and harder to find reasons to award experience as certain activities become routine - this is as intended. The player will either have to work to expand their character's activities or become content in their rut.

You can forfeit experience during an adventure by playing out of character or being a complete jerkoff. The DB should warn you if you're doing something that will cost you an EXPERIENCE POINT. Examples of this kind of behaviour include skeletons talking to people, dwarfs yelling war-cries and charging bravely into battle, humans behaving outrageously charitably and so on.

If you wander off mid-adventure the DB can run your character or palm it off onto someone who's sitting around doing nothing. It'll probably get mashed into a paste before you get it back.

LEVELLING UP

Once you have 5 EXPERIENCE POINTS you have seen and learned enough to become a better, more rounded person. You immediately gain 5 maximum and current EFFORT and may - if you want - pick one new SKILL immediately should you choose. This SKILL must have been successfully used during the adventure up to this point - so if you pick LOCKPICKING you must have made an honest attempt to pick a lock (i.e. using some EFFORT in a HASSLE, not just throwing a test or whatever). You can also pick any SKILL that your character spent time studying during the adventure at the DB's say so - for instance if you watch one of your goon buddies fighting with an axe during a battle instead of fighting yourself, you could potentially take that as a SKILL. You can improve SKILLS you already have in this way to become GOOD at them or adding extra ÉLAN, etc.

The rest of the points (1 if you picked a SKILL and 2 if not) are spent AFTER the adventure. It takes two weeks to learn a new skill or improve an existing one - so if an adventure takes place during those next couple of weeks then you're out of luck and your new skills won't be ready. Any skills you pick here don't have to have been used during the adventure.

If you don't choose to improve your SKILLS when you level up you can take an entirely new PROFESSION in exchange for your two SKILL picks(so long as you're not an elf). You get to keep your old PROFESSION and get all the bonuses of the new one. However, this process takes a long time. The new profession and its bonuses won't be available in the time period you are currently playing - you will have to advance to the next one before your character will be able to use their new abilities. See the section on CAMPAIGNING for more about this. Normally they won't be able to adventure again during this time since they're devoting themselves to learning something new, but if they must then they won't have the bonuses from their new profession.

You can't take a third PROFESSION - should you want to change to another career after already knowing two, you will forget the oldest of the two PROFESSIONS you already have.

Note that if you're a skeleton with a new PROFESSION your union will still expect you only to carry out tasks in line with the new job and moonlighting can get you in serious trouble with the steward (and cost you any experience bonuses you might normally get for playing well).

Should you choose not to improve your skills or change profession after you level up then the points are wasted - you let an opportunity for self improvement pass you by.

OLDER AND UGLIER

Life is hard for medieval-era adventurers, especially poor ones with limited access to health care and what not. Most adventurers will be starting their careers at, or just past, the prime of their lives. It's all downhill from there, sometimes quite rapidly.

You must roll on the OLDER AND UGLIER table when you recover from a WOUND or the campaign progresses to the next time period(see the CAMPAIGNING section for more about this). Generally speaking it's not like the movies: people don't adventure at the drop of a hat if they want to live a full life. The gang might meet up once a decade to pull some caper or another. Keep track of how often you've rolled on this table - each time you roll you must add 1 to the next roll. This is cumulative - your third roll will be at +2, fourth at +3 and so on.

OLDER AND UGLIER TABLE

- **1-2**: You're still as fit as a fiddle.
- **3-4**: You're beginning to feel your age a bit and old wounds are starting to act up. -5 maximum and current EFFORT.
- **5**: As you get older you find you've forgotten how to do some things from your younger days as prosaic tasks crowd the knowledge out. Lose 1 SKILL of your choice but gain a SKILL in something mundane related to your character's day job.
- **6**: You feel your eyesight beginning to blur. -1 ÉLAN and you can no longer read without glasses (assuming you could read before). Any ranged attack or cantrip aimed at something more than 10' away has +2 DIFFICULTY. Re-rolls double the effect.
- **7**: As time slips by your character changes. You become somewhat... eccentric. You must add an INSANITY.
- **8**: An ongoing racking cough has been troubling you. -10 maximum and current EFFORT and you have a persistent and incurable level 1 ILLNESS. On second or subsequent rolls the ILLNESS increases by 1 level. Skeletons contract bone rot or some equivalent problem with the same effects.
- **9**: Advancing age or too many hits to the head have made you a bit senile. -1 FIST and take the SENILITY insanity. If you roll this again then lose 2 ÉLAN and take an additional INSANITY of the DB's choosing.
- **10** or more: You feel death's cold, clammy hands reaching for your soul. The next adventure will be your last. -1 ÉLAN and -20 maximum/current EFFORT, retire after next adventure (should you survive it)

INSANITY

Players with the NUTCASE class or whose minds are slipping must pick from the INSANITY list. These insanities all place conditions on the way you can play your character, with penalties for playing against the insanity but a reward for playing into it. If you have one or more INSANITIES and you handle it well in game (keeping in character regardless of its effects on the party or your character), you will earn 1 additional EXPERIENCE at the close of the adventure (should you survive).

ALCOHOLIC - You can't stop at just one. You must drink until you pass out BLOTTO every time you get your hands on booze. Your colleagues might need to pry you out of bars.

DELUSIONAL - You take on a powerful delusion - that a powerful figure such as the Count

of Bilgeton is in love with you, or that you are in fact an incredibly powerful, wealthy and famous individual. No evidence or reasoning will convince you that your delusions are false, and you must act in accordance with them at all times. Until you have taken an action which furthers your delusion you will suffer -1 ÉLAN for the remainder of the day. This action will depend on the delusion - for instance if the Count is in love with you then you must write him a love letter and try to send it, or something along those lines.

DEPRESSED - Life has lost its lustre to you and it's hard to drag yourself through the day. Every time you spend any EFFORT doing anything lose 1 extra EFFORT. This is cumulative with other EFFORT-draining effects like armour.

HALLUCINATING - Something's gone wrong with your brain and now you see things differently from other people. You are far more likely to freak out in battle, among other situations. All psychological HICCUPS are HASSLES to you and taken at +2 DIFFICULTY.

KLEPTOMANIAC - You steal compulsively. If from your character's point of view, if it's possible to steal something from a location -no matter how worthless- and remain unobserved, you will suffer -1 ÉLAN until you do so. You should always be pocketing bits of junk regardless of their worth to you or their value.

PARANOID - They're out to get you. Your character trusts no one and sleeps with one eye open. His or her abrasive nature wears on party morale. Your character never gets a full night's sleep and can never regain more than 10 EFFORT from resting. Pickpocketing or stealing from you is much harder - +2 DIFFICULTY. Pick a gang member to watch most closely of all - that one's up to something.

SENILE - You're beginning to forget things, like your fellow gang members' names or where you left that scroll last night. You can no longer learn any completely new SKILLS or PROFESSIONS though you can continue to improve SKILLS that you already have. Your short term memory is shot but your long-term memory is fine - for now.

LOOT

There are two kinds of loot in this game - JUNK and EQUIPMENT.

JUNK is what's lugged around by the characters - an unlimited amount is theoretically possible though players are expected to explain where they're keeping everything if asked. Junk can be used, if it has any use, to unleash its bonus - for instance a scroll of magic ruining will blast an enemy from existence with an attack equivalent to 10 ÉLAN and 2 FISTS once read. Some junk items have situational uses but don't provide any changes to your or your opponents' vital statistics. Other items are just worthless crap.

EQUIPMENT is different in that it provides its effect if and only if it's worn, otherwise it's pretty much inert. A padded gambeson for instance counts as light armour, but if you're just lugging it around you don't get the benefit. You can't equip multiple items of the same type - for instance you can't wear two helmets, heft two shields or wield two swords (dual wielding isn't a thing in this game). It'd be best if you use common sense for this since providing an exhaustive list of locations to which you can strap equipment should be unnecessary for anyone who has a passing familiarity with the humanoid form and/or has ever worn clothing, but one consideration is that you can wear a full set of clothes under armour. The bonuses and penalties for armour replace any bonuses and penalties you might get for wearing your clothes.

Everyone starts out with basic adventuring stuff - a set of clothes suitable for their day-to-day lives (usually wretched and patched labouring clothes, sackcloth or a very simple tunic) and all the tools required by their SKILLS aside from weapons or armour. These things counts as a single item each - the clothes and the weapon are equipment and the tools count as junk. At the level of abstraction this game operates at we don't worry about individual lockpicks, bowstrings or sling stones - these are just assumed to be carried around by the character and whipped out as needed. If someone's back-story allows it and the DB agrees they could start with light armour and/or a shield but there'd have to be some kind of reason or trade-off involved - for instance they start wanted by the militia for skipping out on their unit or something.
Characters will start each adventure with the cash required to buy two additional cheap items from the Bilgeton markets. Characters who are skilled at HAGGLING can take three if they can pass a DIFFICULTY 10 HASSLE. If they've survived one or more adventures they can bring along anything they picked up in a previous outing that they think might be of use.

Items can be traded for other items - any two cheap items for any one held by a vendor. Anyone with skill in HAGGLING can pass a DIFFICULTY 10 HASSLE to make it one for one.

Here's a sample list of items that can usually be picked up in the market at the start of the adventure:

- **Lantern and candles** - allow you to see in the dark with a narrow but relatively steady light.
- **Bundle of torches** - a heap of twigs or reeds bound tightly together and dipped in tar. Creates a strong, flickering light but creates a lot of smoke. Ideal for setting things on fire, too.
- **A ten-foot-pole** - essential equipment for any adventure
- **An iron hand tool such as a hatchet, cleaver, iron mallet, machete, long knife or other civilian version of a military weapon** - crude but better than nothing, and mostly legal to carry around the streets. -1 ÉLAN if used for combat.
- **A bedroll** - bulky but allows you to gain a comfortable sleep where most people would have a poor sleep and a luxurious sleep where others would have a comfortable one.
- **A blank tome** - a place to write down notes, ideas and spells you learn along the way. The info recorded in the book will carry over to future adventures.
- **Quill and ink** - a nice quill and ink for writing in a book or on parchment.
- **Warm clothes** - thicker and warmer clothes to protect you against the cold. Includes a hood, lined boots and mittens.
- **A cloak** - for concealing things that you don't want people to see. Can be worn over all your possessions.
- **A tinderbox** - start fires anywhere.
- **A 50'/ 15 metre length of rope** - useful enough.
- **A mean old hound** - Some disobedient and hostile dog you bought on a whim. You can sometimes get it to do doggy tasks like fetching or sniffing something out. It won't obey anyone else. Not housebroken. In combat if you are outnumbered by only one opponent it will prevent the need to re-roll FIST dice, but for each round the fight drags on there's a 1 in 6 chance of the dog being injured (roll after each round, on a 1 it's out of the fight and the penalty returns). Every time the dog is wounded or you get OLDER AND UGLIER from ageing, roll a dice - on 1-2 the dog is ok, on a 3-4 it loses its ability to lessen the effect of MULTIPLE HASSLES and on 5-6 it dies of old age or its wounds. No more than one per party unless you want a very dog-based adventure!
- **Supplies** - Some extra rations, a few more coins. You'll be able to last another day beyond the amount of time the scenario dictates before you run out of food or cash.
- **A tub of lard** - useful for coating things so they don't get destroyed by water or sewer slime, or for slicking back your hair.

- **Mediocre codpiece** - It'll only impress wenches who you've paid to look impressed but it's better than whatever you've got underneath it.
- **Chunky rings** - Cheap metal rings, good for decorating your fingers and also for hitting people with. +1 ÉLAN and -1 to WRECKAGE rolls if you're brawling against an unarmed opponent. If you're fighting someone with a weapon the rings have no effect.
- **Throwing weapons** - A supply of basic throwing weapons - axes, javelins, heavy darts or the like. Enough for one throw in a battle, retrievable if you collect them afterwards.
- **Simple trap** - a length of iron about the width of a doorway with nasty hooked spikes on the top, used to give unobservant people a surprised when they try to step through it. Anything that doesn't notice it rolls on the WRECKAGE table with 2 dice. It will also slow the victim down. Can be retrieved after use.
- **A cheap padlock and key** - can be picked at HASSLE 10.
- **A simple weapon** - Shortsword, cudgel, dagger, hand axe, duelling sword, long axe, etc. Confers no bonus or penalty. Probably best if not spotted by the guards.
- **Acceptable clothing** - Clothes that are slightly higher quality and don't itch as much as the sackcloth most people of your station wear. Rich people and merchants will treat you slightly less like garbage. Usually a simple tunic and hose - nothing flashy.
- **A hand mirror** - for looking at yourself, around corners, or lots of other places.
- **Monster part** - some trophy from a common monster, often worn for luck.
- **Unlabelled potion** - a potion for a random species that has an unknown effect. The DB will identify what it is when it's picked up by rolling several dice (or just deciding). Species: 1-3 Human, 4-5 Dwarf, 6 Elf. Quality: 1 Bad, 2 OK, 3-6 Good. Effect (roll twice and use both): 1 Double the side effects if possible, 2 No noticeable effect, 3-4 Restore 20 EFFORT, 5 Restore 1 ÉLAN, 6 +1 FIST for the next day.
- **A hunting bow and quiver**
- **A cheaply-made or ex-service crossbow and some bolts** (-1 ÉLAN)

CURRENCY

The average pay in Bilgeton for a day of back breaking, barely-skilled labour is a copper Groat, and there are five Groats to the gold Guilder (the smallest denomination of currency a gentleman will bend over to pick up).

The groat is further cut up into smaller chunks with picturesque names like the har-groat (half a groat), the groatfather (a quarter groat) and the half-farth (one eighth of a groat) plus various shavings and the like. Like the Bilgeton gentlemen that the characters probably aspire to becoming, the game doesn't concern itself with currencies smaller than the GUILDER. Although each character is assumed to be pretty poor (they wouldn't be adventuring if they lived in luxury!) they probably have enough groat clippings jangling around in their pockets for an adventure lasting a day or two - this covers buying a cheap meal at an inn, overnight lodging, bits and pieces for their trade, drinks at the bar and all the minor transactions needed to get by in Bilgeton. After a couple of days this source of money will dry up, and when that happens the players will need to work out how to turn a har-groat - perhaps they'll sing for their supper or take on a job, but that's between the players and their DB. Anyone who is SKILLED or better at HAGGLING can stretch this out another day by passing a DIFFICULTY 12 HASSLE.

For gameplay purposes money isn't all that important until you start bringing in the Guilders - these can be used to buy decent equipment and items at the upscale dealers though it's mostly used to fund the lavish lifestyles that signify success for characters in this game.

EXPENSIVE STUFF

Items worth more than a couple of GROATS are purchased and traded using GUILDERS. GUILDERS are the main goal of the game - the idea is that adventurers will keep a few useful items from their travels but mostly sell them to fund years of living in idle luxury.

Some example of items players might find or want that cost GUILDERS:

- **Crossbow** - 3
- **Longbow** - 2 (an additional -1 to WRECKAGE rolls)
- **Pince-nez** - 2 (if your eyesight is failing due to age these spectacles will correct that)
- **A metal helmet** - 5 (+1 to WRECKAGE rolls if the head in particular is hit)
- **A comfortable, lined helmet with visor** - 10 (+2 to WRECKAGE rolls if the head in particular is hit)
- **Full suit of heavy armour** (maille hauberk, simple metal helm, gambeson or thick tunic, boots and gloves) - 80
- **Cheapest possible full suit of heavy armour** (brigandine, helm, maille shirt, patchwork of plates, pauldrons and other crap, not particularly pleasant to look at or wear) - 50 (-1 ÉLAN)
- **A well-made large shield** - 5
- **A cheap large shield - 2** (every time you use its effect roll a die, on a 1 it shatters)
- **Heraldic knightly shield with custom paint job** - 10 (or more if it's painted by someone famous)
- **A complete outfit suitable for a moderately wealthy townsman** - 1
- **A fur-lined cloak** - 2
- **A buckler** - 1
- **A cheap wizard's staff** - 100
- **Off-the-rack plate harness** - 100
- **Plate fit for the King of Palaver** - 3600
- **Plate fit for a Count of Bilgeton** - 1000
- **Knightly plate** - 200
- **A noblewoman's fashionable evening dress** - 120-600
- **A decent-quality weapon (sword, spear, axe, etc)**- 4 (+1 ÉLAN)
- **A decent zweihander, battle axe, warhammer or other large weapon of war** - 6 (+1 ÉLAN, use 1 dice on WRECKAGE rolls but roll it twice and take the lowest roll)
- **A sweet belt** - 5 (+1 FIST, but if a 1 is rolled on that FIST then the belt unlatches itself and slithers off in search of someone worthy of it)
- **A custom-made weapon by a good craftsman** - 20 (+1 ÉLAN, +10 EFFORT, takes a week)
- **A ludicrous, gold-encrusted fop-piece of a weapon** - 50 (+1 ÉLAN, +1 FIST)
- **A fancy hat** - 2
- **A fancy hat with massive bird feather** - 5

During an adventure if you're trading in expensive items the gang will usually be able to sell them at half their listed value (rounding down) or about a quarter if they're stolen. HAGGLING can be used to argue the price up a little higher - see the HAGGLING skill entry for more details. Items with a sales value of less than a GUILDER can't meaningfully be sold. You can hang onto them, swap them with other gang members, trade them in the market for a simple item or just throw them away if you don't want them at all.

Bear in mind that wearing or carrying ostentatious items around the poorer districts of Bilgeton can mark you as a target for theft!

CAMPAIGNING

The overall point of this game, aside from having fun, is to get your hands on as much cash as possible and live as lavishly as you can. When you run out of money you go back into battle again to get more. Hell, it beats working for a living. While surviving characters will probably become more powerful and better equipped over time, the main priority of most gang members is to secure as good a life for themselves with as little effort as possible.

Unless several adventures are tied together into a single quest, the gang are assumed to go their own way between adventures. The gang divvies up the treasure any way they like and then they all split, returning to their residences or places of business. Each individual character should sell as many items as possible - this will always be at half the sale value rounding down, with HAGGLING not able to influence this (everyone is pretty profligate with their loot). Any items left over must be carried into the next adventure (so make sure they're the sort of thing you want to be seen walking around the slums of Bilgeton with!)

The total amount of GUILDERS is put in the SCORE section of the residency scroll, and added it to any score that's already there. When your character dies or retires that's a summary of the amount of cash they squandered before they gave up the ghost.

A character is by no means required to join every adventure the gang has - if they made a huge haul they're probably still living in luxury. If they sit one out and still want to be involved with the gang in their future exploits then they must become OLDER AND UGLIER whenever the other characters in the gang do as well (due to passing time, not injuries, naturally). New characters should be able to join the campaign at any time, even mid adventure if possible, so it's fine to have a couple of different characters affiliated with the gang and used interchangeably if you want and the other players agree.

Adventures are set in one of eight time periods corresponding to about a decade each, reflecting different events occurring around Bilgeton and Nonce. The introductory adventure in this volume is set in the very first time period, occurring at the same time as the events of The Sword of the Bastard Elf. A full campaign might run from the first of the time periods to the last and at the end of this each player can add up all of his or her character's scores to see how he or she did compared to everyone else. In the future the other time periods may be detailed, though you can just use your imagination for the time being based on the usual trajectory of trade cities that become less and less important as technology and trade infrastructure passes them by.

WIZARDS AND WARRIORS

Once in a while you might get a hankering to play a more powerful character than one of the sleazejobs that make up the mainstay of the gang. If the scenario supports it and the DB agrees it may be possible to play an actually competent hero who has joined up with the gang for one reason another. One lucky player will take control of a mighty KNIGHT or powerful WIZARD!

KNIGHTS must always be human and WIZARDS can be any species but it hardly matters - neither the KNIGHT nor the WIZARD suffer from any of the species weaknesses. They do not gain EXPERIENCE under any circumstances (having seen it all already) and so don't gain levels.

Both the KNIGHT and the WIZARD have an ÉLAN of at least 10, EFFORT of at least 200 and 2 FISTS.

THE KNIGHT has all the bonuses of the GOON but counts as GOOD instead of SKILLED in all weapons. The knight also counts as a LOUDMOUTH. Additionally the KNIGHT has the following SKILLS:

ZWEIHANDER, AXE, SWORD, RIDING, LANCE, MOUNTED COMBAT. All knights have the DISCIPLINED trait as well.

Knights are always equipped with a magnificent set of plate armour, a heraldic shield, a noble steed, a zweihander (two-handed sword), a normal sword, mace or axe, a dagger and a lance. They also usually have fine clothes and a foppish hat on them somewhere, and sometimes a lute or other courtly instrument. They will pick a squire randomly from the gang who will be forced to carry the knight's stuff everywhere. They will generally refuse to learn the characters' names, frequently confuse them with each other, ignore their problems and leave the gang in the lurch whenever they need his help most. In battle the knight is indomitable but he swings his zweihander like a lunatic and doesn't bother himself about accidentally catching some gutterscum with his back-swing. He will often demand that the other characters go off to their doom to save him a minor inconvenience and will sometimes berate other characters for cowardice or carry out sentencing if he thinks a character has committed a crime. Most annoying the knight will usually arrogate all of the glory and nearly all of the loot to himself. Luckily once the knight has what he wants and doesn't need the gang any more, he'll go away, forgetting their erstwhile companions even existed. Knights age like anyone else so if you want to bring a favourite knight back for a future adventure remember to make him OLDER AND UGLIER in line with the other characters.

WIZARDS (and also WITCHES, PRIESTS and WARLOCKS) are spellcasters who have achieved mastery over their field of magic. They no longer cast cantrips but will have far more powerful spells available to them based on the scenario or the DB's say-so. All magic users have a powerful offensive spell which is cast like a normal ranged attack (at up to 100'/30 metres) and counts as two wins if it hits (for instance it will take two toughness off a combat HASSLE) and rolls on the WRECKAGE table with 1 die if aimed at a player character.

Wizards count as NUTCASES though instead of being skilled at all cantrips and magical schools they are considered GOOD. They know all the cantrips from all schools. They also count as DRIFTERS. They do not have to pick an INSANITY (though some wizards might have one anyway). They are SKILLED with the STAFF and have the DISCIPLINED trait.

Wizards will always have a purpose for using the party, mostly trying to use them as (in)human shields or guinea pigs. Sometimes they just want some manual labour done. Wizards are fairly capricious and usually once they have whatever sinister thing they want they go away. In that regard they're better than knights - if the wizard helps you find loot then the gang will probably get to keep nearly all of it. On the other hand they're even more sanguine about sending their pawns off to their deaths. While the knight considers the gang to be social inferiors, it's by no means certain that the wizard even considers the gang to be people per se. Be very careful around these beings! Wizards age slowly, if at all, so they don't become OLDER AND UGLIER over time like the players.

No matter what there can be no more than one of these characters with the party and only if the scenario is designed to accommodate them.

BEER RULES

So far it's all been pretzel and no beer, but here are a few rules to spice up the gaming session, assuming you have alcohol readily to hand. Exercise some restraint here, obviously, and don't drink yourself to death gaming or get in a car afterwards or anything dumb. With that out of the way if you're playing with booze here are a few extra rules:

- Whenever a NUTCASE successfully casts a spell, the player should drink to reflect the effects of spellcasting on the brain.
- Once per adventure each player can take a drink to re-roll one of their FIST dice.
- Whenever a character drinks booze or a potion, the player controlling them should drink.
- If a player falls ill or is poisoned they should also take a drink.
- A GOON can drink to re-roll one failed psychological HASSLE per battle.
- If a player fails a psychological HASSLE they should also drink.
- If a player has to roll on the WRECKAGE table for their character they should drink. If they are wounded they should drink twice.
- The players should also drink at the end of the adventure, and whenever else they feel like it.

FINAL REMARKS

These rules have been kept as simple as I can make them in an attempt to keep the adventure flowing as quickly as possible without constant recourse to the rules, charts and tables. I hope that a skilled Dungeon Bastard will be able to pick these up swiftly but if any rule is getting in the way of a good time simply ignore it and move on. If you remember the core of the system - HASSLES, HICCUPS and HEAVES then you can fudge the rest without too much damage until you figure it out.

Remember that players need to be notified if they are facing a situation that will cost them EFFORT - conserving EFFORT is the key to player survival after all. For HASSLES they should be given the stats of the HASSLE up front (DIFFICULTY, FISTS, TOUGHNESS) so they can decide what to do, and for HEAVES be told what the cost is in advance. Typically players will roll their own FIST dice for HASSLES but do not need to do so for HICCUPS which can be sprung in secret.

EFFORT runs down fast. A day of hard, honest work would cost a normal person about 30 or 40 EFFORT. Obviously the strain of combat or sneaking around manticores can cause you to spend this amount of EFFORT in just a few turns. Players should plan accordingly!

Players should be encouraged to come up with creative ways to get around obstacles and enemies without directly attacking them. They should also be rewarded for taking defeat in stride - remember they're not playing heroes but rather expendable street scum.

If EFFORT is a problem then players can choose to use the same optional rule as the gamebook. If they have a lower maximum EFFORT than 70 they may start an adventure with a current EFFORT of 70, though they can't restore EFFORT until they drop below their maximum value. This reflects a surplus of energy built up over weeks of inactivity and easy living. If a character's been involved in an adventure in the past few weeks of game time or is a hard working stiff when not adventuring they obviously won't be able to take advantage of this helping hand.

And last of all, good luck in your adventures!

LOYAL SUBJECT!

I congratulate you on your admission to Bilgeton, capitol of Nonce and the gateway to the Kingdom of Palaver. Here most of the species of Nonce are welcome and live peacefully side by side with the human population, except elfs, and the goods of the world flow through our gates and down the River Bilge. Anything you can think of is here. As the saying goes: "if you ever tire of Bilgeton you have tired of life, for all the world is here".

Incidentally, if you ever tire of life it is against the law to dispose of yourself in the Bilge.

Bilgeton prides itself on its modern approach to crime prevention. We practice a full range of corporal and capital punishments! Here are some crimes which are punishable by flogging, ordeal and/or death:

- Begging
- Stealing
- Vagrancy
- Aggravated impecunity
- Assault
- Murder
- Wandering around armed without an excuse
- Public drunkenness during daylight hours
- Skulking menacingly in dark alleyways after curfew

Obey the law, don't go in the ancient sewers and enjoy as many of Bilgeton's sights, sounds and smells as you can tolerate and/or afford.

As always, I remain

Your Liege,

Count Hugues of Bilgeton

(dictated but not read)

Bilgeton Residency Scroll

_____, a _____ _____ / _____ is
name species first profession second profession

ÉLAN

MAX

CURRENT

EFFORT

MAX

CURRENT

FISTS

LOOT

SKILLS

TRAITS

CASH

SCORE:

hereby recognised as a resident and de jure su

BACKGROUND

NOTES

CONDITIONS

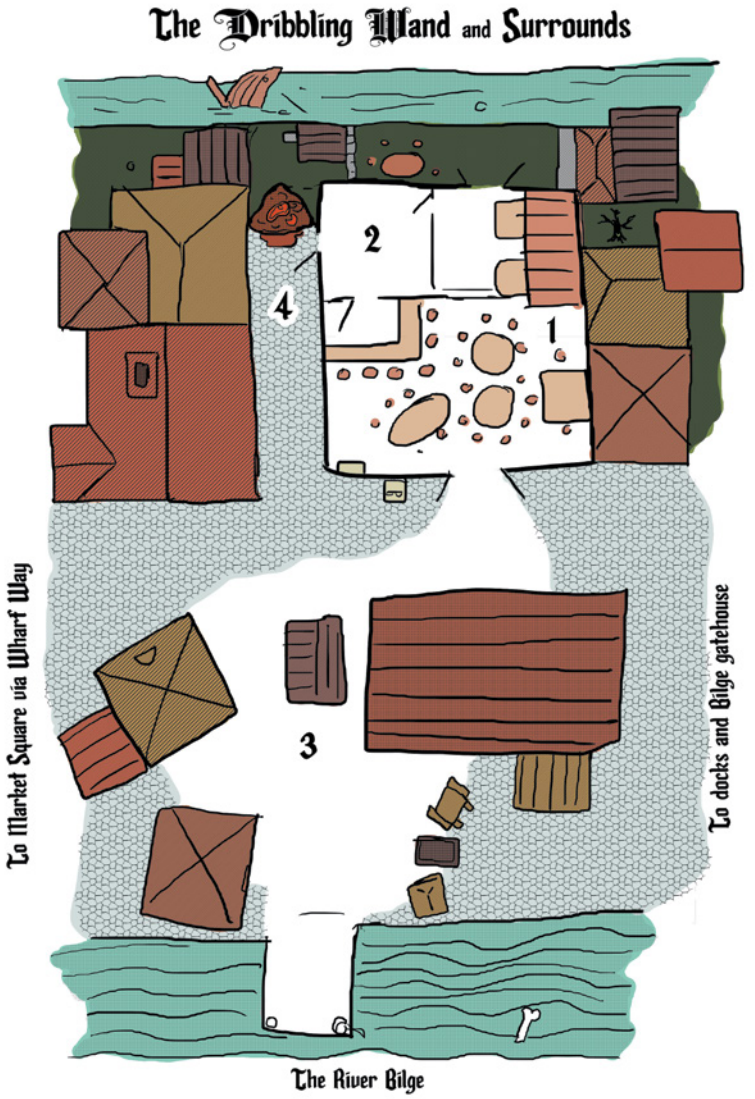
Introductory Scenario

A message to adventurers: read no further! This is for the Dungeon Bastard only. If you read the info contained here you'll probably ruin the fun of your first adventure.

Now that the adventurers have cleared off, here's a very short introductory scenario for the role playing game called **Where's the Beef?**

Where's the Beef is set in the seamy dive called The Dribbling Wand, a dockside tavern with a fairly rough clientele. It's a favourite gathering place for adventurers and other misfits as there's usually some kind of high-risk, relatively high-reward gig on offer from the bartender or one or another of the patrons. Tonight it's the mystery of a meat shortage which needs solving.

This adventure would suit a gang of 2-4 adventurers of any profession and species, with no experience. It's meant to be a short introduction to how you could run and play the RPG.



Useful locations:

1: The Dribbling Wand's main bar area. Crowded with large tables, unsafe sports and lots of people. Surrounded with slums. A stereotypical dockland tavern. A canal running behind the tavern serves as the lavatories, "his" on the left, "hers" on the right. This area is fenced off and also packed in by slums, the only ways out are through the pub or into the canal (yuck)

2: The kitchen, packed with nobolds. Basically inaccessible. Normally could be used as a back exit but something's wrong in there tonight.

3: A cluster of storehouses and shanties near the docks. A gathering area for peddlers, buskers and thieves. A mooring point extends into the toxic Bilge.

4: The meat pile in the infamous alley next to the Dribbling Wand.

Background and Summary

The Dribbling Wand is running out of meat! The tavern hasn't received a delivery for a couple of days and they're down to their last few mystery meat slabs. The gang will need to find out what's going on and get the meat deliveries going again.

The cause of all this hassle is an overzealous and straight-laced new guard officer, **Corporal Hunfried**, who is turning back the illicit and probably rotten meat deliveries, arresting people trying to dispose of corpses, and no longer executing crooks on the spot. The meat pile (4) accepts non-denominational meats from all these sources and with the supply blocked there's nothing left to feed the punters of the Dribbling Wand. Sure, the pub could buy its meats legally, but that'd mean putting food prices up and no one wants that.

The gang might have bought their pre-game items from the market earlier, if not they will have the coin available for one or two more purchases in the night market, location (3).

Scene 1: The Dribbling Wand

A filthy, ribald tavern (1) packed too tightly with tables and people - mostly rough-looking human dockworkers but a couple of dwarfs and skeleton workers too. There's a "beer garden"/ lavatory out back, a kitchen (2) a dart board in the SW corner of the main room where people are dangerously hurling darts over and between punters, and stairs up to the rooms upstairs. A couple of more private tables are nestled under the stairs. The area next to it is a raised stage which is sometimes used for entertainment and fights but tonight is just packed with more drinkers. Outside the main exit is the lumbering rock troll bouncer, Plike.

The gang starts at the bar, just south of the kitchen (2) where late one evening they've gathered at the behest of **Olaf** the one-eyed bartender. Olaf's probably just picked them from people who are standing around in the pub so it's possible the characters don't even know one another, but what they have in common is they'd do almost anything for a groat so they're perfect for this job.

Olaf explains that the meat supply for the Dribbling Wand has dried up! None of the usual meat deliveries have arrived over the weekend and the remaining stock has gone a bit rancid, or become more rancid than it was already. A perceptive gang member (HICCUP 10 for perception, nutcases get 2 FISTS, roll against all characters - the ones that succeed notice) might notice patrons having trouble stomaching their meals, even more than usually. Olaf's worried that it might be the Hovel and Harpy, a competing tavern, trying to ruin business somehow. Anyway, it's your job to find out what's going on and get the meat supply flowing.

Olaf offers a total payment of 1 Guilder per head. A successful haggle (HASSLE, DIFFICULTY 13) can raise this to a more reasonable 2 Guilders per head, though this will take a while whether it succeeds or fails. The players who aren't haggling can look around the tavern or chat. Having cut a deal the gang can start their enquiries in the tavern (go to Scene 2) or head outside (go to Scene 3).

Scene 2: Loitering

The characters can mingle for a while, discuss what gear they've brought along (this might be a good time to prompt the players as to what they're carrying) and come up with a plan. The kitchen is inaccessible for now (it's full of screaming nobolds and the smell of rotten meat is unbearable) After a very short time roll a HICCUP 10 for perception (nutcases get 2 FISTS) -

the gang will notice another gang of thugs giving them the stinkeye, sitting . At this point they might choose to leave - if they attempt to leave via the kitchen they'll get a blast of foul-smelling air and a round of abuse from the nobolds inside. If they still want to carry on into the kitchen any players that go in will suffer a Wreckage roll on with 2 dice as the nobolds hack at slash at the trespassers who are unable to resist since the smell and heat is making their eyes/sockets water. They'll then be shoved back into the bar where they'll encounter the amused thugs, below.

Should the players try to leave via the main door they'll be accosted by the thugs, as they will if they stick around. The thugs are just a group of low level goons and scumbags, equal in size to the gang. The leader of the group explains that they've already been hired to find the cause of the missing meat and he's not inclined to lose the bounty to the likes of you. He encourages you to piss off.

If you decide to attack the goons in the gang have DIFFICULTY 12 and the SCUMBAGs have DIFFICULTY 11. They don't count as armed - they're not going to fight to the death over a job. You will start near to each other though in the first round some of the gang can retreat and hide behind a table or climb up onto the bar to start shooting or throwing stuff - if throwing you're considered to have unlimited ammo since there's plenty of crap to throw.

There's other ways of dealing with the goons - a nutcase could cast a spell to enrage another bar patron into attacking them before they reach you, a smooth talker could probably lie his way out of this mess by promising to drop the investigation (DIFFICULTY 9, FISTS 1). You can also throw the fight and beg for mercy, the enemy gang will look confused and leave in disgust after taking one random item from one of the players just out of habit. The players can probably come up with something clever. Should they resolve the incident without a fight then the thugs will leave you in peace and you can leave through the front door the Scene 3. If a fight breaks out then the whole tavern immediately erupts into a brawl after the first round - players who have defeated an opponent might have to fight against punters - roughly DIFFICULTY 11.

At the end of the second round the bouncer, Plike, will come roaring in. He's a huge rock troll who looks like a Moai statue with angry eyebrows carved in and he will strike the fighter nearest to the door. A DIFFICULTY 10 HASSLE is needed to dodge the swing if the nearest is one of your gang, the CONSEQUENCE is a Wreckage roll with -1 to the roll so it might be an early end for one adventurer. If the player survives they're knocked out cold for the next little while. If you dodge the swing will hit one of the other brawlers, neatly splattering him. Either way the fight comes to an abrupt end and moments later the guard patrol makes its belated entrance.

The guard patrol is led by **Corporal Hunfried** (see info box above) who pompously declares a major crime scene and has his men start interviewing and searching the crowd. The militiamen - four halberdiers in standard militia garb - carry out this task without enthusiasm while the corporal draws a chalk outline around the corpse. A couple of nobolds emerge from the kitchen to drag the corpse back to be butchered (if you haven't guessed yet this kind of thing happens a lot in the Dribbling Wand) but the corporal kicks at them and shoos them away before going to interview Plike and Olaf, both of whom are at the bar. A perceptive player (DIFFICULTY 10 HICCUP) will notice that Olaf attempts to bribe the corporal but the offer is refused, much to Olaf's surprise. The nobolds watch the corpse as the guards finish halfheartedly doing the rounds (no one saw anything and the guards don't find any contraband because they're not really looking, even if a player rats out the other gang or whatever the guards will show no interest. If the players want to talk to the guards they'll readily open up about how they've been prevented from taking bribes, even from the meat wagons which they've been turning away for food safety violations. Hunfried is a stickler for the law and utterly incorruptible, a terrible thing for

a human in Bilgeton to be, and these guards signed up to take advantage of their position of authority, not to inspect food wagons for a subsistence wage. The guards return to the corporal to report their findings.

If the person pulverised by the troll was a player and they're not dead, now's time for them to wake up. If it's not a living player, a priest arrives through the main entrance, pulling a little wagon. He loads the corpse onto the back of the wagon and rolls it off, probably to be buried safely in the Bilgeton pauper pit. Either way the nobolds are inconsolable, weeping and gnashing their pointy little teeth.

Hunfried calls for the attention of everyone in the bar, declares that he's found that the matter was self defence and the cause of death was accidental, and tells everyone to go home before leaving with his patrol in tow. The guards follow, rolling their eyes. By now the players should realise the problem - if so they can go to Scene 4 to figure out how to deal with it. Otherwise they can go outside and investigate some more in Scene 3. Olaf will helpfully close the bar early and tell everyone, "you don't have to go home, but you can't stay here", and if they still don't get the hint Plike will show them the door.

Scene 3: Outside the Wand

The Dribbling Wand is at the eastern end of Wharf Way, a road which runs along the northern side of the Bilge and ends at the busy city docks which are constantly loading and unloading the trade goods that give this city its reason to exist. Even at night it's pretty busy, with a couple hundred people milling about in a place which has become known as the night markets - grey and black market stalls and peddlers use a wide gap between several warehouses, shanties and shops as a kind of open air market (3). Unusually the discordant sound of buskers fills the air and though the Bilge smells as foul as usual there aren't the usual undertones of rotting meat that usually characterise the night markets. The players, who've all been hanging around here for a while, should have an inkling that something's up.

The characters can go to the markets at (3) if they want to buy supplies for the mission. If they do so they'll find that a lot of the stalls are abandoned but there are a huge number of buskers - at least 20. Busking is informally considered the same as begging in Bilgeton and usually a busker will be shaken down by the guards and moved on, but it doesn't seem to be happening here. If asked, the buskers will talk about how much they like the new guard corporal - he doesn't even ask for a cut! On the other hand the remaining merchants will complain about the buskers driving away business and how some of their fellow traders have been arrested for selling their merchandise whick may or may not have fallen off the back of a truck. Someone with a skill in singing or a musical instrument can busk here for money in exchange for a HASSLE - DIFFICULTY 9, FIST 1 and an hour's time will yield a Guilder, during which time the rest of the gang can find other stuff to do.

The merchants will sell anything on the item list (or any simple item really) that isn't illegal in Bilgeton - the less-than legal items like weapons, monster parts and potions will be missing. Haggling will work like usual here and take an hour or so, reflecting the hassle of canvassing all the vendors for stuff.

If the gang remains outside for a while they'll see the following edifying scene : an open wagon, loaded with suspicious-looking (and -smelling) meat will approach from the east. As it comes close to the alley the patrol runs up to stop it. Hunfried orders his men to check the wagon, which they do without enthusiasm. The corporal remains with the driver, who he lectures about

hygiene standards before issuing him with a citation. The driver, confused, tries to bribe the corporal but gets another fine for his trouble. One of the men is unhappy about the patrol leader's refusal of the bribe and taps him on the shoulder to tell him so, and in return gets a dressing down in front of the other men. Eventually the wagon turns back and the patrol marches on, back towards the night market at (3), with the men grumbling conspicuously as they fall in line behind the corporal.

If the players aren't interested in the markets they might investigate the alley running alongside the Wand (4). The smell of rotting meat here is very strong.

After a short walk down a dark, foul-smelling alley flanked on the left with tenements and the right with the Wand, the gang will arrive at a large heap of very rancid-smelling meat. Nobolds scurry in and out of the kitchen door leading into the Wand, carrying what they can off the heap. This is where the Dribbling Wand takes its meat deliveries and a regular would know it's far smaller than usual and even more rotten. The gang has time to dig in the heap - in exchange for a 5 EFFORT heave each player can rummage around for items valued at a Guilder or 2 each, but after doing so will be attacked by furious Nobolds who are trying to drive them away. The 4-6 Nobolds each have stats in the range of DIFFICULTY 5-7, FISTS 1, TOUGHNESS 1-2. There is no consequence for losing. If the gang wins the the surviving Nobolds will retreat. Each wounded or killed Nobold is carrying 1 Guilder (it's pay-day) and a kitchen implement which works as a low-quality weapon.

If the players don't dig in the heap and weren't involved in a fight inside the tavern they will have been pursued by the thugs described in the bar, who assume that the gang's interest in the heap is evidence that they've got something to do with the meat shortage. The goons have short swords and the scumbag has a short bow. The CONSEQUENCE for losing the fight is to take a wreckage roll on one die. Be careful! If the gang is defeated it flees back to (3) and the thugs return to the tavern, ready to receive their reward. As soon as someone on the opposing gang is wounded or killed the rest will flee, leaping over the fence at the back of the alley and ending the fight. You can retrieve a weapon from whoever you've killed or wounded.

If you don't dig in the heap and have already fought inside the pub then there's nothing to do here. The kitchen won't open for you from the outside.

As you go to leave the alley you'll be approached by the guard patrol, which either heard the commotion or was interested in seeing what you were doing entering the alley. Luckily if you killed or wounded someone back on the pile the Nobolds will have already have retrieved them for the kitchen. Although the corporal will ask you what you're doing there he'll believe any even remotely plausible excuse, though he'll warn you that the meat pile is a violation of health and safety codes and that he's doing everything he can to bring it into code. The militiamen with him go to shake the gang down but the corporal reminds them that they have no lawful reason to search the gang or confiscate their goods. The corporal wishes you a good night and turns away from the alley with his men grumbling along behind him.

From here there's not a lot to be done outside the Wand. The DB might add encounters with beggars, peddlars and buskers, or even have something nasty crawl out of the Bilge if they like depending on what the gang might like or tolerate. Now we move to the final scene.

Scene 4: Ending the Beef

By now it should be obvious that Hunfried's overzealous policing is responsible for the meat shortage, among other things. To complete the mission the gang needs to get rid of him. There are numerous ways this could be done, here are a few:

If the gang tails the patrol for a while one of the guards will break off to take a leak, and at this time someone who's good at talking could try to persuade the guard into fragging their officer. They hate him enough for stopping them from shaking down the locals and taking bribes that a DIFFICULTY 12 HASSLE will be enough to get the ball rolling. If successful they will slay him right in the middle of the night market, filch all items of value from his corpse and kick him into the river before heading back to the barracks via the gatehouse to the west.

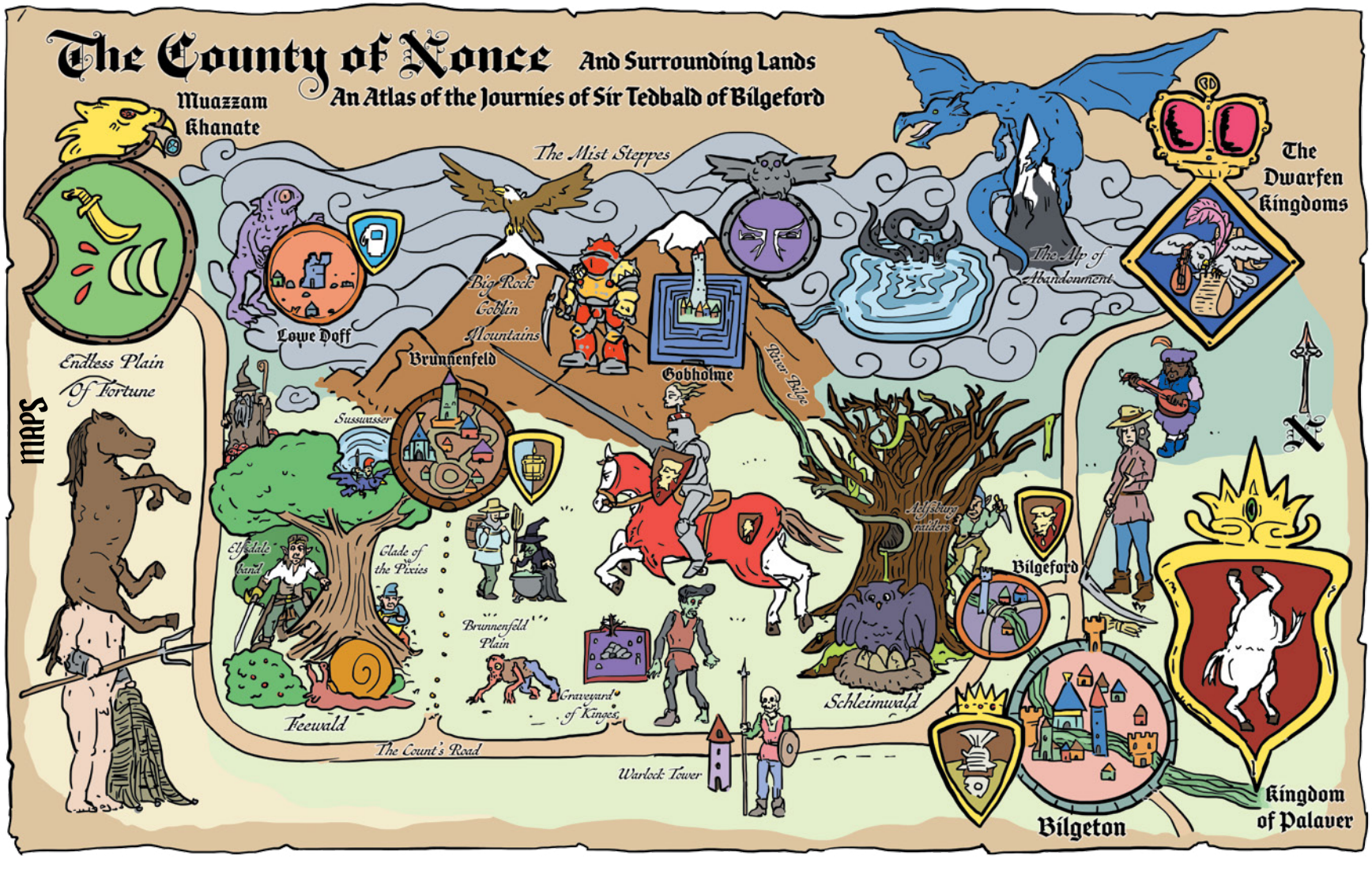
The gang could watch the patrol route and set an ambush wherever they like - they'll find the guardsmen strangely chicken. If the patrol comes under attack they'll split, leaving Hunfried in the lurch. To make the ambush more effective a scumbag could CASE one or more buildings, finding ways inside and up onto the rooftop where any of the gang could attack with a ranged weapon or just hurl roofing tiles down. As a bonus the houses may contain some (poor) loot at the DB's discretion, nothing worth more than a guilder but maybe some weapons, provisions and potions. They could also contain inhabitants if the CASE checks failed. Again, any attack on the guards will cause them to split, leaving Hunfried to face the music.

A simple trap or cantrip might be enough to cause a guard to slip over, or inflict a minor injury on a guard like a stubbed toe or an insect bite or the like, If any guard is injured at all he'll pretend to be mortally wounded and the other guards will insist on taking their comrade back to the guardhouse. Hunfried will bravely carry on the patrol alone.

Once Hunfried's alone he can be attacked, again with some risk, or if the cause of his being abandoned wasn't obvious, he can be talked into realizing that everyone hates him and that being a guard corporal probably isn't the career for him. This is a DIFFICULTY 14 HASSLE with the consequence of failure being that Hunfried arrests the person talking to him by cracking him over the head with the pommel of his sword - a roll of 2 dice on the Wreckage table and being immediately clapped in irons if no one else is nearby to prevent this. Then it will be a matter of attacking the corporal directly. If it succeeds then he symbolically removes his helmet, tears off his Bilgeton logos on his armour and vows to find something better to do in life.

Fighting Hunfried directly is a HASSLE with DIFFICULTY 9, FISTS 1, TOUGHNESS 2. He's armed with an heirloom sword which he wields gracefully - losing a round to him results in a WRECKAGE roll with 2 dice, and losing the fight is a further WRECKAGE roll with 1 die. Just for the sake of comparison, Hunfied is a HUMAN GOON with ÉLAN 9, EFFORT 140, 1 FIST and is GOOD with his WEAPON(Sword) and SKILLED at SMALLTALK. On his person he has the heirloom sword (+1 ÉLAN, value 6G), a padded gambeson and mail hood which constitutes a suit of light armour (2G once the Bilgeton logos are picked off), an unlined, open-faced metal helm worth 4G which is a bit better than militia issue, and 2G in currency. If you win and isn't slain or wounded, he'll fall to his knees in despair. Either be sure to finish him off and/or chuck him in the Bilge/return him to the meat pile. If he's merely wounded or shellshocked and left alive then he'll crawl back to barracks and the gang will have failed.

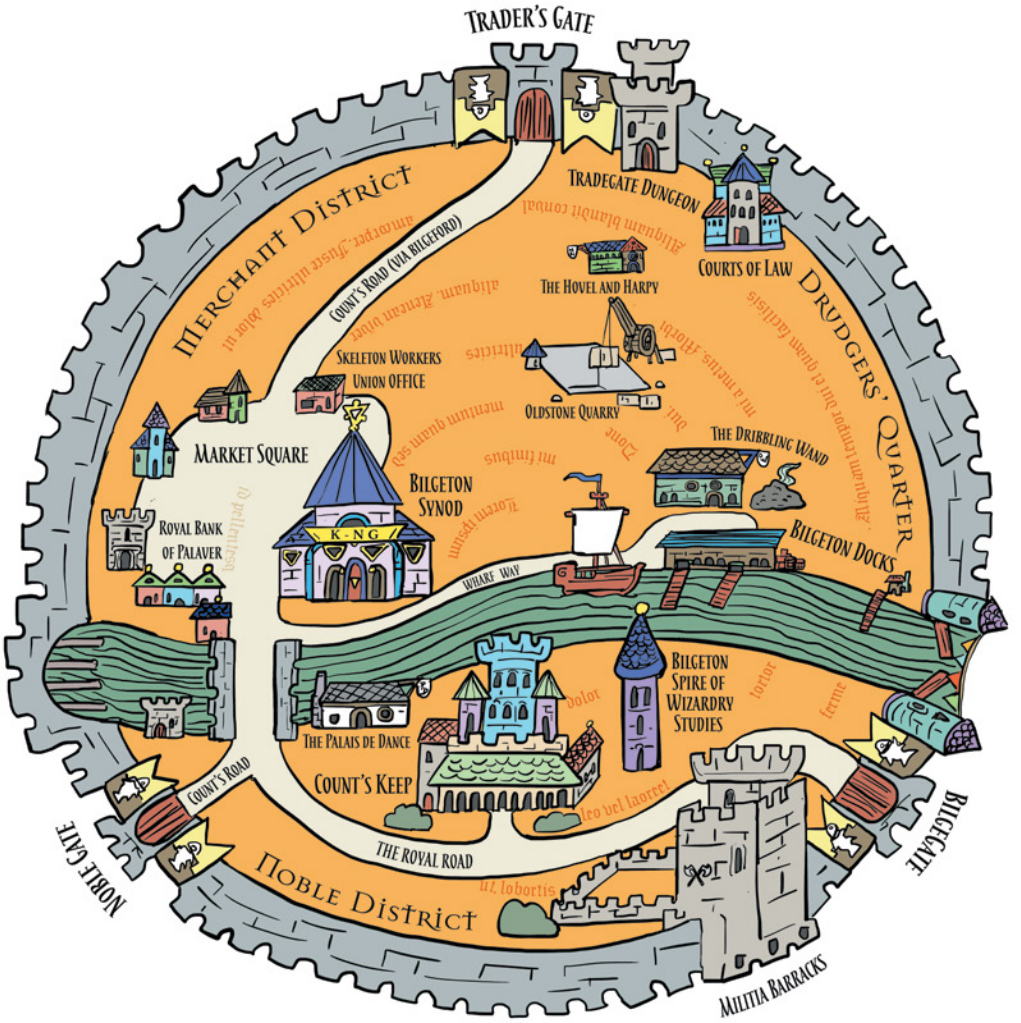
Once Hunfried is defeated one way or another the job's done: return to Olaf for your reward. If you threw his corpse on the meat pile he'll give you 1 extra Guilder for the delivery. The party is free to divvy up the loot and call it a night!


The County of Nonce
And Surrounding Lands
An Atlas of the Journies of Sir Tedbald of Bilgeford
Muazzam Khanate
The Mist Steppes
The Dwarfen Kingdoms
The Alp of Abandonment
Big Rock Goblin Mountains
Lowe Doff
Brunnenfeld
Gobholme
River Pilge
Endless Plain Of Fortune
MAPS
Sussuusser
Elfdale Land
Glade of the Pixies
Brunnenfeld Plain
Graveyard of Kinges
Feewald
The Count's Road
Warlock Tower
Schleimwald
Aelfsbury Gliders
Bilgeford
Bilgeton
Kingdom of Palaver

A Mappe for the benefit of the newly-arrived stranger to the Delightful Citie of

Bilgeton

Containing an account of the Locales wherein Entertainments may be Soughte and Services Procured in this year of our K-NG mcmlxviii



Enjoyest thou a scrappe?
Hie thee hence to the Dribbling Wand for unarmed combat. Place a bette or enter the tournement for the Heavie-weight Championship Belte of Bilgeton

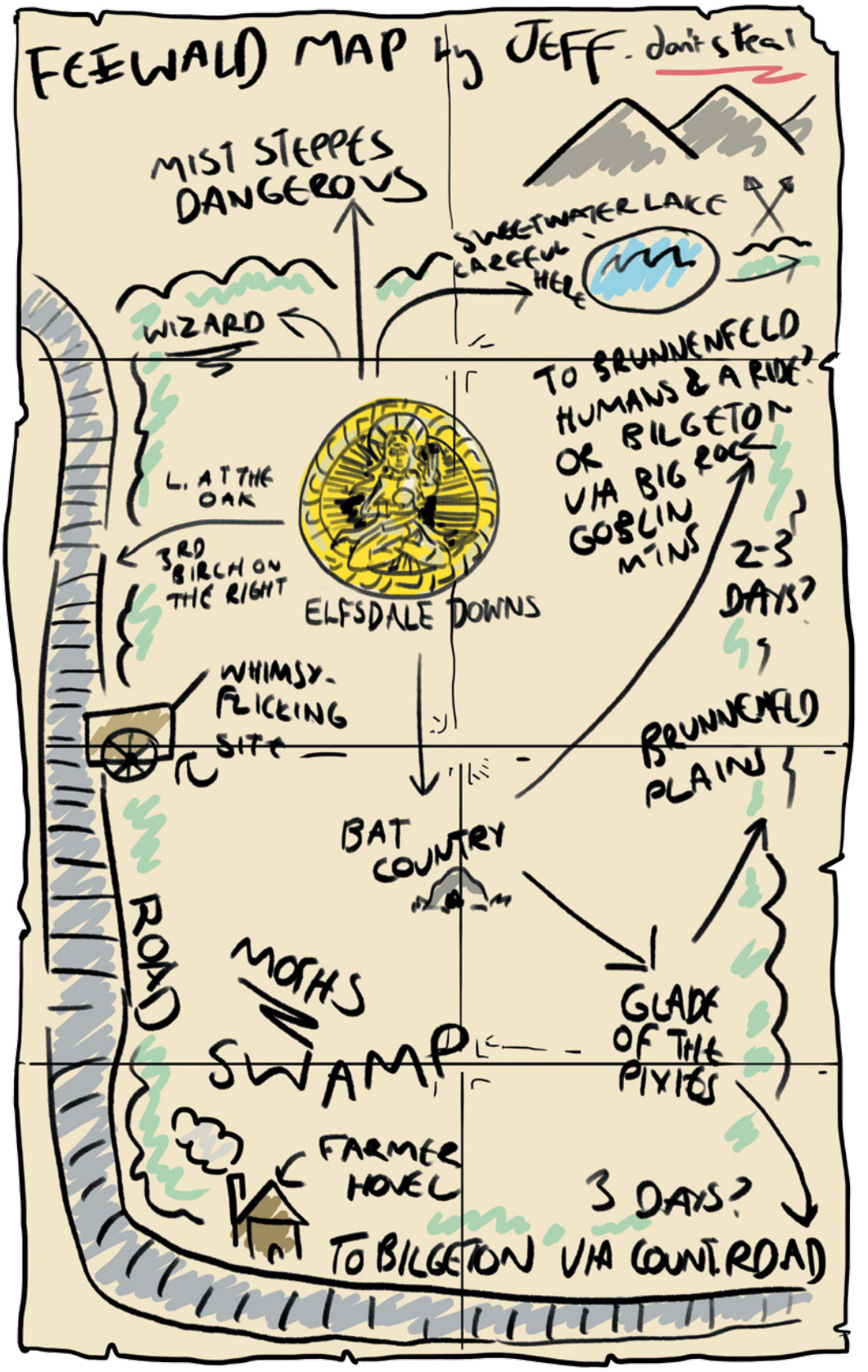
A Battle of the Bardes!
A treate is in store for thee! Attend thou the Oldstone Quarry in the Drudgers' Quarter for a showe, or display thine own choppes. Headlined by The Waites and Seed Drille. Admission free!

Seekest to enter societie?
The Grand Balle in celebration of the engagement of our Count Hugues de Bilgeton and her Ladyship Comtess Amelie de Fraude will be held in a location. But marry, sir! Thou muste alreadie knowest where it is to be helde, otherwise thou art surely not invited.

Cravest thou fine musics?
Attend The Palais De Dance in the Noble District. Strict Dresse Code.

Thy purse burdenst thee?
The manie fine merchants of the Market Square betwixt the Trader's and Noble Gates will exchange thy heavie coin for the finest goodes available in Nonce and for manie a mile in any direction beside.

Seekst thou adventure?
The Bilgeton Militia is hiring. Bear arms part or full tyme in the service of the Count and King. Fair wages and exciting travel a certaintie. No elfes.

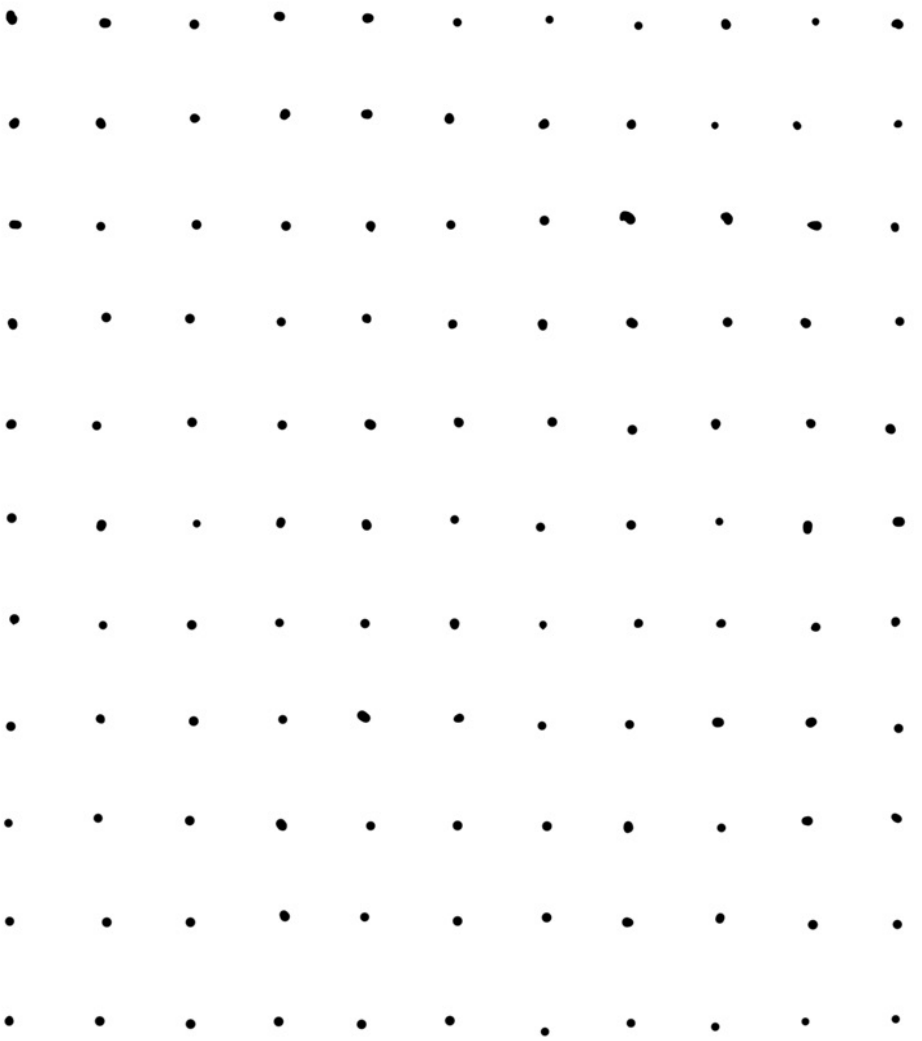

FEEWALD MAP by JEFF. don't steal
MIST STEPPES DANGEROUS
SWEETWATER LAKE
CAREFUL HERE
WIZARD
TO BRUNNENFELD HUMANS & A RIDE? OR BILGETON VIA BIG ROCK GOBLIN MINS
2-3 DAYS?
L. AT THE OAK
3RD BIRCH ON THE RIGHT
ELFSDALE DOWNS
WHIMSY-FICKING SITE
BRUNNENFELD PLAINS
BAT COUNTRY
ROAD
MOTHS
SWAMP
GLADE OF THE PIXIES
FARMER HOVEL
3 DAYS?
TO BILGETON VIA COUNTRY ROAD

Lost in another obnoxious gamebook maze section? Try

the Dungeonmaster

(DIY edition)

Crawl any catacomb with aplomb! Depart any dungeon with gumption! All you need is a pencil, probably an eraser, and an absurdly high tolerance for the antics of this particular gamebook writer. Map your way through the obligatory maze section below:



The adventure begins on the next page!

1

For as long as you could remember everyone in the village called you “Bastard”. You were never sure if it was because you were born out of wedlock or because you are, in fact, a complete and utter bastard, but the name stuck until no one really remembered what your birth name was. Adding insult to injury, you are only a half elf. Your mother, an apprentice whimsyflicker (a respectable trade by elf standards), took a liking to a wandering human milkman. He stayed just one night before moving on, but it was long enough for you to have inherited his rough looks and human oafishness. You are incapable of truly appreciating elfish art, enjoying elfish rations or mastering any of the elfish skills that would lead to an elfish career. Because of your racial infirmity you are despised for reasons above and beyond the circumstances of your birth and your unpleasant demeanour.

One afternoon you are rudely awakened from your slumber by Jeff, Mom’s boyfriend who you will NEVER call “Dad”. He informs you that he’s sick of you and your lack of a work elfic, that you’ll never amount to anything if you don’t pull yourself up by your boot buckles, and that it’s time to push the half-caste baby bird out of the nest. You yell at him to shut the hells up, that’s he’s not your real Dad and that he can’t tell you what to do, and furthermore...

Before you can conclude your stinging repartee, Mom interjects.

“Your dad”, (never that, you fume), “is right. You’ve been loafing about the house for years. No job, no drive... It’s my fault. You’re barely a half elf - you can’t seem to live among elfs and I never let you learn how to live among humans. I should have sent you to your human father when you flunked out of the grasswatching academy. Now it’s time for you to live among your own kind".

“But mooooom....”, you whine plaintively, “I’m only sixty years old...”

Jeff bellows over you, “When I was sixty I was a full-time lorewarden!”

You roll your eyes but Mom nods. “Sorry my son, you must pack your things. Pack lightly, for it is a long journey to the human town of Bilgeton where your father lives. Seek him out and crash on his couch if you are able. Be gone before supper".

Time is now of the essence, so you spend most of the afternoon in your room jerking off miserably. Eventually you are jolted into action by Jeff- that guy who lives with your mother but who you will never, ever respect - hammering on the door.

“FIVE MINUTES!”

You hurriedly cram whatever’s lying nearby into your pack. Select three objects from the starting items list below, and don't look in the items list at the back of the book until after you pick!

10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole, The Tasty Burg, Extra Buckles, The Bastard Sword of the Elf, Bow of the Wood, Enough Rope, Fly Hat, Medical Diploma, Elfish Cloak of Invisibility, Azari PCS With 4000-in-1 Games Cartridge, Feewald Map, Scrying Orb, Healthy Poultice, A Cut Purse, the Lorewardening Key.

Make a note of what you’ve ganked on the Junk or Equipment parts of your Adventure Scroll. You also find 120 Leaves of valuable elfish currency - add this to the Cash section. Finally as you leave the house you find your mother has left you a sack of Elfish Rations - largely indigestible to you but better than starving. Note this in your Junk section. And now you must away: cursing your mom and that prick Jeff under your breath, you set out on your journey.

If you take the most direct path to Bilgeton by striking out for the Count’s Road, turn to 643. If you want to linger around your hometown and wait to see if your parents will change their minds then turn to 433. Otherwise you decide to scream incoherently and flee blindly into the woods, tearing at your clothes and babbling until you pass out in a pool of your various bodily fluids. Turn to 785.

2

Ignoring the huge heaps of loot which you assume to be illusory, cursed or otherwise protected by a terrible guardian, you let out a polite cough to let whoever’s around know you’re here. The noise echoes around the chamber and the third of the above options - a gigantic blue dragon - emerges from the darkness at the back of the cave. Despite its huge paunch it moves gracefully and silently as it steps forward into the cavern, giving you a good look at its shining yellow eyes, razor sharp teeth and coating of thick, deep-blue scales.

“WHO DARES, I mean, who dares enter the cave of Bhad the Black without an appointment?”, roars the dragon in surprisingly good Palavan Humanese, “I haven’t even had time to tidy up. Oh well, what is your business here?”

If you’ve been sent on a mission from the Goblin King then turn to 339. Otherwise you can’t think of a good reason to be here - if you want to try to come up with an excuse turn to 1294 or turn to 1264 to flee immediately.

3

The skeleton reforms yet again! It takes a little longer this time and seems somewhat reluctant to attack. Maybe you're getting somewhere? Who knows.

🔪**CAGEY SKELETON : DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1**

If you win then turn to 1771, otherwise turn to 61.

4

Batu, the lunk that he is, seems to think you should do the job that you're paid for, and all the kicking and screaming in the world won't dissuade him. He drags you out of the wagon by your ankle and hurls you good-naturedly yet painfully onto the road behind the carriage. As he hauls you to your feet you notice the guards, already engaged in combat, are rapidly losing the fight. Two of them are already down and the other three are hopelessly surrounded.

"Hah, more for us", Batu begins, but stops in his tracks as he sees one of the taurcents giving a thumbs up in the direction of the front wagon. At this you hear Hulagu give a terse command in his weird language followed by the crack of reins - the caravan's ditched you! As soon as the caravan begins moving the taurcents spot you behind where the last wagon was and several of them rush in your direction, whinnying and brandishing their tridents and spears.

Batu growls, "No honour here", releases his grip on you and races for the edge of the woods just across the road. If you want to follow behind him turn to 135. If you'd prefer to leap aboard the last carriage as it rolls away turn to 1756.

5

You basically whale on the door. The Thieves' Guild have built it to last, however, and no matter how many times you hit it the door won't open.

Although you're confident that you got the code right, and that an honourable-looking fellow like Oddler wouldn't deceive you after taking your payment, there's no action at all from the inside. Putting your ear to the door there's nothing but silence within.

Perhaps the Thieves' Guild is testing you. If you'd like to wait for a reply then turn to 735. If you know when you've been scorched then turn to 1531.

6

You ask Isentrud if she wants to get out of here. Evidently attracted to you, or at least to your outfit, she nods and leads you by the hand from the dance floor.

"My place or yours?" she asks as she collects her ermine robes from the cloak room.

If you want to go to your place then turn to 970. If you'd prefer to go to hers then turn to 468.

7

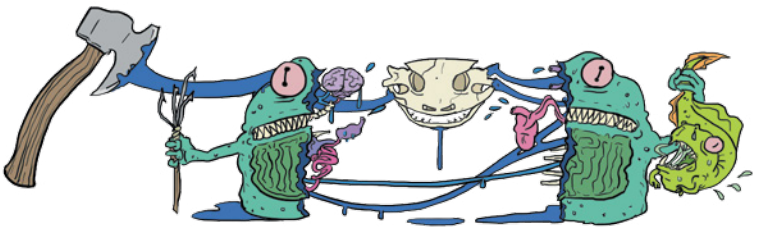
Pissing off the witch might not be a smart move. You dress and leave without making a fuss.

As you're almost at the door the witch dips a large net into the cauldron and hauls a pile of bones out of the bubbling stew, including a couple of skulls. You watch as she shakes off the excess stew off the skeletons and deposits them in a sack. If you didn't know any better, you'd swear it was the bones of the unfortunate captives you completely neglected to save.

"Do me a favour and take those with you, ta. The Warlock of Warlock Tower wants them. Just head south to the Count's Road and then head towards Bilgeton. Tell the Warlock that Sister Aethelcruel sent you - you'll be paid on delivery. I'd take them myself but like I said, I'm expecting guests."

The pretty witch, having finished with you (and with scant regard for your feelings), turns back to her cooking. You sling the Bag of Child Bones over your shoulder - add this macabre item to your Adventure Scroll - and head off. Aethelcruel, living up to her name, uses her magic to slam the door on your arse on your way out. No longer wanted here, you continue on your journey.

Turn to 1581.



8

The old man flees into the undergrowth by the side of the road and disappears into the night. You'd get after him but, in his haste to flee this humiliating arse-kicking, he's left some goodies behind. You can take, if you wish, a pouch containing Elfen Secret Herbs and Spices before laying back down against your bird and getting some shuteye.

Unfortunately you have to keep half an eye open in case the man returns for the finger-locking taste of revenge but his Southern pride is too badly bruised to risk a repeat of that shameful performance. Despite not feeling fully rested you finally rouse yourself properly some time early in the afternoon and get back on the bird, ready for another day's ride along the road to Bilgeton.

Turn to 1455.

9

The shiny demon, as promised, eats your soul before disappearing in a bright flash of light. You will stand where you are, an empty husk of a half elf, reminding all passers-by of the danger inherent in messing with diabolical forces.

Your adventure ends here, obviously.

10

You watch a rock troll teeter and collapse on the other side of the circle with a thunderous crash, smashing the bottles around him as the alcohol gets right on top of him. You don't like your chances of surviving drinking anything that can knock out a nine-foot tall rock monster.

Suddenly you get a reasonably smart idea- if you filter the liquid through some bread you can probably filter out most of the poisonous additives, leaving you with what should hopefully be pure alcohol. Rummaging around in your bag you find the Stale Loaf and begin to filter the drink by pouring the liquid through the bread in into one of the empty bottles lying around nearby.

Kaspars looks at you incredulously but you make up some bullshit about this being a drinking game among your people, which he seems to buy. At the end of this process you have a bottle of pure alcohol. Discard the Stale Bread, then lift the booze to your lips and drink...

Turn to 872.

11

You instruct the birds to go to the hells and climb back out of the nest. The climb down the spire isn't all that easy what with the insulted eagles circling around trying to hit you with their droppings, but you make it all the way to the bottom without any serious injuries. You don't think you'll ever be able to wear your shirt in polite company again, however. You're still picking the foul-smelling stuff out of your hair as you trudge along the trail, away from the spire.

Turn to 190.

12

You're here for the fights, and you tell the bartender as much. He looks you up and down, poorly suppressing a smirk at what he sees before him.

"Well, you're in luck. Tourney's starting soon. Just wait a few hours and we'll find you someone to knock your teeth in for you. In the meantime, order a drink or get out. You'll fight better with some gas in the tank".

You don't comprehend the finer points of this anachronism but you probably get the general idea. Will you take the bartender's advice and get some drinks in – turn to 689, or would you rather go into the tourney with a clear head? If so, turn to 613.

13

Well, that party was a bust. As you leave the grounds you notice that a lot of servants in various liveries are rushing the other way, shouting about some crisis or another that has transpired during the ball. Apparently, the Lady Amelie de Fraude was an imposter and had looted the Count's already-struggling coffers dry, to which the Count responded by sending his guards to rob the estates of everyone who attended the party before hightailing it out of town! The nobility of Bilgeton is pauperised!

You may have failed to make a good debut into Bilgeton high society, but from the sounds of things there's no high society left to speak of. Whistling a jaunty tune, you leave the estate and go off in search of your father and a place to crash at last.

Turn to 1793.

14

Your explanations fall on deaf ears (probably literally - it's unlikely the goblins can hear you inside their helmets what with the clattering of all their metal armour). Just as you're going through your usual routine of begging, crying and crawling around on the ground grovelling for mercy you notice a white owl fluttering overhead. Suddenly it transforms, revealing itself to be the Goblin King! You'd know him anywhere from the suspiciously detailed descriptions in the fairy tales books your mom used to read to you: his flowing mullet haircut, silver tights and generous codpiece (though it's not quite as imposing as the tales indicated). Having completed his transformation from owl to splendid man, the Goblin King turns his attention to you and raises one of his magnificent eyebrows.

"What have we here?", he says. "A thief? Another lost soul for the oubliette? A candidate for the Swamp of Perpetual Putridity?". He swirls a glass orb around in the palm of his hand as he considers your fate.

Realising that you're probably boned you offer to give back the codpiece. The Goblin King frowns.

"I can't put that back in my tights. You've had your grubby mitts all over it. You might as well keep it now. But it's not without a price".

He addresses the goblins who are currently surrounding you, their various sharp weapons pointed at your giblets: "Bring him". With a snap of his fingers he transforms back into an owl and flies up towards his castle. You follow, dragged along the ground, up the hill and through the front gates of the castle by the rough hands of the goblin host.

Turn to 1314.

15

You demand to be allowed in on account of your noble heritage. The guard doesn't skip a beat.

"I apologise, my liege, for the misinformation with which I have provided you. The surcharge for entrance through the Trader's Gate for those of purportedly noble blood is 30 Guilders rather than the usual 20 - after all, your estates should be able to provide such a pittance. Unless you're lying to me, and well, why would you when you could have just used the Noble Gate if you were who you said you were?"

It seems the price of admission has gone up! If you can somehow afford this grotesque fee then turn to 716. Otherwise you'll have to rely on your skills (turn to 241) or your great deeds (turn to 306) to get in, or admit you've got nothing (turn to 201).

YE GOODWIFE'S BUTCHERIE
FUCKING OFF WE'RE FULL

16

Brunnenfeld's town square lies at the bottom of the settlement, right near the southern gate. Most of the daily business of the town is done here - carts heaped with food and wooden casks are being loaded and unloaded, the townspeople who aren't busy working barter with the vendors in the market square and, most importantly, there's a tavern here - The Goblin's Bugbear, according to its picturesque sign. Despite the early hour it's doing a good trade with people staggering in and out in various stages of drunkenness. There's also a placard out front advertising the fact that the Inn is Full, just in case you were getting your hopes up about sleeping all day and not getting any further adventuring done. Beyond the market and tavern, the town proper lies along two curving roads which head uphill sharply and are lined with tightly packed brick and stone houses. The nicer houses are all on the street to the left above which you can see the steep spire and weird religious symbol of what is probably a human church. On the right you observe the busy tradesmen's row with all the usual smoke, filth, and squalor which arise whenever poorer humans are forced to live and work cheek by jowl. You much prefer the opulent towers where even the poorest and laziest half elfs are accustomed to dwelling. Looming above this scene at the top of the town is a fancy looking mansion adorned with heraldic shields which you assume belong to the local gentry. Behind you, in the much easier direction of downhill, the gate which leads away from all these humans lies invitingly open during daylight hours.

If you'd like to forget whatever you were meant to be doing and visit the local tavern then turn to 432. If you'd rather hassle the marketplace vendors for some sweet deals or maybe a lift then turn to 787. If you've got business up the hill you can take the left path along the road with the church (so long as you haven't already visited the place) by turning to 501 or take the tradesmen's row to the right by turning to 1473. If you'd rather just get the hells out of here without touching the sides then you slip out of the gate. Striking out south, you follow a well-worn dirt trail leading away from Brunnenfeld: turn to 372.

17

Exposure to the funk in this room makes you retch violently (lose 5 EFFORT), but after a rummage around in the dragon's underwear drawer (containing nothing that would fit a dragon but a whole bunch of underwear that might fit humans, elfs or dwarfs of various sizes and genders - along with a horse's saddlebags) you locate something undoubtedly precious - the Ultimate Codpiece. You can add this to your Adventure Scroll.

With that accomplished you can't bear to be in this dank cave a second longer. Not even the loot you left lying around in the main cavern can entice you to stick around - you walk straight out of the Alp and back onto the frozen tundra, heading south towards Bilgeton where you hope like hells they have a warm bath available after that ordeal.

Were you sent here on a mission from the Goblin King? If so turn to 919. If not turn to 889.

18

Your crying, crawling and grovelling isn't getting you anywhere with these guys, who are somewhat miffed that you killed their friends and are still carting around their esky. In their haste to punish you they underestimate your slipperiness: as the nobolds move in to deliver a death blow you hurl your ice box at them as hard as possible and flee back into the dark tunnels in the ensuing confusion. Remove the Esky Full of Cold Ones from your Adventure Scroll.

You hear the nobolds cursing somewhere behind you and running after you, but your your long legs and abject panic give you the edge over their anger. You manage to get way ahead of them before long, the sound of their flappy feet slapping the ground receding into the distance. The only problem is that you're back in these damned tunnels again.

Not wanting to go all the way back to that maze you instead chuck a left at the first junction you come to and follow that miserable, black stretch of tunnel for hours and hours. It's exhausting but after some huge period of time, during which you don't feel it safe to stop for a rest, you see light at the end of the tunnel and emerge into blinding whiteness.

You're convinced that you've gone blind until your eyes adjust - you're outside in bright daylight, standing in a massive heap of tinnies in some kind of garbage dump at the bottom of a canyon, completely boxed in by cliff walls belonging to impossibly tall mountains which stretch into the sky in every direction. This must be where the nobolds dump their garbage when they're done with it. Looks like they've been here a while from the huge number of tins lining the floor of this open-air trash heap.

There's nothing here worth stealing so you look for a way out of this canyon that doesn't involve heading back to the tunnel. The only safe way out of this high-walled canyon is a goat track winding up the side of one of the mountains, so you head that way. Before long you're making your way among the nearly trackless peaks of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains, heading towards a particularly intimidating-looking spire which juts ups high into the sky

Turn to 1772.

19

You'd rather take your chances with whatever's waiting for you outside than sign up to this shady religion. You tell the priest as much.

"It's your funeral and eternal Damnation, bro", says the priest with a shrug.

You ready your jaw to receive the mailed fist of a guard the second you step out of the church, but as it turns out no one really gives a crap about that hipster bartender so you're probably in the clear. Still, if you'd like to get out of town while the getting's good you can head straight for the south gate by turning to 338. If you'd like to continue on up the hill then turn to 1236.

20

Chlothar looks a bit crestfallen. He thought he had you there.

"Well, how about getting Redeemed? All your sins and transgressions will be washed away in the eyes of man and The K-NG, plus there's booze involved. Or you could leave a tithe. Something. Anything. Please."

If getting all your sins and transgressions washed away sounds real appealing then turn to 908. If not, and you have a Guilder to spare for a tithe then turn to 912. If you've got at least 10 Elfen Leaves maybe that'll do as a tip - turn to 1578. Otherwise you just walk away - turn to 487.

21

The sign-up sheet is located in the old foreman's shack, a dilapidated hut on the edge of the quarry. You're just in time - the surly-looking organiser is about to close his books having signed on the last group of minstrels, but on your arrival he heaves a heavy sigh and re-opens the book to take your details.

"You're just in time", he says. "You look like shit but we're an act short, so you'll do. You'll come on after the Zwarte Piets. No one's ever heard of either of your troupes so you'll be perfect as an opener for the good acts. Just don't bore the audience".

You're annoyed at this man's inability to recognise your obvious musical chops but before you can complain he bustles you out the back exit and down a rickety wooden staircase descending along the steep edges of the quarry. You begin to feel nervous as you see the size of the audience - there must be almost five hundred souls here tonight! But luckily you reach the bottom of the stairs before second thoughts make you turn back, and a couple of skeleton ushers lead you to the backstage area. Out on the stage are the aforementioned Zwarte Piets- a group of minstrels, performing with their faces blacked up with boot polish or coal dust or the like. Even by the standards of late medieval society this is considered somewhat passé and the booing of the audience almost drowns out the sound of their performance.

Do you have the Dwarfen Troupe with you? If so turn to 996. If not then turn to 238.

22

As you continue along through the monotonous mists you can't help but feel that you're missing out on a lot of content, the desultory scene from last night notwithstanding. A rare gust of wind parts the fog temporarily and a few hours walk to the south you can see the high peaks of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains. The highest spire looks like it's being circled by gigantic birds, though at this distance they look like little specks to you. It looks like a promising and fun adventure! The mists then close in around you once again and block the view. You find yourself dreading any continuation of this drab, uneventful trek.

If you'd like to repent of your course you can now head south towards that spire you saw - turn to 355. Otherwise you carry on through the Mist-Steppes, generally heading north - turn to 240.

23

You'd rather have nothing to do with anything that lives out in this forest, so you elect to avoid the charming-sounding Glade of the Pixies. According to promotional map on the tapestry it should be possible to get to the Count's Road if you head south from here. Now that you have your bearings you're pretty sure that making it out of this forest is more a matter of willpower and endurance than anything else.

WILLPOWER AND ENDURANCE: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then turn to 732.
If not, turn to 1285.

24

You steady your nerves and lie still, trusting in the elfish plan. For once it's not a total bust. The skeletons, mistaking you for a human guard, decide not to risk getting on the wrong side of the law and come to a halt mere yards before the horses' hooves would have stomped you into the gaps between the cobblestones.

The two skeletons driving the first wagon climb down from their seats to see if they can help you. As the driver leans in you slash at its skull, dealing it a crushing blow. While it staggers back towards the wagon you leap to your feet and assault the other skeleton, a rather more heavily armed member of the undead dressed in light armour and carrying a spear and a sword. Just as you're wondering whether you've bitten off more than you can chew there's a loud shout from the verges of the road and the elfs who accompanied you here spring their ambush, racing out across the thoroughfare towards the stalled wagons. Suddenly the skull of the driver who you struck pops clean off as its owner attempts to climb back up into the wagon: it was struck by an arrow fired from the tree line. The elfs are firing on the wagons and their skeleton crews, including the ones you're tousling with! As arrows bounce off the cobblestones around you and plunge into the wagon you take advantage of the guard's momentary distraction and attack:

🔪**ARMOURED SKELETON: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Did you succeed against this opponent? If so turn to 623. If not then turn to 1816.

25

Despite your head wound you make good progress along the road, its cobblestones lit by the nearly full moon in the clear night sky. You're hurried along by the sounds of howling, screeching and flapping coming from inside the forest that runs alongside the highway - in your weakened state the last thing you want is to pass out by the side of the road and be at the mercy of whatever's roaming those woods at night.

Sped on by such thoughts over the long midnight hours you eventually stagger around a bend in the road and find yourself heading due east in the direction of Bilgeton. With the adrenaline and nausea from your head wound beginning to fade you suddenly begin to feel incredibly faint. Luckily just a ways down the road to the east you spy a light shining in the window of one of those wretched wattle and daub farmhouses that rural humans seem to enjoy dwelling inside. While you'd rather have as little to do with rusticated human farming types as possible you might have more luck begging a human for help than you would with a wild forest animal or, worse, a pixie.

If you want to make yourself the farmers' problem, then you attempt to make it down the long and winding road to their door - turn to 232. If you're better off alone then turn to 1433.

26

You grudgingly part with the money, tipping the Guilders into the guard's outstretched palm. Remove the requested amount of Guilders from your Adventure Scroll.

"See, that wasn't so hard, was it. Enjoy your stay in Bilgetonshire".

With that the guards get out of your way, allowing your caravan with its skeletal cargo to move on unhindered. You cross the bridge and emerge out the other side of the small town without incident. Your purse is a goodly bit lighter but with high hopes of reimbursement from Aggie's agent you continue on your way towards Bilgeton!

Turn to 1002.

27

The half elf kneels on the ground before you, defeated. You're not known for your sense of decency or fair play when there's a potential corpse to be looted, and yet something stays your hand this time - a strange sense that you share something important with this fallen warrior...

Oh well, loot calls. Putting all that uncharacteristic musing to one side you draw a knife and stab viciously at the prone half elf. Fortunately for him you're pretty shoddy with a knife and his battle-honed reflexes enable him to roll slightly to one side, out of harm's way. Your blade slices close to his neck, severing a locket which flies loose. It flips open as it hits the ground, revealing a little painted image of an elfen woman holding a little half elf baby. By her side - a human in a milkman's garb.

Months pass. Despite your lack of scruples you couldn't bring yourself to kill your new-found brother, mainly because the shock of recognising your shared family ties gave him enough time to get to his feet and then you calculated that his loot wasn't worth the injuries you'd sustain taking it off him. Instead you've gone into business together as "Elf 'n Safety", an elite elf-stomping duo that makes use of your brotherly love of violence and loot in the service of the money of the local merchants and townsfolk that are troubled by the presence of elfs, pixies, fairies and other assorted filth in their area of business. Thanks to your low cunning and your half elf half-brother's killing power you are on the verge of exterminating the last of the non-humans in the Bilgeton region. Next, you intend to go on the hunt the biggest game of all - Jeff.

28

You figure Aggie would be happier with three of her wagons reaching Bilgeton than none of them, so you leave the hapless skeleton hauler to its grisly fate and order your remaining drivers to move out. The caravan reluctantly moves on, leaving their comrades to the not-so-tender mercy of the elfs. Still, it could have been worse: it could have been you! Remove 1 WAGON and 1 GUARD from your notes and turn to 381.

29

Oddler doesn't skip a beat. "What a coincidence!" he says, "We have a bursary for the exact amount you're short by. As you know the Thieves' Guild takes in many promising young thieves from less than fortunate backgrounds, and with a talent like yours we'd be fools to let you slip by. Tell you what - I'll take what you've got in your hot little hand there and the Guild will cover the rest. I'm sure you'll repay the investment a hundred times over".

Getting in with the Thieves' Guild will cost you every Guilder you have, but how can you pass up the opportunity of a lifetime? If you could, easily, turn to 867. If you can't miss out on these incredible savings then prepare to hand over all your money and turn to 837.

30

Despite your fear you prepare to fight. Luckily you don't have to - one of the Merry Men accidentally bashes you in the skull with a cudgel and sends you sprawling back onto the stairs. By the time you recover you're at the back of the pack and no matter how hard you try (not much) you can't force your way back into the fighting line. All that's left for you to do is wait it out.

Luckily the enemies are surprisingly fragile: Rouge-Gorge and his men make short work of them and the ones that don't manage to shamble away back into the darkness are cut down without mercy. The Merry Men charge deeper into the barrow and you follow them, rubbing the lump on your head, until they arrive at a heavy oak door from under which an intense light is shining brightly. Rouge-Gorge raises his huge blade and exhorts his men to further acts of violence. One of the thugs responds by booting the thick door right off its hinges and the fop and his men stream in! Scared to be alone you follow, but what you encounter scares you more!

You face a terrifying Ancient Lich - a four-armed, half-undead, half-demon monstrosity born from the madness of some necromancer attempting to bridge life and death itself. It holds a pair of wavy-bladed swords and an ivory wand in its bony hands and it attacks the intruders in a whirlwind of blades and dark magics. One of the Merry Men is cut down instantly and another one turns to flee and is turned to ash by a blast from the wand. Just then you absently notice he's a bit wet and clearly wearing a bathrobe - did you disturb his bath? A couple of green lanterns dangle from the robe as he moves, swinging on chains as he slices left and right. Your observations are cut short as the lich, running out of targets, strides forward, slicing one of his blades at you! Rouge Gorge is taking on his right arms but that still leaves you with the left!

🔪**HARDMOD THE LICH: DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**
The lich hits with the force of a ballista - each time you lose a round to Hardmod you lose an amount of EFFORT equal to the highest roll he got on his FIST dice.

If you win then turn to 245. If you can't beat this undead horror then turn to 150.

31

Karol Myśliwiec, the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole, seems eager to accompany you on your journey.

“Bilgeton? Przyjdę. Nie mogę się doczekać pijany jak bela w ‘Dribbling Wand’”, he says enthusiastically. You shrug.

With that useful piece of information in mind, if you take the most direct path to Bilgeton by striking out for the Count’s Road then turn to 643. If you want to linger around your hometown and wait to see if your parents will change their minds then turn to 433. Otherwise you decide to scream incoherently and flee blindly into the woods, tearing at your clothes and babbling until you pass out in a pool of your various bodily fluids. Turn to 785.

32

If you’ve got the Pixie Bits, a Potion or a Glowing Jar then this plan is likely to work - turn to 718. Otherwise the Dribbling Wand is well used to lowlifes doing the dash on their tab. The bartender lets out a low whistle and the rock troll bouncer who was sleeping so serenely when you entered steps into the doorway just as you’re trying to use it to exit. You bounce off the gigantic rocky edifice. As you lay on the floor the bouncer reaches down, lifts you into the air by your ankles and gives you a great shake. All currency you’re carrying tumbles out of your pockets and pouches and onto the floor. The coins, leaves and/or teeth jangle, rustle and clatter respectively onto the floor and the tavern erupts into a violent melee as the patrons scramble for your hard-earned loot! Remove all your currency from your Adventure Scroll.

“Great. More work”, the troll groans with a voice like two stone slabs being dragged against each other. Walking backwards he drags you through the door and hurls you hard into the street. Lose 10 EFFORT from the bruising landing.

“If I see you around the Dribbling Wand again”, he grumbles, “I’ll break your legs”. With that he returns to the tavern to handle the wild brawl your money has instigated.

It’s getting dark out here. Since the docklands don’t seem like the friendliest place after nightfall you decide to get a wriggle on.

Turn to 827.

33

You'd prefer bonds of iron to the bonds of matrimony and you say so. The farmer shakes his head sadly.

"Shame. Oh well, your choice," says the old man. "Oh Nilde!", he yells, "Be a dear and fetch the militia would you?"

This being a medieval backwater, it takes several days to find a guard patrol but they eventually come to pick you up. After a seemingly endless stint in the outhouse the door swings open and you find yourself face-to-helmet with a couple of Bilgeton's finest. Without bothering to introduce themselves they roughly haul you out, take all your stuff, clap you in irons and haul you into the back of a metal barred wagon, making sure to smash your head on the door frame before slamming it shut behind you. Soon they mount their horses and the cart's off down the road to Bilgeton!

Turn to 227.

34

Bullshit. But assuming you didn't cheat, you single-handedly batter this subterranean terror back into the abyss. Its heat expended in its futile defence against your skilful attacks, the beast goes dark and cold as it plummets into the chasm, never to return.

Now turn to 402.

35

You're caught completely unawares by the sneaky skeleton. The rusty blade sinks between your unresisting shoulder blades and digs into an important organ. You die without even a chance to cry about the irony of it all. Your adventure ends here.

36

Thought you'd pull one over on Herman S. Skull, eh? Well you'd have to get up pretty early in the morning for that! You're not getting any extra ant parts on my watch. Return to 279 and pick some other way to go but remember - I have my eye on you!

37

Making sure the guard isn't looking you sneak over to the nearest lit window and smash it in. Since the tinkling of glass is likely to attract the guard's attention as soon as he can be bothered to come check it out, you'd better act fast: ignoring the jagged pieces of glass you leap up and wriggle through the small window frame.

Roll 1 die and subtract that amount of EFFORT from the cuts you receive. If you're still alive you find yourself greeted by several high-pitched screams - it seems you have let yourself in via the ladies' restroom! Several very well-dressed and potentially single women stare at you in abject horror as you rise up from the shattered glass and brush yourself off.

If you'd like to move on before the guards inevitably come for you then turn to 585 to make your way out of this restroom and out into the adjoining ball room. If you're not going to let your imminent capture and probable death get in the way of romance then turn to 177.

38

As you get more and more tired from digging, the hole you've made looks more and more appealing. Completely worn out, you crawl into the incomplete hole and lie down for a nap.

A little bit later the churchyard's gardener comes along and notices you curled up in your handiwork. Reasoning that it'd be easier just to deal with you himself that it would be to turn you over to the authorities, he bashes your head in with a rock, retrieves his shovel and fills in the hole, burying you at the scene of the crime. Your adventure ends here.

39

You look longingly at a polished suit of armour. It's last year's model with less than three battles on the odometer and just one careful previous owner. The goblin sucks in his breath.

"That's just a display model. We don't actually have much armour in your size. People aren't usually so lanky and weird looking. Now, I feel your pain! Imagine trying to find goblin plate outside of Gobholme! Total nightmare. I have to wear this suit two days in a row sometimes".

Seeing your disappointment and mild disgust at this goblin's lack of hygiene, the shopkeeper offers to sell you a good pair of Hiking Boots or a terminally uncool Padded Vest for 1 Bilgeton Guilder each. If you absolutely insist on buying the display armour, he'll let the Full Harness of Steel Plate go for 8 Guilders. If you don't have the human cash you can attempt to barter with elfish currency, assuming you have any. Turn to 810 to attempt this.

As you're finishing up your transaction (successfully or otherwise) a paying customer enters the shop and the goblin goes to try his sales routine on the new arrival. With nothing left to do here it's time to go. You step out of the store and back into the street. Turn to 1543.

40

Since you seem to know where you're going no one bothers you - the numerous city guards in the Noble District are mostly on the lookout for people who look like they might be begging or casing out buildings. You're not loitering or talking to anyone who you might make uncomfortable so they assume you're some kind of minor lord or at least a minimum wage servant and let you be. You soon arrive outside the Countess Amelie de Fraude's manor where the Grand Ball is to take place. An early wedding gift from the Count to his wife to be, it's a very large newly built mansion situated within a walled and fantastically well-tended garden. The front yard currently happens to be crowded with the almost-great and not-quite-so-good of Bilgeton society who are waiting to find out whether they will be admitted to the do of the season. A long, snaking line of fantastically-dressed humans leads to the porch where a couple of skeleton household guards in their ceremonial (in other words, clean and ironed) heraldic garb stand with halberds crossed, making a big show of checking a list of names on a comically long scroll before deciding whether the supplicant is in or out. From the sumptuous ballroom you can glimpse beyond the guards you can hear the posh laughter of the incredibly wealthy mixed with the strains of a saltarello being played by a wind and percussion troupe hired to entertain the upper crust.

If you're happy to join the queue for the entrance then turn to 1485. If you'd rather find a quicker way in then turn to 1691.

41

It goes against everything you believe but you somehow restrain yourself from coming on to the poor lady. She somehow seems a little disappointed as she tucks you in. Bidding you a rather reluctant goodnight, she returns to her chamber. You spend a little while kicking yourself for not making a move but eventually drift off back to sleep again.

You are woken once again by the sound of soft footsteps approaching your sleeping spot. The fire's gone out and it's pitch black. You're about to ask if anyone's there when you feel warm breath on your face and soft wet lips brushing against yours. You guess she couldn't resist your charms, what with them being irresistable and all, and is no longer willing or able to wait for you to make the first move. Here's your chance!

If you go for it, turn to 349. If you somehow manage to control yourself then you turn her away: turn to 1303.

42

The wizard scoffs.

"You can't even pronounce it correctly, let alone afford it. And even if you could, what would you do with it? Your limited palate couldn't even begin to appreciate the craftsmanship that goes into my bespoke cocktail creations".

If you insist on getting your drink then turn to 262. If you're growing weary of this wizard and this horrible place you could just leave - turn to 1532.

43

Clearing away some of the rubble in your room you locate the Seeing Glass under a heap of disused corsets and hook up the Azari PCS console. You've got a cartridge with 4000 games on it and you've barely mastered 2000 of them. The high scores table in the hit classic "The Sword of the Bastard Elf" isn't going to entirely fill itself with the word "ASS" all on its own.

You spend the rest of your life being a worthless piece of shit and playing video games all day.

44

You've had more than enough of this forest and its inhabitants so, bidding it a less than pleasant farewell, you head in what you think is the general direction of Bilgeton by skirting around the outside of the lake and hooking southeast. You soon exit the woods and find yourself under the open skies once more. Turn to 268.

45

You once heard from a lorewarden that humans bury each other with their stuff, a ridiculous notion to anyone raised by elfs (they prefer to strip their dead naked and abandon them wherever they fall). Still, if it's true, there could be some free loot in it for you!

Unfortunately, after a little exploratory scratching you realise that the humans are buried kind of deep, and also you're drawing some suspicious stares from passers-by on the nearby street. If you'd like to head around the back of the church so as to keep prying eyes away from what you're up to then turn to 1260. If you don't see the problem here then turn to 997.

46

The court room is packed for the day's proceedings. Trials are something of a spectator sport in Bilgeton and townsfolk with nothing better to do will often loiter around to watch people less fortunate than themselves get found almost invariably guilty and sentenced to one of the amusing death sentences on the Bilgeton justice code's books.

You stand in the defendant's booth and over you on a raised dais looms the judge - the fearsome Magistrate Beltz, his ridiculous white wig and pantomime gown a stark contrast to his furious ruddy face. He looks at you like a man who's already made up his mind about you.

"You stand accused of..." he starts, then checks his notes. Not finding any mention of you he shuffles the papers for a moment while he thinks, "...crimes. You stand accused of crimes, of a most serious nature. The sentence for crimes is death". At this the crowd cheers. Beltz waits for the applause to die down before continuing: "How do you plead?".
Since you don't currently want to die, you declare yourself innocent.

"We'll see about that. Wait, have you no lawyer? It is the law of the land that if you have no lawyer the court will appoint you one. Or, for all the good a court lawyer would do you, you can defend yourself".

Do you want a court lawyer (turn to 1422)? Or are you going to attempt to defend yourself? If so turn to 52.

47

Getting these brownies to shut up is going to be impossible. You're going to have to bluff your way past these guards using your superior persuasion techniques.

The guards approach and hear the ruckus your bag is making.

"Traveller", says one, "Your bag appears to be arguing with itself. I insist that you allow us to take a look".

You arch an eyebrow, give them your smarmiest smile and invite them to be your guests.

As soon as the first guard approaches the bag you yell for the brownies to attack! About half of the brownies swarm out of the bag and assault the poor guy just as he's opening it up for a look. As he runs around in circles screaming under the stabbing needles and pincing pliers of the household helpers you do battle with the other one:

🔪**BRUNNENFELD HALBERDIER: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1**

If you simply can't defeat this master of arms then turn to 1712.

If you win then you cut him down just as the brownies are finishing off their hapless adversary. You may avail yourself of the guards' equipment - they won't need it anymore after all! Add a Cheap Halberd, a Dented Helm and a Soiled Gambeson to your Adventure Scroll if you like.

Your looting completed (or not), you kick the bodies into the undergrowth and continue towards Brunnenfeld before anyone realises the patrol's gone missing. Turn to 777.

48

You tell the owl to piss off and the magical ring compels it to do so. It stomps away into the woods in search of something that isn't equipped with an enchanted ring that prevents the wearer from becoming owl food. Feeling safe against the horrible denizens of this forest (more or less) you ignore the cacophony of horrible screeches and howls echoing through the woods and settle down in the spongy soil for a nice long snooze.

Turn to 386.

49

The guards shove you into your new digs: a dark, pokey prison cell consisting of nothing but a couple of piles of straw and a thick oak door with a heavy iron bolt to keep everything firmly locked inside. The only light comes from a small barred slit set near the ceiling which opens onto a street gutter within the city. Along with the light it also allows access to the repulsive odours of Bilgeton - and, as you will find out over the coming days, weeks and months - a surprising quantity of rainwater, insects, garbage and various unidentifiable slimes. In other words it's not a lot worse than your tower back home but you miss all your stuff. You ask a guard where you can plug in an Azari games console and a scrying orb but the only response is a snarl as he slams the door shut in your face. You hear the heavy bolt drawing and boots stomping away up the stairs and that's the last you see of anyone for a good long while.

Days pass- and then weeks - without you seeing another person aside from the occasional pair of feet walking around outside the window. The only nourishment you get is whatever's thrown into your window by those passers-by, plus all the cockroaches you can eat. Although this fare is more nutritious than the lembas and leaves you used to have to eat at home and the complete lack of anything to do here means you can sit around doing nothing all day like you've always dreamed (restore your EFFORT to its maximum score), you're beginning to get bored. You wonder if anyone outside even knows you're in here.

If you want to try to break out of this dump then turn to 365. If you want to wait around for your day in court then turn to 1411.

50

As trying as it is you manage to engage in an honest, frank and miserably tedious dialog with the dragon about your feelings, hopes for the future and relationship goals. Finally, the dragon leaves off as you're approaching the walls of Bilgeton. Taking advantage of the lull in the conversation you ask to be let off.

"Are you ashamed to be seen with me?" Bhad roars sadly, almost on the verge of tears again, but you comfort the dragon and explain that you're worried that the humans will attack it. Bhad complains but finally and sniffily agrees, and soon lands behind a copse of trees off the side of a wide road heading south-east towards the city walls.

"Come back to me when you're done in Bilgeton", says Bhad as you leap of the weirdly clingy dragon's back with unseemly haste. "Don't forget about me. Don't leave me waiting like your d.... well, just be back in time for supper".

Inwardly swearing never to have anything to do with this needy dragon again you stride off down the road towards Bilgeton, its walls looming large just a few miles away along the road.

Turn to 1732.

51

Mercifully, it's not much further to your destination, otherwise the grumbling would probably have spilled over into mutiny no matter how closely you stuck to Rouge-Gorge. Before the angry ruffians can do away with you and your foppish leader, however, you arrive at the location of the lich's barrow. It's apparently accessed via a vine-choked burial mound in a run-down old cemetary called "Ye Graveyarde of Kinges", if the ancient boundary stone you nearly tripped over is anything to go by. The moon hangs balefully in the sky, illuminating the desolate site - fallen headstones, broken stele and, disturbingly, black pits which you're nearly certain are excavated graves. If you weren't so worried about the threat from the increasingly mis-named Merry Men you'd be far more disturbed by the godsawfully lonesome appearance of this graveyard and distressed about the possibility of encountering whatever was digging those graves up.

Fortunately, Rouge-Gorge knows how to handle surly mercenaries and gives a belter of a speech promising riches awaiting the men who are brave enough to follow him into the lich's lair and butcher the undead horror. Since the lich is responsible for a rash of ghouls, non-union skeletons and the like, Tedbald's estate will pay handsomely for the monster's demise, plus the opportunities for looting in the lich's lair are unparalleled.

Although the interest of the Merry Men seems piqued by all this talk of riches, they still don't seem totally sold on the plan. You're not sure whether these ruffians can be talked out of whatever mutinous plots they'd begun hatching on the way here, though maybe if the witch-slayer made an effort of some kind to look supportive of the leader the men might fall in line.

If you'd like to stand by Rouge-Gorge's leadership then turn to 1420. If you'd like to make yourself scarce for a while then turn to 1544.

52

You trust your silver tongue to get you out of this scrape. Regrettably other people find your tongue to be more "smarmy" and "obnoxious" than silver and the lawyers from the prosecution seem to be asking you some tricky questions that make you sound guilty no matter which way you answer. You begin to wonder if you haven't made a horrible mistake.

SELF DEFENCE: DIFFICULTY 10* - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 4

Add 1 to the DIFFICULTY for each of the following crimes you've committed: destroyed Brunnenfeld, summoned a demon and failed to get rid of it, personally annoyed the Count, gone berserk in or been run out of Bilgeford, failed to complete a task for Witold or killed the Warlock of Warlock Tower.
Deduct 1 for each great monster or demon you've made a note of slaying, for destroying a pixie, elf and/or brownie town, if you sold or gave the Feewald Map to a human at some point and if you have a Noble Crest marked on your Adventure Scroll.
Add 1 FIST to this HASSLE if the court-appointed lawyer has attempted to defend you already - the jury will be baying for your blood!

If you succeed then turn to 659. If you fail then turn to 1393.

53

Displaying a savagery born of desperation you rush forward, put the fat priest in a headlock, suplex him through a stele and, leaping spryly to your feet, put the prone priest in an excruciatingly painful spinning toe hold, stepping over his free leg repeatedly. Who thought you had it in you?

THE HUMBLER (FINISHER): DIFFICULTY 8

If you manage to overcome this test then turn to 73. If you ease off the priest or can't finish the lesson then turn to 185.

54

Putting the dingy bar behind you, you emerge back in to the town square. It's still bustling as the merchants go about their various trades. You have no idea why humans are so into swapping goods on this scale - the elfs of Elfsdale Downs only dealt in cobblestones and you're pretty sure no one was doing anything so crass as paying for those.

If you want to question the marketplace vendors then turn to 787. If you'd prefer to check out the town instead you can take the path on the left along which you can see a bunch of fancy houses and a church spire by turning to 501, or you trek past the humbler but presumably more productive buildings of the tradesmen's row on the right by turning to 1473. If you'd rather just get the hells out of here then you slip out of the gate and strike out south following a well-worn dirt trail leading away from Brunnenfeld: turn to 372.

55

Having defeated you, Milner brays annoyingly and trots off to the north in the general direction of the Alp of Abandonment. You follow, and the hills around Gobholme transition into flat plains stretching off into the horizon, where you can see a saw-toothed mountain range which you believe must be the Skytrap Mountains. Before that you can see a huge shimmering lake, rolling tundra and a large mountain standing alone - the forbidding-sounding Alp of Abandonment.

Sadly, your sedentary lifestyle which continued unbroken from birth until a couple of days ago has betrayed you - you're not fit enough to keep up the slow jog demanded by this donkey and it soon leaves you behind. You watch helplessly as it trots away ahead of you to the north, eventually becoming a black dot and then disappearing into the landscape after a few hours.

Cursing Jeff for deliberately raising you in such a way as to not allow you to reach your peak physical condition and simultaneously castigating him for kicking you out of your cushy lifestyle of doing literally nothing all the time, you consider your next move. If you wish to continue towards the Alp you could head there straight over the tundra - turn to 1297 - or you could take a more scenic route and follow alongside the lake by turning to 1790. On the other hand, you could follow the donkey's example and just abandon this stupid mission by turning to 114.

56

It's been a long, long walk and you're bushed. You lie down under a tree and try to get some shuteye. Despite your discomfort at being outside the spongy soil is surprisingly comfortable and you find yourself clocking out before you know it. Restore 10 EFFORT.

Your dreams are troubled by the constant sensation of Bilge bugs buzzing around and nibbling on your skin and the distant sounds of unspeakable things screeching and howling in the night, but true to everything Jeff ever said about your layabout nature you dutifully snooze on. You even ignore the crashing noise of trees being torn apart nearby and the vibrations in the soft ground growing into veritable tremors as something approaches...

What finally wakes you up is a terrifying screech and the feeling of your scalp beginning to tear away from your skull. Your eyes flick open to see the horrifying sight of a colossal Hulking Owl wrenching at your hair as it attempts to drag you back to its nest. Even in this dense forest the wan light of the moon reveals the beast's dinner plate-sized yellow eyes, its razor-sharp beak and its cruel talons flashing in the dark as it batters and rips at you. You manage to surprise the bird beast with your sudden awakening and accompanying hooting, hollering and thrashing: it loosens its grip on your hair just enough for you to pull yourself free, with the loss of a good chunk of your coif. Eyes watering, you leap to your feet and prepare to face:

🔪**THE INCREDIB-OWL HULK: DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you prevail then turn to 1244. If you can't beat this monster then turn to 1533. If you're not inclined to fight and you have the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes equipped, you can use it now by turning to 48.

57

Murdering a gnome for his hat has sated your bloodlust for the evening and you find you have no further appetite for destruction. Restore 5 EFFORT from the unexpected inner peace you seem to be enjoying.

If you're all tuckered out and want to get some shuteye then turn to 1714 to find a place to sleep. Turn to 1249 if you want to see if the gnome has anything good in his house first.

58

"Don't hit me!" you scream as the guards approach the door. They give you a sheepish look.

"There's been a misunderstanding, sir, and no mistake", replies the blonde-moustached one rather sheepishly. "After apprehending ye we found in your possession more than a hundred sets of enchanted tools of the type used only by those cursed brownies. We banished them from Brunnenfeld for their shoddy workmanship and we've been trying to stop them sneaking back into town ever since. Their craftsmanship is abysmal but they be utterly enthused about it, and brownies would rather die than part with their tools or give up on ruining our stuff. You've done Brunnenfeld a good turn, it seems".

Seizing the moment you deliver a thoroughly unrealistic and fantastical account of your dealings with the brownies, focusing on your bravery, initiative and general heroism in single-handedly genociding the fairy menace. By the end of your brag the guards are visibly bored.

"Yes, well. Our thanks have ye, and the freedom of Brunnenfeld to boot. Our lord, Sir Witold, sent word that he wanted to see you - his manor lies uptown. Take any street from the market square up to the end. Ye can't miss the place, it's huge. And please take this Guilder as an apology from the Brunnenfeld Militia."

The blonde moustached guard flips you a tiny gold coin which you just barely catch. Add 1 Guilder to your Cash section.

If you'd like to complain about this paltry sum then turn to 110. Otherwise you collect your junk and head out of the jailhouse, emerging into the main square of Brunnenfeld - turn to 16.

59

"Next!"

The line shuffles forward again and stops. Roll a die and lose that amount of EFFORT.

Assuming you're not bored to death, will you risk skeletonisation in hopes of getting to that counter? If so turn to 283 to keep waiting. If not it's time to go. Turn to 827.

60

You throw your hands up in the air in the universal sign of chickening out. The old farmer grins. Holding his pitchfork steadily at your eye level, he waits for the lady to emerge from the outhouse - you can't help but notice she's kind of attractive in a human kind of way - and then prods you in, shutting and latching the door behind you from the outside. You watch through the crescent shaped cut-out as he props a stool up against the door and takes a seat. You're stuck here for the night.

Turn to 748.

61

Dropping to your knees and hugging the skeleton's bony ankles you beg and plead for mercy. Unfortunately for you, the undead being has none (or at least none for you). Your cries for clemency are met by a hard blow which knocks the wind out of you and lays you flat on the ground. Lose 5 EFFORT.

Just as the skeleton is raising its weapon for another attempt at finishing you off, you hear a hoarse bellow from the top floor of the tower where you can see the outline of a cloaked figure silhouetted against the light blazing out of a balcony doorway.

"BLAST YOU THIGHBONE YOU CRETINOUS OAF, THAT'S NOT A PLOUGHING ELF. WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU BLOODY DOING FAFFING AROUND WITH THE POOR BUGGER WHEN THERE'S A BLASTED GAGGLE OF THE SHITTING CREEPS OUT THERE?"

The skeleton freezes at this tirade and turns to chitter out a response to the robed figure, giving you a chance to get away.

If you'd like to crawl off then turn to 761. If you'd like to stick around and hear the outcome of this conversation then turn to 1094.

62

Tying your rope to a stalagmite, you slowly lower yourself into the pitch-black abyss. It's a long way down and you're glad you packed enough rope, but any ideas you had of crossing over to the other side are soon forgotten as you scale further and further down into the unimaginable blackness of this void under the earth.

Eventually you feel something soft underfoot. Striking a spark from your flint you see that it's a huge mound of granulated white sand or something similar. You're in a large, dark subterranean chamber, even darker and more subterranean than the one you just climbed down from. A single eight-foot wide. perfectly round tunnel exits this chamber on the other side of the room which is nearly completely filled with heaps like the one you just touched down on.

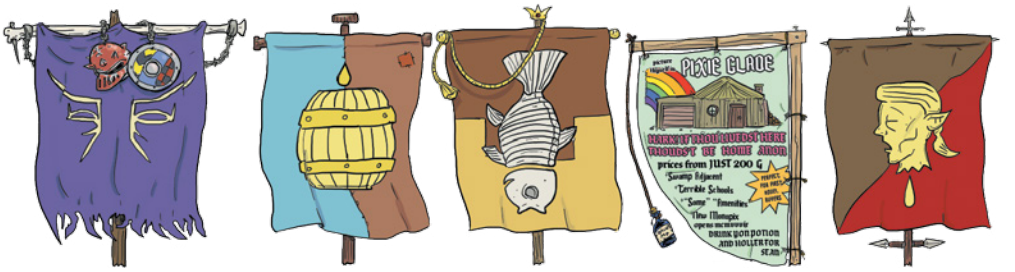
If you've seen enough you can climb right back up and take your chances with the Malrog - turn to 1081. Otherwise you could fossick around in the strange sandy material in case it's concealing something useful - turn to 438 to do this. If you'd rather leave the stuff alone you can venture on deeper into the tunnels - remove Enough Rope from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1272.

63

You shove your way across the market and enter the small Silvermane's Sundries. Inside all is chaos - the cramped store is stacked to the rafters with cages. Most of them contain animals ranging from the domestic to the exotic, though a number of them are open and the former occupants are racing around the shop screeching, barking and yowling. A young lady with short brown hair is chasing the critters, fruitlessly attempting to recapture them. Luckily the door swings shut behind you on its own because an elongated rat-like creature makes a dash for the exit, crashing into the door with a thud and a squeal. The girl looks over at the source of this noise and notices you standing there. She stops what she's doing and gazes at you with an exhausted, drawn expression.

"Hi, and welcome to Silvermane's Sundries... sorry about the mess, I'm trying to get the store set up, but opening day's come and gone and I just can't...." she starts, but trails off when she realises she's rambling. "Sorry. I'm Emilie, the owner of this franchise location. Can I help you?" she says, recovering.

If you've been sent here on a mission to deliver the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes to Emilie then turn to 1144. If you're just here to fence animals or animal parts then turn to 993. If you feel like helping the girl out with her problems then turn to 361. If you'd rather just leave then turn to 1475.



64

Though your intentions are friendly you're paralysed with fear and stand rigidly with a rictus grin plastered across your face as the caravan approaches. The procession is made up of several large painted wagons loaded with goods and each driven by what you assume are humans bedecked in furs and silks. A bowman sits casually on the back of each wagon, with bow unstringed. You've never seen anything like these people but the strangest thing of all are the teams of giant two-legged birds that are pulling the wagons along: four are harnessed to each cart, a loudly squawking procession of beaks and feathers perched atop thick, powerful legs. They flap their short wings wildly as they stomp along surprisingly quickly for such lumbering creatures.

Eventually the carriages draw near enough that they must stop to avoid running you over and one of the men, perhaps misinterpreting your social anxiety for bravado, calls down from his seat atop the lead carriage:

"Hail and well met, traveller. What urgent business occasions this interruption of the great merchant Hulagu's commerce?"

If you want to explain yourself then turn to 1625. If you'd prefer to step aside and let them pass before you inevitably ruin your fortuitously good first impression then turn to 513.

65

Karol beams like a child at Christmas and continues down the tunnel. You follow him, bored out of your mind as he stops to collect soil samples and investigate the occasional tiny cracks in the earthen walls, scrutinising them with a magnifying glass.

This goes on for so long that Karol's torch finally gutters out and you're plunged into darkness. Karol says something sharp that you interpret as an obscenity.

"To był ostatni!" he elaborates. Since you're both sitting here in the dark you guess he's out of torches. You'll have to navigate by the light of your flint from here on out. You retrieve the lighter from your backpack and give it a strike, lighting the tunnel. A few paces later, another strike. Paces, strike. Paces, strike. And so on. It's annoying but there aren't really any obstacles here and it doesn't slow you down much. Anyway, since you've already come this far you may as well see how deep the hole goes.

Turn to 1272.

66

The massive chamber you've just entered is huge - if the residents of this medieval-type setting played football the size could be compared to a football field, but instead you'll have to make do with a comparison to a bladderwhack pitch, bladderwhack being the made-up sport generally played for fun around these parts. Anyway, foul water spills into this bladerwhack pitch-sized chamber from numerous tunnels, crevices and pipes lining the walls, filling the huge subterranean room to an unknown but probably unfathomable depth. Light filters in from cracks in the ceiling high above, shining dimly through roiling clouds of noxious fumes. You can almost chew the air and you choke as it fills your lungs. It smells unbelievable foul, like liquid crimes. As you look around you see that the water is full of garbage - the usual bits of flotsam and jetsam, oily slurries that float on the surface and shimmer in the half-light, a huge number of dead birds and rats, and you count at least half a dozen dead humans or elfs floating face down in this horrible soup. You try to avoid getting even a droplet in your mouth.

The water in here moves slowly but surely towards a weir at the other end of the chamber, but as you drift along you begin to notice clusters of bubbles bursting on the surface of the sewage in front of you. Dismissing it as gas from whatever's rotting in that slime you ignore it and try to paddle along towards the weir, but you've got the uneasy feeling that something's watching you...

Something is - and it bursts out from under the sewage in front of you, a terrifying tangle of snapping reptilian heads, glowing yellow eyes and a huge thrashing tail which churns the sewage into a whirlpool of ordure. You face the Bilgeton Hydra!

BILGETON HYDRA: DIFFICULTY 11 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3
If you are in the water (swimming or floating in a barrel for instance) you suffer -1 ÉLAN as you have some difficulty fighting and keeping your head above water at the same time.

If you prevail then turn to 1150. If you can't beat this thing you need to think fast. Will you beg for mercy - turn to 1560 - or will you play dead (turn to 86)? Otherwise if you're still carrying around any Meat or other edible animal parts you can try to use them to distract this horrible beast - turn to 1723 to give this a whirl. Failing all else you can simply paddle as fast as you can for the weir at the other end of the chamber by turning to 1088.

67

You're not great at chess but it's one of the few games played by virtually all types of sentient beings and you can't really think of anything else. The Prince of Shards accepts and, using some infernal magic, summons an ornate brass chess table and a couple of uncomfortable stools out of thin air. The board is made of pure obsidian and ivory, as are the demonically-inspired but masterfully-crafted pieces. The demon takes a seat at the black side of the board and you apprehensively pull up a stool at the white side, trying desperately to think of a good opening move.

Suddenly the Prince of Shards moves his rook, jumping over his pawns to bring it several spaces forward. You try not to display your confusion and play your move, but the demon keeps messing up. If the Prince of Shards, playing you at chess for your soul, chose the black army then why did he take the first move? Why does he keep trying to move his bishops like knights? After a few turns it becomes evident that he simply doesn't know how to play chess at all - unless the tricky demon is testing you somehow. You wipe some sweat from your brow.

If you keep your mouth shut for now, turn to 1184.
If you politely correct his chessmanship, turn to 894.
If you put your theory to the test and yell "checkmate!" after your next move, turn to 249.

68

When you finally come back to your senses you find yourself suspended from a dead tree by one of your belts. You have no idea what time it is but it's probably unconscionably early in the morning. Ignoring the pain in your arse for now, you use the high vantage point to look around. You can see the huge, unwelcoming chasm containing the subterranean Busted Hill just behind you, and nearby to the north you see the middle of a great mountain chain which stretches off in the distance to the east and west, its jagged peaks rising vertiginously into the sky. Busted Hill was probably once one a foothill of this range before it collapsed into the earth. Less impressively but also probably far less dangerously, to the south and east lie scrublands dotted with numerous stands of trees. Although your bearings are a bit off after an extended time underground you think this might be the most direct route to Bilgeton, though maybe not the most interesting or even the safest.

Having made your observations, you undo the belt and let yourself fall. You land with a thud on the stony ground, though unfortunately your belt remains tangled in the tree above and with your busted arse there's no way you can climb up to get it. If you have a belt equipped you must remove it from your Adventure Scroll (if you have multiple belts you may choose which one is lost). Otherwise you lose one of the several lesser belts which makes up the standard half elf outfit - an annoying loss but not critical.

As you begin to move you quickly realise that you're hurt quite badly and can't walk faster than a hobbling limp - lose 1 ÉLAN from your freshly cracked arsebone. At least you've been out for long enough that any effects of alcohol have left your system - restore any ÉLAN you may have lost from being drunk.

Now, will you head up into mountains? If so turn to 252. Otherwise you set off across the trackless scrub lands - turn to 1382.

69

Nice.

70

The colonel gives you a sound thrashing, but he's far too much of a gentleman to take your bird without your express permission. Once you're on the ground, grovelling and crying for mercy, he finally relents.

"Boy, you're madder than a wet hen. I reckon I tanned your hide enough for two of you, but if'n I catch you talking rude around me or mine again I'll be fit to be tied. I'll leave you be to think about what you've learned this night: good day".

With that the man wanders off down the road, whistling merrily as you lay on the ground in a pool of your various fluids, thoroughly humiliated. You briefly wonder why you even left home but then you remember that Jeff threw you out. The seething hatred keeps you awake pretty much all night - between that and the beating you don't recover any EFFORT for your rest though if you're affected by potions or alcohol or the like it'll wear off.

Consequently you're up incredibly early and witness the first sunrise you've ever seen. It's awful and you never want to see one again. Groaning, you painfully haul yourself up atop the bird and give it an unfriendly kick to get it moving. It squawks loudly and lurches off down the road, jangling your tenderised muscles with every step. It's going to be a long day.

Turn to 1455.

71

You try to explain that you are a free brother and that you owe no allegiance to any man. The guard looks unimpressed.

"So, a deserter. And a stupid one at that since you've come here still wearing the uniform. But don't fret, we have a place for you".

That place is the gibbet! Your adventure ends with you dangling above the town gates as a warning to anyone else stupid enough to wander through a guard checkpoint in a stolen uniform.

72

Whereas the Zwarte Piets at least roused the indignation of the crowd you merely managed to bore them with your tuneless noise-making. Before you're halfway through your first stanza the crowd is already booing and by the second verse you're being pelted with rotten fruit and vegetables. While you can tolerate tomatoes and, to a lesser extent, apples, you realise the gig's up when a rock troll nails you right in the chest with a whole pumpkin, knocking all the wind out of your sails. You collapse to the stage gasping for breath and the skeleton ushers drag you off. As the audience cheers at your downfall, The Waits (a popular Bilgeton act) step up to perform their set.

Although your musical debut was hardly a rousing success, at least you were brave enough to get up on stage and give it a shot. Consoled with such vacuous prattle you climb back up the rickety stairs and out of the pit. It's late, you're dripping with pumpkin and it's time to go find that place to crash at long last.

Turn to 1793.

73

Chlothar, despite being a named character and appearing in a number of sections in this adventure, is something of a jabroni when it comes to no-holds-barred wrestling and at some point between your slamming his spine through a gravestone and nearly ripping his leg off the poor priest gives up the ghost. At least you're the only witness, aside from that cursed shovel which watches everything you've done with its impassive iron face. Make a note that the shovel's seen you slay Chlothar.

You decide to cover up your crimes - shoving the skeleton and the priest into the grave you hollowed out, you pile some dirt on top and pat it down. But will a little topsoil be enough to cover up your deed?

If you're pretty sure you're safe, you can continue on your way nonchalantly up the lane by turning to 1236, or you can return the way you came and slip out of town through the gate before anyone raises a hue and cry by turning to 338. If you'd better burn the church down just to be on the safe side then turn to 1800.

74

The skeleton collapses in a heap.

If you'd like to loot the skeleton's remains then turn to 1322. If you'd like to continue on to the tower turn to 1680. If you just want to get the hells out of here then turn to 1424.

75

You're hardly in mint condition but this is a medieval fantasy setting so almost everyone is caked in mud, blood and soot nearly all the time. Anyhow you seem harmless enough: the guards stop fidgeting with their halberds and crossbows and come forward to meet you.

"What ho, traveller?" says one, "I assume you're here to play some cards with the Count. Well, we don't let just any brigand hassle our paymaster. I mean, liege".

Recovering from this mistake he continues: "Count Hugues isn't called "The Mark" for nothing, and we don't let people play cards against him for nothing either. Get it?"

Seeing the blank look on your face he tries a different tack. He steps to one side and behind him you see the nobleman who must be the Count dropping his hand clumsily and, after picking up the cards, increasing his bet. The guard blocks your view again with a smirk.

"Now do you get it? If you want to play cards against The Mark, we want half of what you win. Or you can piss off. What'll it be?"

If you're here to play cards then turn to 1134. If you insist that you just want to talk to the nobleman then turn to 1048. If you'd rather be on your way then turn to 728.

76

You slither out the door to the raucous amusement of the goblins. As always you'd rather get laughed at than pummelled, though you'll be sure to to tell Jeff about this episode when you're gloating over him about all the success you're planning on achieving out here. Lose 5 EFFORT from the unbearable chagrin.

You find yourself back outside on the streets of Gobholme. Turn to 192.

77

Wizards usually know what's going on so you attempt to get this one's attention. It takes a while as the white-robed snob steadfastly ignores you in favour of the black-suited servants coming over to give him their orders in some strange tongue. Eventually he realises that you're not going away. Sighing and rolling his eyes he finally turns his attention to you.

"Yeeeees? Can I help you?"

You ask him what he's doing. He sighs again.

"I am the mixologist". You ask him if that's anything like a bartender.

"I did not study illusion and conjugation in the Bilgeton Spire for two score years to be styled a 'bartender'. Mixology is a true art, and only I'm doing it to pay off my student debts - which are sizeable - until something better comes along. Now, what will it be?"

You ask to see a drinks list. He sighs once again and waves a hand around. A glowing menu appears in the air right before your eyes.

Will you order:

The "l'ordure fermentée pour les riches" : turn to 42.
The "le bite de nain" : turn to 1198.
The "le baiser de la langue du dragon" : turn to 1328.
The "la boisson pour le demi-elfe qui n'a aucune idée de ce qu'il a commandé" : turn to 162.

78

While the Pole keeps Bhad distracted you make a quick tour of the treasure hoard, picking out items you think you can get away with stealing. You end up snaffling 20 Guilders worth of gold and gems (add this to your Adventure Scroll), a Full Harness of Steel Plate and a Palavan Army Knife. Now loaded down with as much of the dragon's hoard as you can carry you look over to Karol, but he waves you away in irritation and goes back to speaking in his weird language with his gigantic blue interlocutor. Taking the hint, you sneak out of the cave and back onto the frozen tundra outside.

Add your new items to the Adventure Scroll and remove the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole - you doubt you'll be seeing him again. Wiping a tear from your eye (maybe, depending on how much you liked the guy) you set out on your long and lonely journey south towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 889.

79

You take a run-up and leap atop a nearby thoroughbred just as the first of the guardsmen are re-emerging from the edge of the clearing, halberds lowered and crossbows raised to fire. Or at least you try to. Having never ridden a horse before you're not real slick at this, and the damn beast isn't helping much.

SADDLE UP: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1

If you succeed add the Noble Steed to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1432.

If you give up, you awkwardly flail at the side of the horse until it wanders off, leaving you in a tight spot. The guards are steadily approaching and through the eye slits in their cheap metal helmets you can see them eyeballing you like they mean business.

"Halt, fiend, and... Boss damn it, what am I supposed to say", one of the halberd guards yells in a way that suggests that he's forgotten some line he's been practicing for a while.

"Face justice", bellows the other halberd guard quietly to his colleague. "Face justice!" roars the first. Behind them a third guard shakes his head sadly at the simplicity of his comrades in arms as he winches another bolt into his crossbow.

You're probably boned. It's too late to run - you'll be shot in the back if you turn to flee now, and that's even if you can evade the halberds of the guards who are now close enough to take a chop at you.

If you give up at the first obstacle like Jeff says you always do, then surrender by turning to 126. If you'd rather fight your way out of this mess then turn to 1495.

80

The guard looks up as you approach. Until now you had considered your outfit the height of fashion but it looks so similar to what the servants are wearing that the incompetent oaf doesn't notice your wild, bloodshot eyes, your trembling hands or the panic sweat seeping through the armpits of your doublet. Instead of poleaxing you he simply grunts as you pass through the door before going back to his book.

If you have the Confessor's Shovel equipped then turn at once to 751, otherwise you make your way through a busy kitchen teeming with chefs and servants where you're loaded down with a tray of fancy hors d'oeuvres for the guests. On the other side of the kitchen you push a heavy door open and find yourself in the main ballroom! Pausing only to messily cram a handful of the nibbles into your face (restore 5 EFFORT) you dump the tray into a nearby pot plant and step onto the dance floor.

Turn to 585.

81

You tell Aggie about the mission you've been sent on by Chlothar.

"That sanctimonious little prick, eh? I was fucking worried he'd bloody well sent me back another worker. The fat cretin returned the last few blasted gardeners because they wouldn't take bloody redemption or whatever the hells bollocks those bloody wankers mumble about over their whisky. Well, let's have a ploughing look at him".

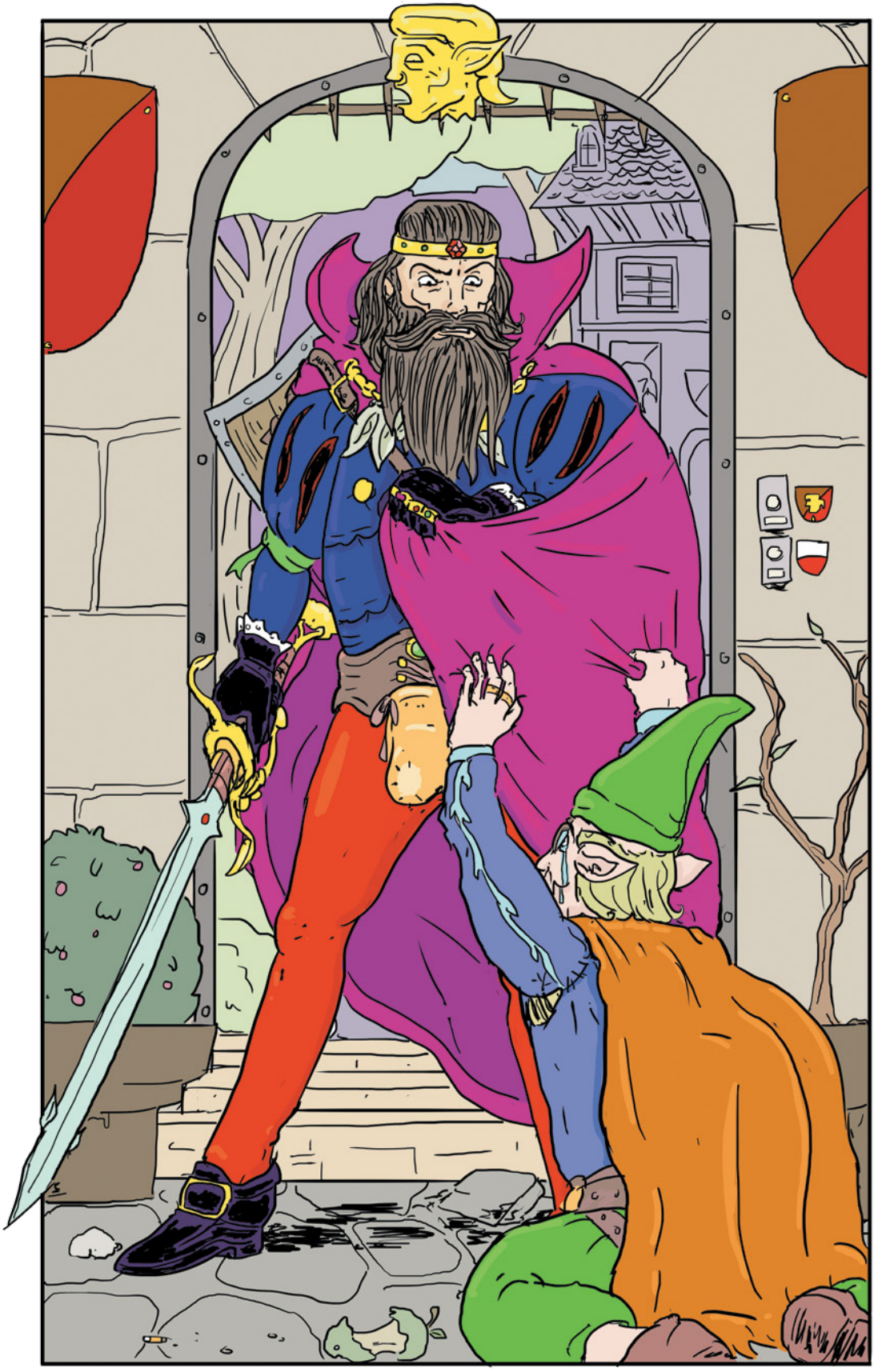
You chuck the sack containing what's left of Greenbones on the floor (remove Skellybones from your Adventure Scroll). Aggie laughs heartily.

"Did a right fucking number on him, didn't you? Reckon you'll be a great bloody help with those ploughing elfs. Don't worry about bloody Greenbones here, I'll have him patched up and back to the ploughing priest in no time. Now you're rid of that turbulent bloody priest what do you say to doing a ploughing job for me?"

You're free of your obligation to Chlothar. If you've been collecting sacks of bones and want to turn over the Bag of Child Bones as well then turn to 693. Otherwise if you're ready to battle the elfs for Aggie then turn to 704. If you'd prefer to keep out of it then turn to 532 instead.

82

Your tranquillity is shattered one morning by a knock on the front door. It's your guardsman, who informs you that there's a visitor outside who has requested to meet with you in person. Looking through the gate you lock eyes with none other than that filthy, good-for-nothing scumbag Jeff! You grab your sword from its home behind the door and striding down the path you fling open the gate. Jeff, the home-wrecker, cause of all your misery and murderer of your childhood, stands before you, his posture that of abject humility and tears shining in his eyes. You grip the pommel of your sword as he speaks.



"Son... I must speak with you. I met you and your mother when you were but a babe of ten years, and watched you grow to be a young man. Although it almost slew me to be so harsh with you, I knew that you would squander your life among the elfs, and I pushed you from the nest so you could realise your potential. I followed along behind you all this time, helping where I could without being seen, hoping I could help keep you safe. And now, here you are, a knight, wielding your own sword forged from the very blade I wished to pass down to you when I died. I am so very proud of you, my son."

Your hand tightens around the grip of your sword. If you want to cut Jeff down before he can rob you of any more of your childhood, turn to 504. If instead you've previously told the city guard the Jeff had committed some crime or another and would like to turn him in then turn to 1596. However, perhaps his speech has kindled the recognition that, despite his flaws, Jeff is just an elf trying to do his best by you and that his efforts deserve to be reciprocated. If so, turn to 1289.

83

Continuing to ignore the pleas of the captive kids you run through the flames and smoke towards the exit. You make it out just in time - the yelling is silenced by the house collapsing as the supporting beams give way. Packed as it is with highly flammable potions and alchemical reagents the place goes up like a matchbox. The fire is too intense to allow even a cursory attempt at looting and it looks like it's fit to burn for a good long while.

Not wanting to stick around in case anyone shows up, you decide to hit the road. Turn to 1581.

84

Your long-suffering wife is horrified to see you walking into a brothel. Even before the saloon doors have swung open she's got you by the ear and is dragging you back out towards the Synod as you squeal like a stuck pig, Lose 5 EFFORT from the agonising pain and the public humiliation of being towed through the busy marketplace as Nilde berates you at length. She doesn't release you until you're outside the Synod where she lapses into a sullen silence.

Turn to 495.

85

You're at least a head taller than all the goblins here, so this should be an easy 5 Guilders. You step boldy into the ring.

"New challenger!", shouts the announcer, "The... what do they call you? Never mind....The Jabbing Jabroni will fight Krung for his title and the purse!"

Hearing his name called, Krung emerges from the privy behind the ring. Like all goblins he's short but he's unusually stocky. He's also wearing a thick harness of plate from head to toe and his gauntleted fists are covered in sharp spikes and studs which are still dripping with blood and gore left over from tenderising the guy you saw dragged out of here earlier. You go deathly pale - how the hell are you supposed to fight that?

86-88

You soon find you don't have a choice - as you're trying to stammer your excuses at the announcer he yells, "Fight!". Krung advances on you, his armoured fists raised:

🔪**KRUNG: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 3**

Krung's armour is largely impervious to your flailings - you must re-roll any of your FIST dice that score 4 or higher. The second roll stands. If you have the Knuckledusters or Class Ring equipped this has no effect.

If you throw in the towel then turn to 1755. If you somehow prevail, turn to 701.

86

This might not be the smartest move. Filth hydras, which is the kind of hydra this one is, are carrion feeders which means they prefer their prey dead and, where possible, rotting. Your natural cowardice makes you excellent at playing possum, and after your days on the road you're emitting an odour which gives a pretty good impression of the something that's been dead for a while. In other words, all you've managed to do is pique this thing's appetite.

If you have the Elfish Cloak of Invisibility equipped then turn to 1434. Otherwise the hydra seizes your unresisting self with one of its six sets of jaws and drags you under the sewage where it wastes no time in tearing you to pieces and gobbling you up.

87

You inquire about a room.

"One night's a Guilder in human moolah, mate", says the bartender, holding out his slightly webbed reptilian hand, palm up for payment.

If you've got a Guilder you can pay the nobold, who gestures to a ladder you can climb up to the balcony level where the beds are - turn to 1663. If you can't or won't pay that kind of money for a room then you can find something else to do: turn to 975 to try the piss, 1118 to have a punt, 538 to have a go at some yakka and 677 to just hit the road.

88

You've made your way to the Goblin Town at the heart of the Mazyrinth - this is Gobholme proper. A tightly packed little town full of cramped, multi-storey houses and miniature towers, all with sharply peaked roofs feature smoke-spewing chimneys, this is where the goblins live when they're not digging underground or roaming the mountains looking for loot and inexperienced adventurers to level up. Narrow alleys snake off in every direction, disappearing between rows of houses and concealing myriad mine shafts, smithies, dispensaries, barracks and all the other staples of the heavily regimented and yet somehow chaotic existence typical of the larger goblin towns.

Normally it'd be bustling but today it's completely insane - as you're getting your bearings you see some huge fracas has broken out which apparently has dragged most of the population into the fray. The citizens of Gobholme - heavily armoured in colourful goblin plate, wielding a huge

variety of painful-looking, semi-improvised weapons - jostle against each other and run around trying to do battle with a pair of rather splendid-looking adventurers - a very beefy and very shirtless barbarian and a dashing rogue in a flowing green cloak. Although outnumbered the dashing duo battles with consummate skill against the goblin horde - the barbarian wades into a crowd swinging his huge sword while the rogue throws daggers, tumbles out of the way of the clumsy attacks of the goblins and generally making fools of the short green-skinned critters. Still, more and more of the goblins move in. It looks like the adventurers can't hold out for much longer.

You need to decide - will you charge in to help the adventurers - turn to 938, or are your sympathies with the goblins? If so turn to 652. If you'd rather sit this one out then turn to 800.

89

You're not real interested in helping these birds out, so you decide to use the ring's authority over animals to command them to carry you straight to Bilgeton. The eagles wince, clearly uncomfortable about you getting into their minds.

"Knock it off!" screeches one. "Fine, I'll take you to Bilgeton, though it seems pretty cheesy to use this method to end the adventure so quickly. Just stop pointing that ring at me".

Glad that the author clearly forgot about this obvious plot hole, you begin to look for a way to get up on the eagle's back. The huge bird notices your intention and grins, a disturbing expression when displayed on the beak of a giant raptor.

"Sorry, you're flying coach", she caws.

The eagle leaps out of the nest and soars into the sky overhead. As you watch the enormous creature wheels around and swoops at you, seizing your arms with an iron grip and hauling you into the air. Your terrified screams set the other eagles to raucous screeches of laughter, but the mockery soon recedes into the distance as you soar directly towards Bilgeton!

Turn to 1398.

90

Kicking the flanks of your mount you ride right around the strange-looking fellow. His frenzied waving turns into a torrent of obscenities as you gallop on down the road.

What follows is an uneventful stretch of travelling (mercifully excised from this tome to save on printing costs and to avoid further straining the reader's patience) during which time you're able to amble, rest and recover somewhat – restore up to 20 EFFORT. Finally the road emerges from the woods at last and you finally see the great walls of Bilgeton in the distance. It's still at least half a day's ride away but the end's in sight at long last! Still, by the standards of a lazy half elf, it's a long and lonesome road.

Now, have you summoned a Shiny Demon into the world? If so turn to 1574. If you'd never do something so irresponsible as that (or at least haven't done that exact thing yet) then turn to 897.

91

You desperately need your beauty sleep so you lie down in the grass and try not to think about the growing list of annoyances which have inflicted themselves on you since you left home. You soon drift off again. You wake in the mid-morning, covered in a refreshing coat of dew. Restore 20 EFFORT.

You yawn and stretch and, with nothing else to do here, you get a move on towards Bilgeton. Turn to 1446.

92

You begin to tell the guard your life story but he's unable to conceal his lack of interest. He interrupts you by gruffly saying, "Whatever you be, you'll be coming with us".

The guard throws a rope down to you and hauls you up out of the pit, but just as you're about to smarm out an insincere thanks he slugs you hard in the face with a mailed fist. Everything goes black.

Turn to 1221.

93

You accept the farmer's offer and step inside his hovel. It could be politely described as humble - its dried mud and plant fibre walls are propped up by rough wooden beams which rise into the thatched roof, and the floor is little more than trampled hay mixed with plenty of dirt. The room you're in contains a long wooden table, a few stools, some particularly prized farming implements and, most importantly, a pot of stew bubbling over a warm fire right in the centre of the room. A few openings lead to darkened rooms though the farmer is weirdly insistent that there's nothing of interest in those. Given the wretched state of the hovel you're sure he's probably correct.

The ancient farmer offers you a bowl of stew and a piece of floor near the fire. As you sit and eat he asks you a few questions about where you're from and what you're doing, which you rudely answer with questions of your own. It turns out this guy's called Aldrecht, he farms something called gourds, and he's often up late in case travellers come by who need some hospitality in this dangerous neck of the woods. As you answer you can't help but feel like he's sizing you up somehow.

After your stew which turns out to consist mostly of old gourds and even older horse, Aldrecht bids you good night and wanders through one of the doorless openings to his bedchamber, putting out the candles in the room and leaving you to sleep next to the fire. Although it's not like the sophisticated comforts of your old bedroom the straw is quite thick and the warmth of the fire is very relaxing. You are soon fast asleep.

Turn to 1558.

94

Your cowardly attack of opportunity is thwarted by the fact that Hardmod doesn't have anywhere particularly vulnerable to strike. All you manage to do is wake him up. Leaping from the bed, the naked lich takes up a sword from his desk and slices at you with horrifying speed. It's all you can do to defend yourself as you realise you may have bitten off more than you can chew:

🔪**HARDMOD : DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 3 - TOUGHNESS 3**

Hardmods hits like a charging bull. Each time you lose a round to Hardmod you lose an amount of EFFORT equal to the highest roll he got on his FIST dice.
Since you're in the buff no armour, belts or clothes count as being equipped for this battle, so you don't gain any of their defensive benefits. You may still use weapons, shields and other equipment that's on your Adventure Scroll.

If you can't beat this evil lich you repent of your treachery and flee - turn to 1642. If you somehow overcome this adversary then turn to 371.

95

You follow the increasingly incoherent road, accompanied by a swarm of little pixies, until you arrive at the dearest tiny town - rows of charming wee houses for the delightful little men. Not everyone there is small though - you see a group consisting of a couple of humans and a dwarf near the biggest gold nugget you've ever seen. They're merrily carving away at it with magical glowing tools, sparks shooting out like fireworks as they strike the rock, and as they go they're stuffing piles of the treasure into their pockets.

"Welcome to the Glade of the Pixies!" says your host, the colourfully-garbed pixie who you'd forgotten about as soon as your eyes fixed on the treasure. "We extend our warmest hospitality to you! Before you avail yourself of our amenities", he continues, gesturing to a building the size of a barn on the other side of the town which, at this distance, looks like the most luxurious inn you've ever seen, "perhaps you'd like to join your fellow large folk and help yourself to some free gold before it's all gone?"

Your drug-addled brain reasons that this offer seems too good to be true, so it must be! If you can't wait to start stuffing your backpack with purestrain gold then turn to 1085. If you'd rather avail yourself of the amenities first then turn to 1363.

96

You try to make yourself look real small but the loudmouth who talked you into this expedition calls to the half elf.

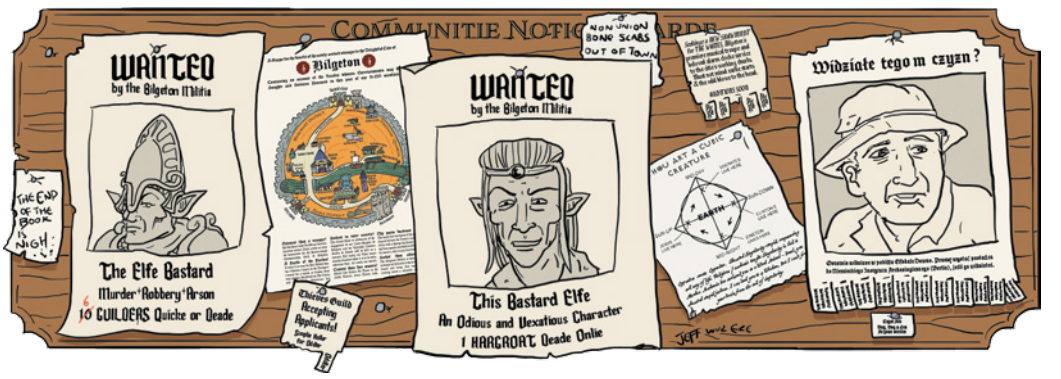
"We brought this guy along for the job", shouts the elf. "Don't mind his weird mannerisms and cretinous face, he's a grasswatcher from Elfsdale Downs".

The half elf rubs his chin in thought.

"A Grasswatching Academy graduate, huh?", he says, giving you a searching look. You briefly think about contradicting him but then realise that the scale of the arse-kicking you'd probably receive for outing yourself as a fraud right now would be astronomical. You decide to continue playing along and nod. The armoured half elf continues speaking.

"You'll do. Here's the plan..."

Turn to 1677.



ROOMS
LODGE
VACANCY

97

There's no way this jerk is getting his hands on your precious! You stuff the pouch into your pockets and shrug. The scarecrow's eyes narrow.

"Fine. Men, seize these two and impound the wagon for inspection".

Hurensohn sticks his head up from between his knees and gives you a look like thunder.

"You narc! You cop! I knew you weren't cool!" he shouts, before being silenced by one of the hell knights thumps him and drags him from the wagon's driving board. As you gawp in horror the scarecrow grabs you by the collar, hard. You have to fight your way free!

🔪**SCARECROW: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1**

If you succeed then you get loose - turn to 729. If you fail then turn to 477.

98

The guard looks crestfallen.

"Oh well, it was worth a shot", he says, his moustache drooping sadly. "Can't spare even one more Guilder? Never mind. On your way".

He waves you on and the guards get out of the road, allowing your caravan with its skeletal cargo to move on unhindered. You cross the bridge and emerge out the other side of the small town without incident. Your purse is a bit lighter now but with high hopes of reimbursement from Aggie's agent you continue on your way towards Bilgeton!

Turn to 1002.

99

Desperately trying not to be killed by this huge, rampaging mountain brute, you swing whatever weapon you have to hand about wildly. A hit to the side! The cyclops shrieks in pain. He collapses in a pool of blood.

With this heavy-handed tribute to a very old game out of the way you're free to loot the cyclops' corpse as is your usual practice. He's a barely sentient mountain monster so he hasn't got a lot, but if you like you can take the Air Scepter he has tucked into his filthy loincloth (which you decline to take, your own underwear situation being sufficiently repulsive without adding to it).

Make the necessary adjustments to your Adventure Scroll before you carry on: turn to 505.

100

You agree to Nilde's demand but as you're making your way through the busy riverside path towards the Synod you ditch here in the crowd. You creep over to the nearest of the city's convenient dark alleyways from where you can watch to make sure your wife has given up the search for you before you emerge from hiding, a free half man.

Oddly, Nilde doesn't seem all that interested in looking for you and leaves the area immediately after she notices you're no longer by her side, heading towards the market square instead of the Synod. She scarcely even tried to look around for you and you could swear she's even smiling. Could it be that she was never all that into you? Lose 1 ÉLAN as this nagging question plagues you from here on out, lessening your swagger considerably. Remove Nilde from your Adventure Scroll as well.

Feeling a bit hurt you emerge from hiding far earlier than you expected. Since you're closer to the nice side of town now, would you like to drown your sorrows in the slightly upmarket Palais de Dance - turn to 606 - or have you had enough of drinking, in which case you may prefer to explore the city - turn to 941? If you're done with Bilgeton and its heartbreaks and just want to get on with the end game content then turn to 827.

101

The guard sighs.

"My apologies, my liege. I didn't recognise you, covered in the filth of the road and languishing in poverty as you obviously are. Please, right this way".

Your interlocutor and a couple of the guards nearby let out a clumsy exaggerated bow. One of them removes a battered hunting horn from his belt and gives it a toot. The nobles look up from their game.

"My Lord Count Hugues of Bilgeton, may I present this bedraggled and filthy country cousin of yours who has clearly fallen on hard times".

The count, a young man with long, impeccably-styled hair and wearing impossibly expensive-looking clothes, places his cards down face up and waves you over. You sit down near him and see that although his hand is awful he's put a huge wager down. The charming lady he's playing with immediately raises with a huge bet.

"What ho! Now don't tell me, I've seen you in the Palaver Genealogy and Heraldry Almanac - you're a son of one of the Brunnenfeld armigers if I'm not mistaken - what's his name, he's got a dairy in Bilgeton somewhere. Haven't seen him in a jolly long time, not since I was a boy!" he prattles in a plummy accent. Your ears prick up at the mention of your father, as does one of the beautiful lady's eyebrows. The count continues,

"May I introduce to to my fiancée, my lady Countess Amelie de Fraude. She comes from a very far away land, I'm told".

"Charmed, I'm sure", interjects Amelie, offering her hand to be kissed.

"Say, have you heard about the Grand Ball I shall be hosting in Bilgeton to celebrate my recent wedding? You simply must attend, half the nobles in the Kingdom will be there. In fact, we're about to go back: as soon as we finish this hand we'll be departing. Could I offer you a ride in our carriage?"

He gestures towards a coach parked nearby, a tacky, baroque monstrosity covered in complicated gilded metalwork and masterfully painted yet hideous heraldic motifs of the kind favoured by human big shots. A couple of manservants are harnessing a team of beautiful white horses to the carriage in preparation for departure. It'll probably be more comfortable than walking.

If you'd like to hitch a lift to Bilgeton with the Count and his lovely fiancée then turn to 1070. If you'd rather steer clear of such an ostentatious mode of transport then turn to 1542.

102

Ten Guilders is a hells of a lot of money - two entire months' wage for a hard-working human and probably several times that for someone as lazy and dissolute as you. You also don't feel it would be entirely safe to refuse this old gentleman. You grunt that the deal is acceptable and relinquish the bird to the old man.

"Thank you, I say thank you sah and gods bless" says the fellow, tossing you a pouch containing 10 Guilders. Add this trove to the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll and remove the Baby Rukh. "That about puts the rag on the bush. Now I shall bid you adieu and be on my way with my colossal clucker. Don't you be a stranger now, y'hear?".

With that the strange man in white mounts up onto the huge bird and, whipping the reins, departs into the night. Although the ground is cold and hard without your feathered friend, your new-found riches fill you with a warm glow and you sleep right through the night, the morning and into the afternoon. Waking refreshed and significantly richer despite your lack of a steed, you commence the long trudge towards Bilgeton.

Restore 20 EFFORT from your peaceful slumber and turn to 1445.

103

Blinded by greed you ransack the old coot's corpse! You can take one out of the Class Ring, Dapper Garb or the 2 Guilders from the dead man's eyes. Regrettably you're still plundering the body when the driver returns from his business.

"Hey, you! Vulture! Yes, you! Get down from there or I'll call the guards!" he shouts.

Not wanting to be arrested you get down from the wagon and back away. Aside from putting the lid back on the coffin the driver doesn't seem too concerned about what you've taken (truthfully the Synod priests and Bilgeton corpse robbers would have got it even if you didn't) so once he's back in the driver's seat he loses interest in you.

There's nothing for it really - you'll have to try your luck with the other wagon. Turn to 545.

104

Insane with rage and despair you plunge into the undergrowth around the enchanted clearing and flee blindly through the woods. So eager are you to put this morning's humiliating incidents behind you that time ceases to have any meaning. You don't stop running until you burst clean out of the forest where you collapse in a whimpering ball of snot and tears. You're a bit scraped and bruised up the various tumbles and snags you encountered along the way - lose 5 EFFORT.

You feel a sharp sting in the back of your neck which jerks you out of your semi-vegetative state of self-pity. Probably just a forest bug but probably best not to lie here all day feeling even more sorry for yourself than usual. Rubbing most of the snot off your face you consider your options.

The easiest paths ahead of you seem to be turning to the east, which is the rough direction you remember Bilgeton being, and following along the edge of the forest as it slopes gently down. Turn to 145 to go this way. Otherwise you could continue the direction you were going - the grassy plains stretching out ahead of you look invitingly easy to walk across, though further north they become ominously misty. Turn to 1024 to do this. Finally if you have a map you could pull it out and take a look before blundering around any further - turn to 220.

105

You put a bunch of Guilders on the counter. The bartender looks horrified. "Put those away before you get robbed!" he whispers. You sheepishly retract your payment.

"I can't change a Guilder. It'd empty the till". he says peevishly. You enquire if the meal is free then, and and by way of an answer you feel a stony hand pressing down hard on your shoulder. The rock troll bouncer, always alert to people skipping out on their bill, has you in his grip!

"The 'change for a Guilder' is the oldest trick in the book and I wish you rich out-of-towners would stop trying it. That's a week's wage, you idiot. Plike, this rich boy's going to pay his tab by doing an honest bit of bleeding in the tourney. Put him up against the champ".

The bouncer grunts his assent with a sound like stones being crushed into pebbles and drags you towards the stage, which is now swarming with fight fans! You've been entered the first round! Plike shoves through the crowd and pushes you into a clear space in the middle as the blood-thirsty audience cheers...

Turn to 1705.

106

You go left. You walk for a very long time between the stone walls but find no other archways, trap doors or features of any kind that could indicate a way further into the maze. Just as you're about to give up and turn back you find yourself looking once again at the entrance to the Mazyrinth, still open a crack. You've just come full circle!

Bored nearly senseless and no more likely to work out what's going on now than you were an hour or two ago you decide to call it a day. Turn to 1277.

107

Carefully avoiding the tower with the crying elf, you work your way around the village stealing whatever isn't nailed down. Unfortunately, this place is pretty poor even by elfen standards and you don't find a lot worth a damn. Jeff would shake his head sternly at your poor lorewardenship as if you care what he thinks of you.

Add one of the following items to your Adventure Scroll (if you don't already have it):

Extra Buckles, Bow of the Wood, Enough Rope, Elfish Cloak of Invisibility, Healthy Poultice, A Cut Purse, Lorewardening Key, Scrying Orb, Bottle of Milk.

By the time you're done fossicking the sobbing sound has ceased - whoever was responsible for making that noise has long gone, maybe after the man in white. With nothing left to do in this place you're about to leave when you realise you haven't visited the School of Lorewardening yet.

If you'd like to go take a look at the place then turn to 712. If you'd rather get back on the road then turn to 332

108

You hand over the Guilders (remove the 10 Guilders from your Adventure Scroll). Otto takes on a look of deep regret, probably calculating how much more he could have charged you. Still, he honours his side of the deal and shows you in through the gates. The peasants mutter as you cut ahead but they don't have several weeks' wages to throw away so their mutterings are of no import. Moments later you're inside!

Turn to 717.

109

Sigbot is thoroughly unimpressed with the weight of your purse.

"Great, another impoverished noble", he sighs. "How many is it this week?"

"Three so far", Gawin pipes up gruffly.

"The Mark must be in trouble if he's hitting you lot up to cover his gambling debts", says the sergeant somewhat cryptically. "We've got as much reason to hate him as you do - he stopped paying us a few months ago. Aside from Gawin. He's got his own thing going on with Witold. But I digress: we have to make a living. So tell you what - you can pay your way in specie instead of cash this one time".

You're in no position to disagree and the arms dealers-cum-highwaymen relieve you of any human-made weapons, armour, outfits or rings in your possession (excepting the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes or the Confessor's Shovel, if equipped, as their curse makes them impossible to pull from your grasp). They have no use for your musical instruments, but of course they relieve you of any Guilders you may be carrying. Make the needed adjustments to your Adventure Scroll.

With that Sigbot releases you and you're free to go. Feeling a bit hard done by you continue on your way towards Bilgeton.

After a fairly long and uneventful stretch of travelling (mercifully excised from this tome to save on printing costs and to avoid further straining the reader's patience, but either way it's taken long enough to allow you to recuperate somewhat: restore 20 EFFORT) the road emerges from the woods at last and you finally see the great walls of Bilgeton in the distance. It's still at least half a day's ride away or twice as long on foot, but the end's in sight at long last! Still, before you lies a long and lonesome road.

Now, have you summoned a Shiny Demon into the world? If so turn to 1574. Otherwise turn to 897.

110

You make a fuss.

"What!", huffs the guard, "that's a week's wages for a hard-working churl about these parts, and with your noodle arms and soft hands ye don't look to me the type to do much hard working". His moustache twitches contemptuously - or maybe nervously?

If you'd rather not push your luck any further you may accept your Guilder, pick up your stuff and leave at once - turn to 16 to step out into Brunnenfeld's main square. Otherwise you could attempt to bullshit the guard to get more money out of him : turn to 597, or just make a good old-fashioned scene by turning to 1004.

111

The audience enjoys your song, the murder notwithstanding, but long before you're done the skeleton guards have come off their break and duly reported your crimes to the authorities. As the song progresses you notice more and more members of the Bilgeton law enforcement community standing around in the audience, watching you intently and waiting politely for the end of your set.

You look around for a way out as you play. Usually places like this have a trap door hidden under the drummer's riser, but as this is a stone quarry the drummer's riser is a normal slab of solid stone and since you're a solo act there's no drummer to cover your exit anyway. You're boned. As soon as the Jailhouse Rock is completed you're mobbed by the Bilgeton militia and dragged away to your very own jailhouse to the riotous applause of the cheering crowd.

Since you won the Battle of the Bards (the former favourites, Seed Drille, suddenly declining to risk being murdered over a contest) and so have gained a modicum of fame and popularity, the death sentence you almost certainly would have received is commuted to life in the noble section of the Tradegate Dungeons. Instead of the pokey little oubliette reserved for the common criminals you are given a well-appointed room. The food, while still slop, is better than anything you'd cook for yourself and you are even permitted to receive groupies. You settle in for a life of ease, your quest to find a place to crash complete.

112

You look to your trusty dungeoneering Pole for guidance on what to do in this situation. He's absentmindedly swinging a ruby the size of a plum on the end of a gold chain as he leans against the mansion behind you, but he eventually notices you looking at him and states, "Wypchaj się sianem. Ja jestem bogaty."

As you still don't speak his brand of gibberish, whatever wisdom he bestowed upon you is lost to the ages. Return to page 82 and face your destiny on your own two feet.

113

You poke around the huge chamber for a while, salivating at the endless heaps of treasure. There's enough here for you to live the rest of your life like a king - and not one of those good ones, one of the really corrupt, decadent despots - many times over. But there's no way you're getting it all out of here - you'll have to come back for it later with a bunch of chumps to help you haul it all off. In the meantime you start stuffing your pack with a selection of stuff you think you can carry away right now. Add any or all of the following to your Adventure Scroll : treasures worth 20 Guilders (which you may add to the Cash section), a Full Harness of Steel Plate and a Palavan Army Knife.

If you're done hunting for treasure you can try to harvest parts off the poisoned dragon - turn to 1516 to attempt this. Otherwise you can investigate the cavern further - turn to 1683 - or get out of here while the getting's good by turning to 1235.

114

Well, you did your best. You're sure the Goblin King will understand. No one can blame you for walking away.

Sadly, this proves not to be the case. The Goblin King has probably been scrying on you this whole time using that orb of his and he most certainly intends to hold you responsible for your failure. As soon as you've resolved to give up on your quest you hear his mocking voice speaking clearly in your head: "Such a pity".

No sooner has the voice completed relaying this sentiment than you feel the power of voodoo coming over you and the sensation of something shrinking in your pants! Your tights-bulge, the pride of your ensemble, is deflating! Soon its little more than half the size it was when you set out on this damnable quest!

"Such a pity", repeats the voice, fainter now.

This miserable situation is a new depth for you in a life not without its lows, and your swagger suffers accordingly. You've been cursed with Shrinkage! Your half-manhood, never the pride of Elfsdale Downs, has become even more shrivelled, and the pitiful size of the bulge in your tunic is likely to detract from any big impressions you were hoping to make in Bilgeton! Additionally, your confidence has taken a serious blow - from now on whenever you roll FIST dice you must re-roll any 6s. The second roll stands, even if it's a 6. If you are somehow already suffering from this curse or something similar then the shrinking is even more severe - lose 1 FIST as well!

Consumed with worries about the newest inadequacy to add to an already large pile, you shuffle along in what you hope is the general direction of Bilgeton and away from that blasted Alp. Turn to 889.

115

You raise an eyebrow and fix your smarmiest grin.

"You know what might keep me warm? You, on the floor, with me, under this blanket".

Nilde seems taken with this terrible idea: she giggles and gets under the blanket with you. You bust out your patented sex move, the three-minute special, or at least you would if you could figure out how the lacing's supposed to work with this charming but complicated peasant dress she's wearing. You're just about to unfasten the first knot on the bodice when old Aldrecht comes bursting into the room, leaping out of one of the darkened chambers with a torch in one hand and a pitchfork in the other. While the sudden appearance of this rickety old farmer sends you into paroxysms of shock, Nilde doesn't seem at all surprised by this weird behaviour.

"AHA!" shouts Aldrecht, "Well, you've gone and done it now, but you're gonna make this right. You marry that girl or it's curtains for you."

You struggle to get away but Nilde's cuddled up to you tight and isn't letting you go. Her father jabs you in the chest with the fork.

"So what's it to be?" he demands.

If you agree to his proposal then turn to 1354. If you decline this arrangement then turn to 1746.

116

You take out the elfs one by one, but by way of proving Jeff right about your being a worthless dilettante who never finishes anything he starts, you failed to stomp one of the scouts hard enough. As you're finishing off your final opponent the first elf you battled limps away into the trees to raise the alarm.

If you had the Boots of Elfish Stomping equipped for the fight then he's too badly hurt to get too far. Otherwise he's going to make it back to his troupe and inform them that the caravan's onto them and is up for a fight. They'll be sure to pile on reinforcements by the time it's going to take to get back to your wagons. Add 2 to your PROBLEMS.

With no time to waste you rush back to the wagons, leaving the remaining elfs and their worthless garbage unlooted.
Did you take all the GUARDS with you? If so turn to 687. Otherwise turn 1749.

117

You've had more than enough of down so you ask for up. The hands you were talking to un-contort themselves and in their usual configuration pass you swiftly up to the top. The light above you becomes blinding as you approach and before you know it you're flung out into the open air, free at last of the subterranean sojourning you've been forced to endure so far. You land heavily in the dust and something nearby lets out an outraged shriek. You stumble back to your feet as your eyes adjust to the daylight and you find yourself standing next to a large well in the busy town square of what can only be Gobholme!

Turn to 88.

118

Although you're a terrible rider the noble horse is trained for war and experienced in battle: it has a reasonable grasp of what a ballista is and what it can do to a horse, at the very least. It therefore turns and is galloping away before you can even whip the reins. It's all you can do to cling on as it races down the road!

Turn to 1108.

119

You bash your way over to the bank. It's a grand building, made from polished stone as opposed to the bricks and wood that most of the buildings in town are constructed from. While you don't have the wherewithal to open an account (as you are curtly informed by a very snooty goblin teller), the bank would be able to exchange any currency you do have for Guilders which may be of use to you if you intend to head on to Bilgeton.

Today's exchange rate is 20 elf leaves or 5 monster teeth (any kind) to the Guilder. You cannot get fractions of a Guilder since the bank doesn't carry change - any leftover leaves after this transaction are lost. You may attempt to haggle if you wish:

HAGGLE: DIFFICULTY 12

If you succeed the teller, desperate to be rid of you, offers you a rate of 10 leaves or 3 teeth to the Guilder. If you fail you must pay the original rate.

Once you've concluded your business here the teller shepherds you through the door and back out onto the street. Turn to 192.

120

Despite some misgivings about the quality of any magical treasure these elfs might offer, you decide to help them out. After all, at least they're not humans.

You have another change of heart as you make your way down a dark, tree lined path towards the tower. Shining in the dim moonlight you see a horrifying sight - a living skeleton, dressed in

a tunic and hacking at some weeds by the side of the path with a scythe. It looks straight at you and, raising its scythe menacingly, runs with terrifying purpose in your direction.

Maybe now would be a good time to flee - turn to 1424. Otherwise you must fight:

🔪**ANIMATED SKELETON: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1**

If you defeat the skeleton then turn to 74. If you're beaten or throw in the towel then turn to 61.

121

Grumbling, you pay up. Multiply the number of WAGONS you have left by 5 and deduct that from the amount of Guilders you have in the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll. The guard smiles as you count the coins into his outstretched hand. Just as you're about to mount up again he stops you.

"Oh, I almost forgot. There's the Royal Roads Tax that's just come into force. That's another 5 Guilders".

You look around you. The guards, including the one up in the watchtower, are now looking at you with undisguised interest and a couple of rude smirks.

If you have the 5 Guilders and want to pay then turn to 977. If you're not going to pay (or can't afford to) then turn to 576.

122

You simply don't have what it takes to pull off a song that's five or six centuries ahead of its time. The confusion of the audience turns to anger. Empties and rotten fruit start sailing onto the stage as the crowd surges forward, ready to rip you to pieces.

"Get out of here!" hisses the Seed Drille flautist. "We'll cover for you".

You flee, hoping the progressive baroque stylings of Seed Drille can calm the horde of furious music fans before they get their hands on you. Despite some stone chunks and rotten apples whistling by alarmingly close to your head the distraction seems to largely work and you're able to make your way back out of the quarry the way you came.

Despite failing your Mission from The K-NG you still have your own mission to attend to - the mission to find your human father and find some place to crash. You decide to get on with it. Turn to 1793.

123

You have a bad feeling about all this - enough of a bad feeling that your feeble bravery fails you before you reach the front door. Instead of dealing with whatever's going on out there you lock yourself in to a downstairs toilet. You watch through the keyhole as the militiaman, not receiving a timely response to his questions, smashes the door in with a halberd. Half a dozen guardsmen and an equal number of mean-looking thugs flood in and commence to ransacking the place.

You don't stick around to find out what happens to the Viscountess - as soon as the looters have moved out of the lobby in search of the mansion's treasury you creep off out the shattered front door and back into the streets. Judging by the number of kicked-in front doors you see as you make your way out of the Noble District it seems the town militia has been busy tonight. Making certain to avoid any patrols you cross the bridge back over the Bilge to the relative safety of the poorer part of town.

Well, you've got nothing else to do and nowhere to stay, so you figure you might as well finish this quest off. You go in search of your father and that place to crash of his. Turn to 1793.

124

Since the dude has his back to you, you decide to pocket a few of those clearly psychoactive mushrooms. As soon as you touch one of the things all hells break loose. You have no way of knowing this but you're stealing from an incredibly powerful nature wizard with a symbiotic relationship with the natural world and the creatures and plants that grow in it. Despite being occupied with rolling around in the dirt he is instantly aware of what you've done and is unbelievably pissed.

"I'm unbelievably pissed at you, man", says the wizard known as Radabastard the Brown as he slowly gets up off the ground. "It's not cool to just take stuff from my grove. This is a market economy you know. Stealing property is theft, man!"

He looks at you for a second, thinking. "Well, I'm a bit too toasted to deal with this right now so I'm going to let you off easy this time", he finally says, "Get out of here. And stay out of my forests, man. If I catch you in any of my woods again I'm going to completely freak out".

As soon as he's done speaking you feel a peck at your head and then another - the birds are dive-bombing you and tearing out your long flowing locks! You feel a nip at your heels as a fox takes a bite on your shoe, but the final straw is the rain of bird droppings that starts to descend on you from the trees. You flee the clearing in horror, pursued by a swarm of vengeful forest critters, and you don't stop running until you reach the very edge of the forest. You burst out into the open and the pursuit slackens, though not before your scalp is plucked half-bald and your torso is completely caked in bird guano.

You've successfully annoyed Radabastard the Brown. Make a note that if you enter another forest during this adventure you must immediately turn to 592.

Now that you're out of the forest you find yourself facing the Count's Road. Despite the sort-of grand name it's just a wide dirt track which curves to run south and west of where you stand now. According to the map, following the road south alongside the forest will eventually lead to Bilgeton and heading west will lead out onto something called the Endless Plain of Fortune, a completely uncharted land probably teeming with exotic and thrilling adventures and opportunities to get rich or die trying.

To head for Bilgeton turn to 209. If you'd rather seek your fortune out on the Endless Plain of Fortune then turn to 1526.

125

Using the power of the ring you quickly convince your steed that you both are in serious danger and that it's time to get a wriggle on. The critter you're riding turns as sharply as is possible for a large beast of burden before legging it - and just in time! Seconds later the ballista twangs again and the bolt slams into the exact spot where you would have been if you hadn't moved!
Turn to 1108.

126

You surrender to the guards. After a light beating you are clapped in irons, stripped of your possessions and strong-armed into the back of an iron barred prison wagon which is locked up tight behind you.

Turn to 227.

127

Praying to whatever god or gods you believe in, you time your jump and leap off the dragon as it's flying over the wide river at treetop height. You land with a loud splash in the slow-moving and horribly polluted water of what can only be the Bilge, but the dragon doesn't notice, exhausted as it is by the long flight and its violent outburst. You bob to the surface of the foul-smelling water in time to see the monster flapping onwards towards the south.

It's only a matter of time before Bhad realises you're missing and comes back looking for you, and you don't want to stay here waiting for that. Being back at ground level you can no longer see Bilgeton, though if you're in the Bilge it'll probably be downstream somewhere. Accordingly you let the river bear you along - turn to 1750.

128

You're about to continue rummaging around a bit more thoroughly but the wizard runs out of patience and begins lambasting you from the tower with more charming oratory:

"ARE YOU FUCKING JESTING WITH ME? STOP PISSING AROUND WITH THOSE BLASTED CORPSES AND GET YOUR SHITTING ARSE OVER HERE. WE HAVE SOME PLOUGHING BUSINESS TO DISCUSS AND I'LL BE BUGGERED IF I'M GOING TO STAND AROUND OUTSIDE ALL EVENING FREEZING MY COCKSUCKING BALLS OFF WHILE I WAIT FOR YOU TO STOP DICKING AROUND COLLECTING FUCKING TWIGS OFF BLASTED ELF CARCASSES."

The wizard continues for quite a while in this vein as you approach the tower, your skeletal companions providing a musical accompaniment to this tirade, their bones rattling merrily while they jitter along by your side.

If you survive all this abuse you approach the tower and, finding the door wide open, you step inside. Turn to 1295.

129

The coach is a tacky, baroque monstrosity covered in complicated gilded metalwork and masterfully painted yet hideous heraldic motifs of the kind favoured by human big shots. The door's open so you clamber up the little ladder leading into the carriage and let yourself in, pulling the door shut behind you. The inside of the vehicle is even more opulent than the outside, somehow - two sumptuous velvet couches face one another across a miniature room with ornately carved wooden walls and plush drapery hanging from the ceiling.

As you're casing the place out, scrabbling around for hidey-holes and hidden loot, you hear a hammering at the door. Evidently some keen-eyed guard spotted you entering the coach and now you're busted.

"Come out, fiend. It be a fair cop", shouts a gruff voice through the door. It's a voice that sounds like it means business, with overtones of being heavily armed and accompanied by several other armed buddies.

If you know when you're nicked then turn to 1231.

If you're ready to go out fighting then turn to 1495.

130

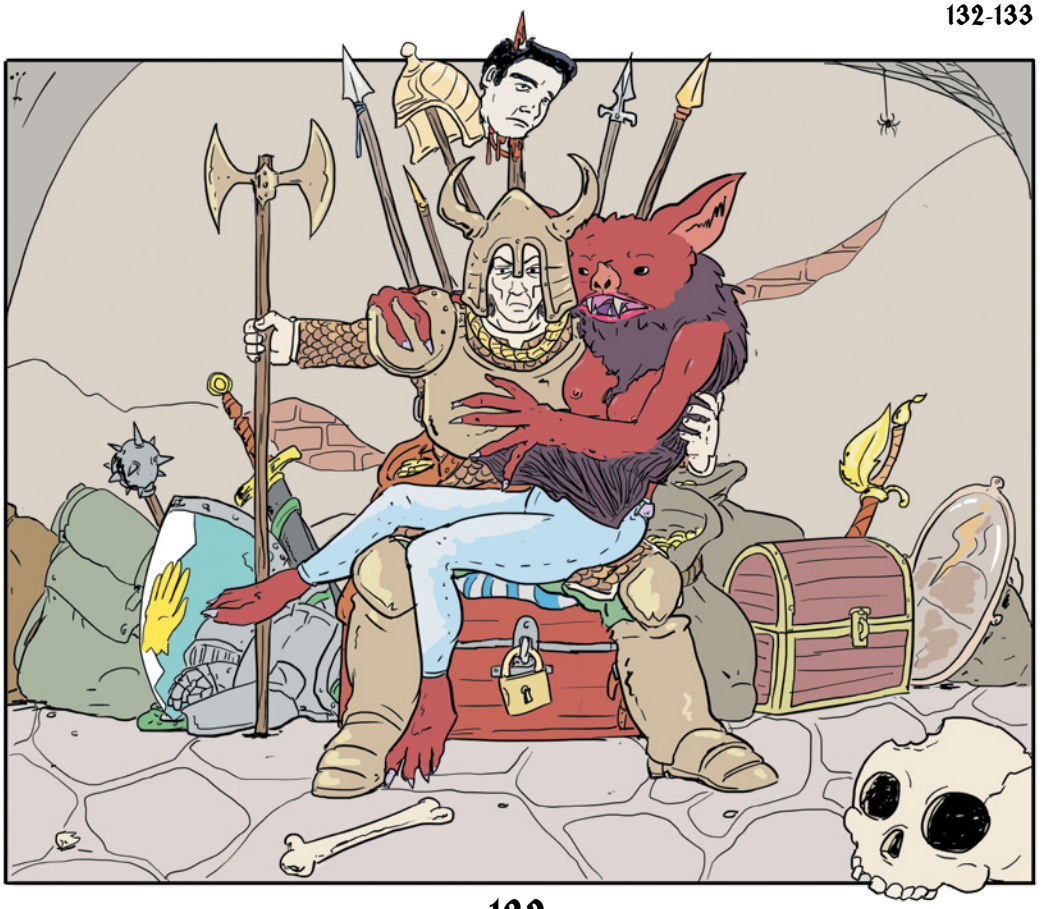
The elf lets out a strangled scream and falls to the ground. If you want to halt the caravan to go check out the scout then turn to 1370, making a note of how many skeleton guards you'd like to take with you for protection (up to a maximum of 4, assuming you haven't somehow managed to lose any of your GUARDS). If you'd rather take advantage of your good fortune and roll on then turn to 1749.

131

The painted minotaur at the centre of the labyrinth is meant to confront each visitor with the idea that they are the source of their own troubles and fears, but you take it to mean that there's currently a vacancy for a minotaur at the centre of this maze. Upon reaching the exit back to the batwoman's cave, you gesture to Karol that you intend to stay. The Pole taps his pith helmet to indicate that he thinks you're crazy, but he shakes your hand and you part ways amicably.

As it turns out, the bat lady receives many adventurers, and a surprising number of them try to escape their shame by sneaking out through the labyrinth. Now, instead of a journey of self-discovery and spiritual improvement they run into your waiting blade. After looting the corpses you trade some of the valuables with the bat lady for food and other necessities. Over the years a bond develops and you become quite close, or as close as a murderous half elf and vile she-bat can become.

Living in a tunnel, bushwhacking tourists for a crust and common-law married to a bat - not how you thought your life would turn out, but you're rich, successful and happy enough. The only thing that nags at you is that you'll never get to rub Jeff's ugly nose in your success, but maybe one day he'll stumble into your labyrinth and find the monster he made waiting for him in the middle.



132

Showing an uncharacteristic amount of stick-to-it-iveness, you do your best to catch up with the nobolds. Unfortunately everything Jeff and everyone else said about your laziness is essentially true - it's not long before you get tired, and curling up around your esky you lie down for a little rest. It's dark and you've been walking all day and the tunnels are kind of cosy so one thing leads to another and instead of a little rest you wind up completely passing out. Restore 20 EFFORT from the snooze, add the Esky Full of Cold Ones to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1417.

133

You nock an arrow in your cheaply-made (but ridiculously ornate) bow and fire away at the barbarian. You're a horrible shot and the bow doesn't really shoot straight anyway, but fortunately for you it's nearly impossible to miss this huge warrior. You manage to get him right in the knee just before he gets close enough with that sword to cut you in half. He bellows in agony as his legs give out beneath him and he crashes to the ground. You've accidentally found his only weak spot - this knee had recently healed from another arrow injury and your wild shooting has badly aggravated the wound. While he rolls around on the ground clutching his knee you creep in and finish off the noble warrior by stabbing him over and over again with the crappy craft knife you keep in your bag for removing the crud from under your nails.

Turn to 1725.

134

The utter wretchedness of your condition after only a day after you left home breaks your brain utterly and you collapse into a weeping, screaming lump of tears, sorrow and misery in the corner of your cell. So total is your breakdown and so alien is it to the normal conduct of humans in general that after the first hour of continuous bawling the guards start to worry that they might have hit you a bit hard in the head when they arrested you. After the second hour they decide to let you go rather than risk the wrath of their lord for militia brutality. You're still weeping and mewling as they bundle you up with your possessions and drag you outside the town gates where they leave you free to stumble away.

"Suckers", you mumble, smirking as best you can as you dry your eyes.

Turn to 372.

135

You know a good idea when you see one and follow Batu as he disappears into the woods. The taurcents are incredibly fast given how awkward they look when they move but they're too tall and wobbly to really get around inside the forest. You just need to make it to the tree line before the taurcents tackle you to the ground.

HORSE RACE- DIFFICULTY 10 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you succeed you make it into the forest: turn to 702. Should you fail one of the taurcents catches up and spear-tackles you before you can get to safety. The horse part of the creature crashes into you. You're dashed hard into the ground with the wind knocked right out of you. Before you can attempt to recover the beefy man arms get you in a choke hold and squeeze until you black out.

Turn to 446.

136

Phalloknights are the highest caste of society on their plane of existence. Small armies of cocksmiths spend their lives slavishly forging and maintaining each plate of armour. Dozens of demonic villages devote their entire existence into providing for the Phalloknight's every need. Hundreds of squires take care of all the day-to-day tedium and minutiae that goes in to cleaning, polishing, waxing and shaving the knight's incomprehensible and diabolical steed.

All this is so the Phalloknight can spend the whole of his existence either training for or waging glorious battle. The Phalloknight is aroused only by war: riding hard; crossing sword and spear with other knights in hot battle; thrusting their lance into a worthy opponent, and so on.

What is distinctly unarousing to this Phalloknight is the sight of some filthy, bedraggled half elf begging for mercy far from any battlefield. It puts him off his stroke and he begins to go soft. The momentum of his charge isn't stopped completely but it is slackened enough to make survival a possibility.

The lance still crashes into you extremely hard, and you are thrown into the bushes at the edge of the clearing where you briefly black out. Something's definitely broken - your arm isn't moving right, the entire right side of your torso has a "caved-in" feeling and your breathing is all weird. Lose 2 ÉLAN and 20 EFFORT.

Assuming you survived, you black out to the sound of one of your teeth rattling around in your lungs. Turn to 1188.

137

The Spectre cracks you right on the jaw with his ring! The imprint made by this ring never fades, marking you for all time as an evil-doer! Draw a little skull IN INK on your Adventure Scroll

Now turn back to the page from which you came.

138

Wisely deciding against needlessly aggravating a bunch of huge aerial alpha predators near their nest, you sidle around the base of the spire hugging the mountain walls as closely as possible. The eagles divine that you pose no threat and allow you to leave unscathed after dumping just a couple more loads of eagle guano on you.

Turn to 190.

139

The bird must be starving because it wrenches the food out of your hands the moment you've removed it from your pack. Remove a food item from your Adventure Scroll. Once the creature has gulped down your lunch it sits down peacefully to allow you to climb up onto its back. You clamber up on top of the bird and hold on tight to the harness around the birds neck before lightly tapping its flanks with your boots to get it to gee up. With a friendly squawk it lurches to its feet and takes off like a shot south along the road to Bilgeton, moving with incredible speed for such a bulky animal.

Add the Baby Rukh to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 313.

140

You shove open the large wooden doors which part with a horrible creaking noise and step into the church. It takes a short while for your eyes to adjust to the darkness in here - the only source of light is from a triangular window set high in the wall behind you, and it filters down through a dense haze of dust and smoke. As your eyes adapt you notice that you're in a wide, stone-walled hall, and that you're standing in an aisle between several rows of benches. The walls all around you are covered with paintings, hooks from which the smoke-producing bronze censers are hanging, and shields painted with heraldic symbols and crests. Ahead of you, at the end of the aisle, is an altar, and behind that and slightly off to the side a chair on which a brown-robed, balding man is sitting, messily eating a hunk of meat off the bone. The church doors slam behind you with a reverberating boom, echoing throughout the stone church. The man, probably a priest of some kind, hastily stands and steps up behind the altar. Putting his greasy meal down on top of the altar he speaks, pitching his voice so you can hear him,

"Good morning! I don't recognise you, travelling bro. I'm Brother Chlothar. Be welcome to the Three Boulders Redemptist Church of The K-NG! Are you here for the sermon or are you already hankering to get Redeemed?"

If you're going to listen to the sermon then turn to 703. If you want to skip all that noise and get right to being Redeemed, whatever that means, then turn to 908. If you feel like some exposition and want to ask about The K-NG then turn to 417. Otherwise if you realise you've made some terrible mistake here you can make an excuse and leave: turn to 487.

141

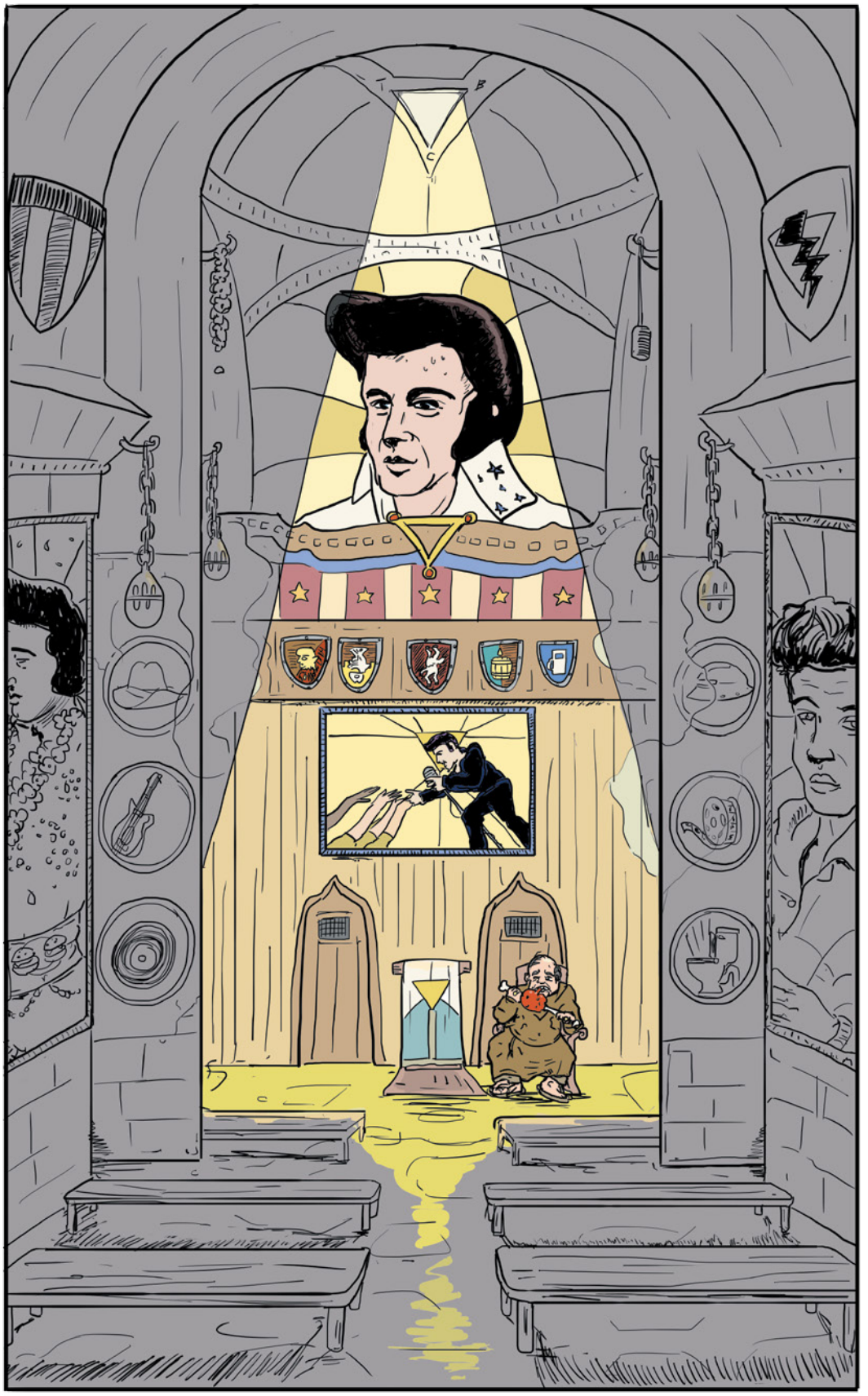
You smash the bush over and over and over again until it's nothing more than a collection of sticks and leaves lying on the ground. Actually, it looks pretty soft. After making sure it's no longer exhibiting any signs of life you lay down in the springy makeshift mattress and enjoy the most comfortable sleep anyone's ever had in these woods at night. None of the monsters in these woods from the most multi-headed Swamp Hydra to the smallest stinging Bastard Fly wants to go anywhere near a Bloodthorn - since they have no way of knowing that this one is dead they give your resting place a wide berth.

You wake early the next morning completely uneaten and ready to carry on. Restore 20 EF-FORT. In the light of day, dim though it may be inside this forest, you can actually see where you're going and none of the nocturnal nasties are awake to bother you. You set off and in just a few hours you emerge from the forest and back out onto a patchy, half-paved highway. The great city of Bilgeton, its walls looming large, lies just a few miles down the road to the south east.

Turn to 1732.

142

Although you've failed to live up to the Woman of the Waterhole's standards for a questing hero, she can't bring herself to watch you get torn apart by an awful lake beast. Just as one of the tentacles coils around you preparatory to crushing the life out of you the hand reappears nearby clutching your sword. It swings hard at the tentacle, partially severing it and spraying the monster's black oily blood onto the surface of the lake.



The rest of the tentacles don't react well to this rough handling and retreat with unseemly haste, leaving you mostly unharmed as they slip away beneath the surface in a cloud of blood and ink. You go to thank the hand for its assistance, smarming out something about how beautifully it's been manicured, but the hand isn't having any of it. Dropping the sword back into the depths, it wags an accusatory finger at you and then points firmly to shore before sinking back beneath the water once again. Rejected once again but at least uneaten you wade back to shore and commence marching soggily along the shore, though not too close in case the tentacles return for you.

Turn to 1632.

143

You hope to indulge in some hobnobbing with the crème de la crème of Bilgeton society, but they don't seem too interested in meeting you. Perhaps it's the fact that you're covered in the filth of the road and that you smell like a bog, or that you're tracking slime in your wake across the nice clean floor, or maybe just that you seem like an untrustworthy sort, but whatever the reason they make an excuse as soon as you approach and move away, leaving you leaning against a wall on your own attempting and failing to look cool.

Despite your inability to make any contacts you do hear overhear some of the local gossip as you position yourself close to one of the groups of nattering nobles. Amid endless patter about bladderwhack scores, the weather and the shameful state of the economy you learn that the Grand Ball, hosted by the Count of Bilgeton himself, will be held tonight at the Countess Amelie De Fraud's Manor at the corner of Tent Avenue and Fort Lane in the Noble District. Many eligible ladies and sirs of the realm will be there in their finest garb looking for love. It's a masquerade ball as well, so even someone who looks like you might be in with a shot as long as your personality somehow doesn't get in the way! The conversation then turns back to bladderwhack - apparently the Bilgeton Basilisks are in with a shot this year - before the nobles notice you're eavesdropping and send one of their servants to the wizard in the middle of the room.

You watch the servant interact with the wizard and seconds later a drink appears in your hand! - an ornate golden chalice filled with a fizzing potion shining all the colours of the rainbow. As you watch in amazement and then annoyance the bubbles rise to the surface and form the word "Begone". As you look around in amazement one of the nobles waves at you, though not in a friendly manner, more as if he's shooing you away. The other nobles titter haughtily. You go to at least drink the booze but you notice as you lift it that it's weightless and when you raise it to your mouth the drink and the glass disappear instantly. Your disappointment only heightens the nobles' amusement. You think about going over and thumping them or at least breaking down in tears but you don't think you could get near enough to them without tousling with their numerous servants.

The night is dragging on and you're thoroughly sick of this place and its clientele. Would you like to leave now - turn to 827 - or will you go talk to that wizard (turn to 77)?

144

It's a long fall – more than long enough to break every single bone in your body when you hit the ground. Luckily for you there's a large mound of something soft at the bottom of this chasm, but you slam into it hard enough to drive all the air out of your lungs and cause all your bones to creak alarmingly. Lose 10 EFFORT. You gasp in a mouthful of the stuff as you flail around trying to dig your way back out of it before you suffocate - it's sweet, like sugar, Once you're back on the surface breathing you can pocket some of the stuff if you like - add the Sugar Sack to your Adventure Scroll.

Once you're done filling your boots you take a look around - or rather, you try to. It's pitch black in here so you don't see a thing. Striking a spark from your flint you find that you're in an even darker, even more subterranean chamber than the one you just plummeted from. A single eight-foot wide. perfectly round tunnel exits this chamber on the other side of the room which is nearly completely filled with man-height mounds of sugar like the one that just saved your life. These mounds are littered with bones, all partially submerged in the sugar and completely picked clean. Could these be the unlucky victims of the Malrog, or has something else claimed their lives? Either way you think it's time to get a move on.

Since there's no way of climbing back out of here you decide to move on through the tunnel, ready to brave whatever lies ahead. Turn to 1272.

145

You walk east, hugging close to the forest. You think Bilgeton is this way and, more importantly, walking downhill is easier than going uphill. There are two problems though - you can see mountains looming in the distance, which means you might eventually have to slog up there again, and you keep getting stung more and more often, mostly in the back of the legs. Your fashionable elfen clothes should be thick enough that you shouldn't even feel forest mites trying to nibble on you, but after numerous small pricks you receive a particularly nasty bite on your outer thigh that makes you yelp in pain. Twisting to take a look at the injury you find a miniature arrow protruding from the side of your leg. These bites haven't been the work of forest bugs at all! When you pull the splinter free it draws even more blood and a closer inspection reveals a cruel miniature barb on the end of the teensy arrow. Lose 1 EFFORT from the injury.

If you want to continue your slog along the forest, keeping a weather eye out for whatever's shooting at you, then turn to 932.
If you want to charge into the forest and confront your hidden attackers then turn to 525.
If on second thought you want nothing at all to do with this forest and would rather try your fortunes out in the unmapped north then turn to 1024.

146

Looking over the wild melee you figure you might, just maybe, be able to save one of the wagons if you can clear away the attackers fast enough. Gulping down a rising lump in your throat you draw whatever weapon you've got and charge towards a knot of elfs who are attacking the driver of the nearest wagon. Your reedy excuse for a war cry does little but alert them to your presence and most of them turn on you with a snarl.

🔪**ELFS - DIFFICULTY 5+PROBLEMS - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2+PROBLEMS**

The worse your situation the more heavily reinforced the elfs are and the more of them you have to face. The raiders have a DIFFICULTY of your PROBLEMS plus 5 and a TOUGHNESS equal to your PROBLEMS plus 2. The skeleton guard with the wagon is fighting hard but there's no way he can hold out for long: each time you fail to win you must lose 1 GUARD but when they're all destroyed you must treat this battle as a Multiple Hassle.

If you win and have 3 or less PROBLEMS then you've driven the elfs back, at least for now: turn to 670. If you have 4 or more PROBLEMS then turn to 1570.

If you can't defeat these elfs they rip you down from horseback and prepare to finish you off, though you have a secret weapon of your own which you've been keeping up your sleeve for just this occassion - turn to 816.

147

If you've got a Skeleton Hand then turn to 518. Otherwise you point to the Four Ecks logo, indicating that you'd like to give it a try.

"What are ya, a banana bender? No accounting for taste", replies Bruce. "Nah, just yanking ya chain, ya wally". The nobold reaches into the esky, pulls out a cannister with the corresponding color scheme, rips off the top and hands it over.

"Here ya go, mate. Get that inna ya". Bruce downs the entire contents of his cannister and emits a foul belch.

You look at the thin metal tin you hold in your hands. It's full of a bubbling golden liquid with a small foam of white scum on the top. It smells vaguely sweet.

XXXX - DIFFICULTY 8

If you manage to get it down then turn to 1275. Otherwise turn to 1042.

148

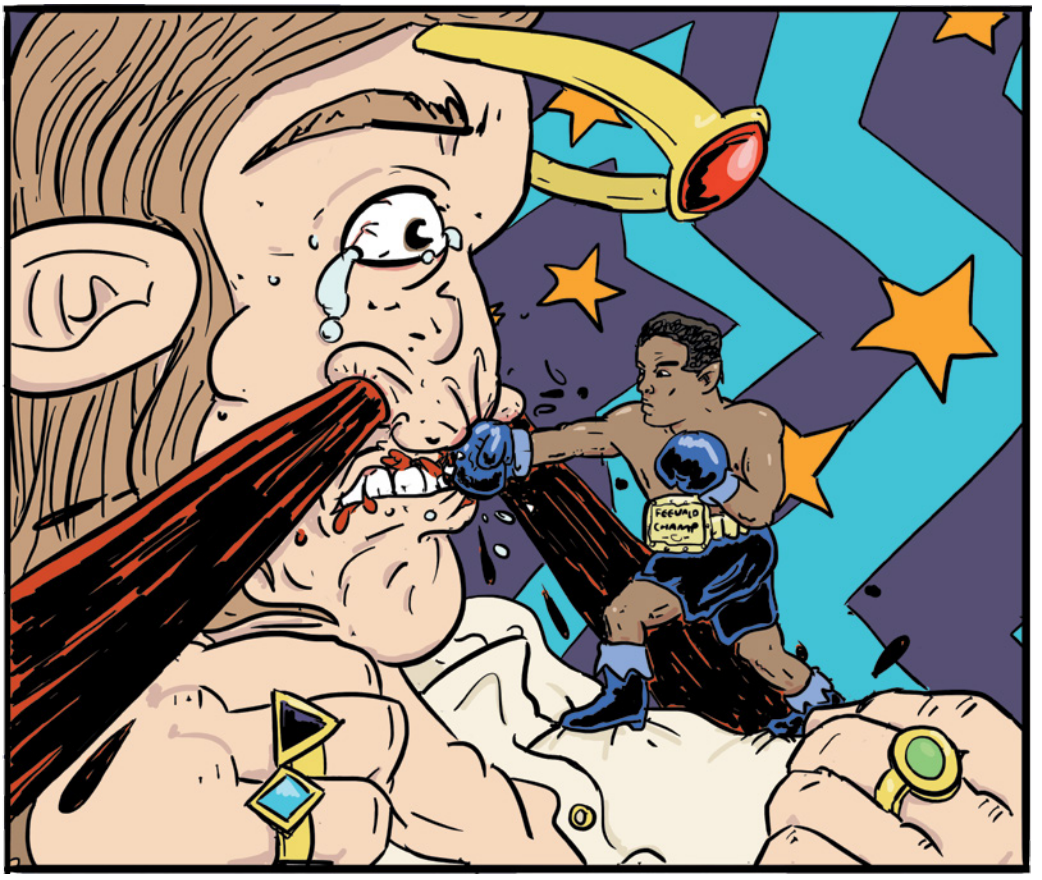
Showing an uncharacteristic amount of grit and determination you plough through the enemy barrage, lashing out whenever you think one of the little creeps is in range and stomping through any obstacle in your way. After a couple of hours the attack breaks off and you see a swarm of brownies fleeing before you through the trees and undergrowth.

The sun has sunk low and the forest grows dark but you keep after them, swinging and kicking at any that come anywhere near you. Soon you burst out of the forest into a small clearing surrounding a huge, bare rock, and underneath you behold the source of all this afternoon's irrations - a cluster of makeshift hovels made of matchboxes, broken casks and other debris, all swarming with brownies. Your defeated opponents stream through the town causing havoc and small fires have broken out as most of the population of the town scatters trampling their worthless possessions underfoot. You're about to stride into the camp and stomp to place out of existence to make up for a day of hassles when you see standing before you in the half light of the forest evening a dark-skinned brownie, naked from the waist up aside from a pair of thick padded gloves and a cool-looking gold championship belt. All of two inches tall he raises his dukes in a show of defiance. Amused, you shout down at him, "Who the hells are you?". The belligerent brownie shouts back, "If you gotta tell them who you are, you aint nobody".

BROWNIE BOMBER: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2

If you're the sporting sort you can choose to fight him unarmed (in an exception to the rules you can change your equipped weapons before this fight) but if you do this, you obviously don't gain any bonuses for having weapons equipped. If you're not equipped with any weapons or tools to begin with then you don't have a choice! If you win with your bare hands then turn to 660. If you'd prefer to hold on to every advantage you have and defeat the pugnacious pugilist using whatever weapon you're clutching then turn to 1584.

If you lose to this pint-sized champ or throw in the towel turn to 1159.



149

Biff calls you a couple more times but you stay still and he can't spot you. Eventually he gives up with a loud curse, rightly assessing that your help isn't worth the effort of asking for it. You watch as the gang of elfs stops slinging rocks at the stricken wagon and advance as a group. The guard realises he's in trouble and stays inside the caravan in the hopes of forcing the elfs to fight him one-on-one inside the vehicle. While Biff, his short-haired accomplice and his crony with the weird eyeglasses menace the guard, the creepy one removes a match he's always chewing on from his mouth and uses it to light a fire under the wagon. The flames catch in the woodchips and debris underneath and very soon the smoke and heat drives the guard out into the open. The elfs kick the hells out of him and run him off into the forest before they remove whatever items of value the can find from the burned-out wagon and load them into their cart. It looks like they're taking the good stuff - if you loiter here much longer there'll be nothing left for you!

If you now feel it's time to claim your share then turn to 547. Otherwise you continue to wait. Biff's gang finishes loading the stuff they want into their cart and wheel it away back into the woods. Once you're sure they're gone you finally come out and survey the wreckage. Turn to 596.

150

You're holding your own until Rouge-Gorge is hacked down. With the best fighter in your band out of the way the lich makes short work of the rest of the Merry Men, sparing none of them until he comes to you. By this point you're on your knees, grovelling like usual. The lich glares at you with deep-set glowing eyes and points at you with one of his long, bony fingers. You're certain this is the end until he curls his finger up, beckoning you to follow him into an adjacent room. Will you follow him? If so you trudge after him through the doorway - turn to 1670. Otherwise you can try to get away - turn to 1642.

151

A small group of militiamen wander over to see what you're hollering about. Their suspicion dissipates as soon as they realise who you've got for them.

"This felon has been terrorising the countryside for years. The city of Bilgeton is in your debt" says the patrol's leader, a young man wearing slightly finer armour than the others with sections of maille supplementing the standard issue gambeson.

You indicate that you're aware of the debt, to the tune of ten Guilders. A shadow passes over the young guard's face.

"Ah, actually that'd be 7 Guilders after the administrative fees are taken out" he says.

"6, sir", pipes in one of the guardsmen, "The haulage and manacle maintenance duty amount to another Guilder".

"I quite forgot", agrees the patrol leader. "Six Guilders for this felon".

If you agree then you hand him over. Add 6 Guilders to your Adventure Scroll, remove the Elf Bastard and turn to 1054. If you're ready to demand the full bounty then turn to 1552.

152

"Oh, you've spoken to Langweilige? What did you think of the guy?"

"He was polite and helpful" : turn to 1016.
"A lot of fun to be around" : turn to 219.
"An unbearable goldbricking arsehole": turn to 277.

153

The creek is fairly placid but the current's against you. Luckily for you there's a wooden paddle of the bottom of this thing which spares you having to get out and push or - worse - return to Busted Hill.

After quite some time of paddling away in the dark you notice that the tunnel ahead is glowing softly with a dim light. As you approach you realise there's a small tunnel running off to the right. You slow down before you pass and the current tugs your punt a little towards the opening. The light is coming from somewhere far away down the side passage – to your light-starved eyes the distant white dot is blinding. You're pretty sure it's daylight. The glow reflecting down the tunnel and into the intersection shows that Shit Creek grows a bit wider and slightly rougher immediately ahead before vanishing once again into the darkness of the main tunnel.

If you want to take this turn off then turn to 1114. If you'd like to continue on then turn to 969.

154

You have the misfortune of having developed a spine just in time to encounter Savage Sid. Sidney is a greaser with some nasty moves, as you're about to find out.

🔪**SAVAGE SID - DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

If you're wondering why Sid would pick fights at a bar instead of waiting for the boxing tournament to release his belligerence, you soon have your answer - Sidney prefers to fight with a switchblade, which he flicks out of his jacket and waves around menacingly.

If you win then turn to 463.

If you lose this fight Sid introduces your head to the bar, knocking you out cold. Turn to 852.

155

As your servants return after their unexpected evening off you hear word of the dark deeds that transpired last night. Count Hugues "The Mark" of Bilgeton, already straining the resources of the province to cover his sizeable gambling debts, was hoping to marry the Countess Amelie de Fraude so that he could use the income from her lands to settle things with his creditors. Unfortunately for him it turned out that there is no County of Fraude, and that Amelie was no countess at all but a mere armiger (a rank which you, as a Viscount, would hardly even deign to spit on). As soon as she gained access to the Count's vaults she cleaned out what was left in them and split.

The Count, realising that he was boned and that his creditors were about to break his legs, did the only manly thing - making sure that anyone with any money in town was at the ball that he planned for his engagement party, he told his remaining loyal militia to plunder their homes and holdings in exchange for a large cut of the loot. Having stolen everything of value left in the city, the count crammed whatever he could haul away into his royal barge in the docks and set sail down the Bilge for parts unknown, leaving the County to fend for itself.

Thanks to your actions and natty suit, Isentrud's properties were the only ones spared, meaning that you are now the only noble couple in Bilgeton with any money at all. You move swiftly to consolidate your position, buying up lands and unemployed guards on the cheap and generally assuming the responsibilities - and profits - for the day-to-day running of Bilgeton and the surrounding lands. Since Hugues left without heirs you soon become the de facto rulers of the entirety of Nonce! You come a long way from being a hated half elf exiled from his scummy forest village: you are now a feared and respected lord living with a beautiful wife in a luxurious mansion and wielding unimaginable wealth and power. Still, your smugness is somewhat tainted: you can never shake the feeling that Jeff would be pleased that you got a job of some kind.

Still, jolly well done I guess.

156

Surprisingly you do the honourable thing. The half elf doesn't bother thanking you - as soon as you release him he flees into the milling crowds of humanity before disappearing down a dark alleyway, never to be seen again. Remove the Elf Bastard from your Adventure Scroll.

A guard approaches to find out what you wanted. Thinking fast, you ask him what the time is. He checks his wrist but since he's not wearing a sundial he can't help you. The guard shrugs apologetically before moving along.

Turn to 1054.

157

Ignoring the concerning signs that you may not be wanted by the rank and file of this band of fighters, you agree to go along with them. Minutes later you're bursting back into the clearing alongside the cut-throats (who seem to have partially forgiven your presence in their lust for violence and loot) and the fop (who is surprisingly deadly with his exquisitely-crafted sword). The lumberjacks are mostly occupied with trying to restrain Briggins, who by now has completed an amazing transformation into a towering half-man, half-horse, reverse-taurcent monster.

As Rouge-Gorge slaughters his hapless adversaries elegantly and efficiently while his band of goons bludgeon, stab and maul with clubs and knives, you race across the campsite to kick Simon hard in the spine while he's desperately trying to stop Briggins from mounting a panicked mare. The lumberjack screams and stumbles in his agony - right behind the reverse taurcent, who kicks backwards and launches the hapless woodman halfway across the campsite where he comes to lie in a crumpled heap. Serves him right, you suppose.

With the lumberjacks dead or scattered this leaves no opponent but the reverse-taurcent. Briggins, sensing the danger he's in, starts rearing and kicking, but with monster hunters closing in on every side it's only a matter of time for him:

🔪**REVERSE-TAURCENT: DIFFICULTY 6 FISTS 3**

If you have Enough Rope you can subdue this beast safely by fashioning a lasso and throwing it around Briggins' neck, automatically winning this battle. You reclaim the rope afterwards.

Should you win, you do your part to subdue the beast and after you kick it particularly hard in the shins it collapses to the ground where one of the fop's men finishes it off. Turn to 1439.

If you can't beat this monster or don't feel like trying you simply wait for an opportune moment and nick off. Being preoccupied with what they're doing no one notices your going: you emerge from the wood and back onto the plains without any further hassles. Turn to 282.

158

As a slippery half elf you place great reliance on your ability to bluster, bluff and blag your way through life, and you see no reason why this obstacle should be an exception. You simply walk into the gatehouse and announce that to the guard that you, Sir Tedbald of Bilgeford, have returned from questing for the season.

Luckily for you, the late Tedbald was an errant knight who spent most of his days wading through brackish swamps trying to stab serpents. Rarely seen around Bilgeton and always in full armour, the only thing even his servants know about him is his heraldic insignia and his generally unkempt appearance, both of which you have. The guard has no reason to doubt your word and bows as you and Karol pass through the gatehouse and into the manor grounds. You snake the book he was reading off the table on the way past as he stands at attention - add Star Bastards to your Adventure Scroll.

If you have the Signet Ring then turn to 1777. If you do not then turn to 789.

159

You might be sweating bullets but your unflappable companion is as cool as a cucumber. While you're freaking out about a trip to the oubliette followed by a tour of the gallows, Karol (who takes up an unpleasant amount of room in this coach now you think of it) is tearing up the carpet, revealing a trick bottom! He gives it a stomp and the floor falls out, with you and he along with it. You find yourself on your belly under the coach just as a guard kicks the door in and he and a couple of his armed buddies rush in.

They instantly spot you crawling away but the 10-Foot Pole's bought you a few vital moments head start. He shoves a guard aside and neatly vaults into the saddle of a nearby horse. As the steed rears back the Pole shouts to you,

"Spójrz na mnie w The Dribbling Wand w Bilgeton!". He bolts off towards the woods with a couple of guards fruitlessly pursuing on foot.

Remove the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole from your Adventure Scroll.

With the rest of the guards closing in on you rapidly you leap atop a noble steed and prepare to make your own daring escape: turn to 1187.

160

In your rage you batter the hells out of the eagles and hurl them out of the nest one by one. They each land with a crunch on the ground below for later harvesting, but for now you turn your attention to the nest. One of the birds must have been expecting because there's a Giant Bird Egg here, which you can take with you if you like. If you had a weapon snatched from you by the eagles earlier, it's already been weaved into the walls of the nest - exercising a bit of force you pull it free. Add it once again to your Adventure Scroll.

This meagre haul doing nothing to abate your fury, you rip, tear and smash up the nest, which is mostly branches, animal pelts, torn-up books and clothes collected by the giant eagles. As it happens one of the torn-up books buried in the nest material is a wizard's tome and you complete the job of shredding up the page about fireballs. The residual magical energy in the page is unleashed and the nest bursts into flames! You barely escape with you hide intact as the whole thing goes up in smoke. You climb as quickly as you are able down the spire as cinders rain down on you. You look up again once you're on the ground and see the nest is nothing more than a column of greasy black smoke a mile high above the mountains.

While you're down there you quickly harvest those eagle corpses, carrying away an armful of 50 Eagle Feathers and a grisly Eagle Eye (add these to the Cash and Junk sections of your Adventure Scroll respectively). You then decide to get a move on before anything comes along to investigate the smoking peak. Turn to 190.

161

You help the young lady cram the last of the tumultuous animals back into their crates. The store is as noisy as ever but at least you're not being nibbled at by vermin or having your crotch sniffed by dogs while you try to cut a deal with the storekeeper.

"Thank you for that", she says once she's finished locking up a particularly annoying monkey, "I'd like to reward you but I'm not turning a profit yet, and unless my father sends that magical help he was promising I don't think I ever will".

If you tell her that whatever's in the till is all the payment you need then turn to 445. If you just want her to take a look at something you're trying to sell then turn to 686. If the good deed is its own reward then deduct 5 EFFORT for going so violently against your nature and turn to 1475 to leave the store.

162

The wizard pretends not to understand what you ordered.

"Sorry, I didn't catch a word of that. Do you speak any dwarfen? Non? Nevermind. It's not like you could afford anything here. And even if you could, what would you do with it? Your limited palate couldn't even begin to appreciate the craftsmanship that goes into my creations".

If you insist on getting your drink then turn to 262. If you're growing weary of this wizard and this obnoxious place then it's time to go. Turn to 1532.

163

Choosing to swallow your pride rather than that suspicious potion, you get down on your knees and beg for mercy. You cringe and simper and explain that all you want is somewhere warm and dry to spend the night. This elicits no response from the notoriously flint-hearted pixies aside from some high-pitched tittering at the miserable display you're making of yourself.

After you've carried on for entirely too long a voice calls out from the edge of the clearing.

"It's a doors of perception thing, innit. You big people can't see the magical glade of the pixies unless your mental state is all altered".

You stare blankly in the general direction from which the voice is coming.

"Cripes. Drink the fuggin' potion already and you'll be able to find the place,"

If the promise of a place to crash is irresistible you can chug the potion - turn to 834. Otherwise you can continue to beg and carry on in an increasingly demeaning fashion by turning to 243.

164

You follow closely behind the duo as they make their way back through the Mazyrinth, pausing only to kick in the odd door or hack at some passing goblin. Soon you've left your pursuers far behind as they sweat and clatter along in their heavy metal armour. It's only once you're safely outside and back in the hills surrounding Gobholme that the pair begin to slow down and you can chat with them.

It turns out that the barbarian and rogue are professional adventurers called Cronan and Legless respectively and that they were hired by Count Hugues of Bilgeton to knock the Goblin King down a peg by stealing his famous codpiece for their paymaster. Having completed that task, thanks in part to your assistance, they're off to the big city to receive their princely (or at least countly) reward. After a while though they seem to get sick of your company - you're not sure whether it's your constant whining about your sore feet or continual bitching about Jeff, the elf who you will never call "Dad", or your frankly racist opinions about any being that isn't an elf, but in any case they seem to be doing their best to outpace you. Nevertheless you keep up, though you're rapidly tiring out and having a great deal of trouble talking while jogging. Lose 5 EFFORT and turn to 342 if you're still ticking.

165

Your pleas for clemency notwithstanding, the half elf is poised to cleave you in half when a strange look crosses his face. He lowers his sword.

"You... I know who you are", he says.

Surprised not to be dead and curious as to where the half elf is going with this, you watch as he reaches into his armour and retrieves a locket. He kneels down next to you and flips it open, showing you a little painted image of an elf woman holding a little half elf baby. Behind them is a human milkman, all dressed in white. Could it be...

"We're brothers", he confirms as he snaps the locket shut and replaces it, "so I won't kill you. But we're only half brothers, so I will definitely rob you and leave you for dead".

Your newly-found sibling proceeds to strip you of all your possessions - remove all equipment, items and currency from your Adventure Scroll. Any remaining GUARDS and WAGONS are lost as well. If you dropped a weapon during the fight he doesn't spot that though - you can retrieve that as soon as he's gone.

The half elf chucks your stuff in the back of a newly-captured wagon and clambers up onto the driving board, pushing the driver rudely to the ground. Grinning he pulls a piece of card out of a pouch and flicks it to you.

"You're a bit hard up now, brother. But don't worry, maybe father will help you, if he still lives. Not that he ever did anything for me".

With that he rides off, leaving you alone on the road. Add the Milkman's Calling Card and your dropped weapon (if applicable) to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 294 to continue your trudge towards Bilgeton.

166

The caravan heads back the way you came, rolling onto the dirt path with a bump. It's a little uncomfortable in the back of your wagon - space is tight because of all the cargo and there's another guard crammed in here with you, but what the hey - you're indoors and it beats the hells out of walking.

About a quarter of an hour passes. You've changed your mind about your living conditions and are about to go have a good whine to the driver when the wagon stops. Seizing the opportunity to stretch your legs you find that Hulagu is yelling orders at his men at the front of the caravan. You don't understand the language but it looks like he's organizing a squadron of scouts to ride on ahead into the whimsyflicking area marked on the map you traded for this lousy ride. Several of the giant birds have been unhitched from the wagons so they can be ridden by the guards for this expedition.

So far he has three volunteers to check out the road ahead, all armoured to the gills and armed to the teeth. If you'd like to join them then turn to 383. If you'd prefer to go back to your cart and lie down then after a brief wait the guards return and the carriages roll on towards Bilgeton - turn to 1124.

167

Your handiwork is a success! Made from incredibly rare materials and fabrics, woven together with consummate skill and topped off with a codpiece that The K-NG Himself would consider "a bit much", your resplendent regalia is the talk of the entire ball! Years from now nobles will still be trying - and failing - to imitate your styles, but for the now the richest and most beautiful ladies of Bilgeton are shamelessly throwing themselves at you in hopes of catching your eye and landing the catch of the season! Sadly, it transpires that nearly all of them are married to Lord This and Baron That, but eventually you are asked to dance by the stunningly beautiful Viscountess Isentrud of Southdock, a minor holding within Bilgeton itself. You'd guess she's about twenty-five, though you can't really tell with humans, but more importantly she's clearly very wealthy, wearing as she is on her person clothes and jewels worth more than the entire life's work of the average tradesman. Her conical steeple hat and veil alone would cost more than a merchant's idea of a nice second-hand coach. You fall madly in love with this woman's money and to a far lesser extent the beautiful woman herself who you're sure is also a very wonderful person as far as you know.

If Nilde's still putting up with you, the sight of your eyes boggling out of your skull and your tongue unfurling like a cartoon wolf's doesn't impress her at all - turn to 1721. Otherwise you graciously accept her offer to dance. After a few hops of the saltarello you're just about ready to get out of here.

If you'd like to suggest to the Viscountess that she grab her coat then turn to 6. If you'd rather stick around to impress the Count and Countess with your ridiculously cool threads and your mastery of the saltarello then turn to 280.

168

You wander into the centre of the market square, taking in all the sights and smells of this squalid late-medieval market. The River Bilge, from which Bilgeton derives its name and reason for existence, starts up high in the Big Rock Goblin Mountains in the heart of the province and flows through the city. Aside from making for an excellent and convenient open-air sewer it's also useful for traders who come from all over the human kingdoms and beyond to trade their wares for exotic dwarfen, goblin and even more exotic miscellaneous beings' produce from the strange non-human settlements surrounding this far-flung province. This trade has allowed Bilgeton to grow large and despite the crippling taxes and endemic corruption (about which the merchants groan ceaselessly to anyone within earshot) there's still a lot of business going on here. While you have no use for a lot of the strange goods on sale here (what the hell is an '8-track player', anyway?) there are numerous stalls gleaming with weapons, suits of armour, gaudy outfits and tacky jewellery, among dozens of other items you might find useful in the closing stages of this adventure.

If you want to buy some stuff and have at least one Guilder with which to pay for things then turn to 1352. If you're interested in hawking some of your wares to get money instead then turn to 526.

169

Bravely staying the hells out of this nightmare, you crawl from overturned wagon to busted carriage to uprooted tree on your way to the gates. The guards are somewhat distracted by the horror unfolding in front of them and people are running every which way to avoid becoming a rukh snack or to dodge the volleys of crossbow bolts bouncing off the thing's almost impenetrably thick plumage, so no one notices you slipping in through the gates and into the city.

Turn to 1364.

170

Leaping out of the shadows you launch a cowardly attack on the goblins, striking at the one nearest to you! Unfortunately for you the heavy plate worn by most goblins prevents you seriously injuring your victim, but it does cause him to topple to the cave floor with a heavy clatter. This leaves you surrounded by half a dozen of his armoured friends who waste no time in giving you a very painful stomping. Though these guys aren't very big they pack a mean wallop with their iron boots, and in short order you're defeated, shackled in irons and led away into captivity.

You're led up through the twisting passages of what turns out to be a mine, chucked on the back of a cart drawn by a couple of weird bird-like monstrosities and dragged out of the mineshaft and into the mountains. The trip is long and excruciatingly boring - the goblins who ride with you aren't interested in talking to someone who assaulted one of their colleagues and, worse, wasn't wearing the correct "PPE", whatever the hell that is. They gibber to each other about topics that are utterly alien to you.

After a long but uneventful drive through the mountains you arrive at a huge stone wall - it's the outside of the Mazyrinth, a non-copyright-infringing obstacle which protects the goblin town of Gobholme at the centre. Your cart drives in through a large gate, takes a few turns and soon enough is rolling into the bustling town of Gobholme. Goblins are rushing every which way around the cramped town square but you don't have time for sightseeing - you are dragged off the cart and up a hill to the front entrance of a great white castle. A goblin guard in full plate armour and carrying a halberd appraises you of the situation in a bored tone of voice:

"You've been found guilty of your crimes in absentia. The Goblin King is ready to pass sentence on you. Right this way, sir, and please check your weapons at the door".

Your manacles are undone and you're relieved of your weapon (remove your equipped weapon, if any, from your Adventure Scroll, though the goblin is way too lazy to check your pack). With that done the guard gives you a prod with the pointy side of the halberd and you stumble in through the great door, which slams shut behind you.

Turn to 1314.

171

You challenge the demon to a coin toss. It shrugs at this ignoble suggestion but nonetheless summons a beautiful golden coin from the daemonic plane and prepares to flip it. Fearing that the demon intends to cheat, you insist on inspecting the coin before making the toss.

"Very well. But be quick" tinkles the demon threateningly and flicks the coin over to you. You catch it clumsily and give it the once over - it's an exquisitely wrought coin, solid gold and polished to a high sheen. On one side is an engraved portrait of some corpulent hell king, and on the other is the unpleasant but exquisitely detailed scene of a devil tormenting some poor sinner with a variety of nasty tools. You have no doubt that this fate lays in store for you if you mess up this toss, and that the demon is going to do whatever it can to make that happen. Maybe you could avoid the toss by pocketing the coin and running off into the trees? Could you make it?

If you want to make a break for it with the valuable coin then turn to 1003. If you'd rather honour the terms of this contest then take your chances and turn to 486.

172

Now that you're outside you realise it's been a while since you've seen much of Elfsdale Downs. You're mostly found in and around your room and after washing out of the grasswatching academy a decade or so back you've had no real reason to roam the streets.

Elfs the world over live in charming stone towers amid enchanted forest glades, and although you're a half elf you're no exception. Elfsdale Downs is made up of a ring of tall cobblestone towers set close by each other, all surrounding a clearing in the forest in the middle of which is a huge oak. Underneath this, nestled among the great roots which twist around the clearing, are the famed academies and schools of Elfsdale Downs where elfs go to learn their trades - whimsyflickery, lorewardening and most of all, the course that puts Elfsdale Downs on at least a few maps: grasswatching. Your mom wanted you to become a grasswatcher but you couldn't hack it and dropped out of the Grasswatching Academy with nothing but a sizeable student debt.

From somewhere behind one of the towers nearby you hear the unmistakeable sounds of merriment - some of the townspeople are no doubt engaged in the carefree frolicking that elfs are known for. If you'd like to investigate then turn to 1353.

If you'd prefer to visit your alma mater for a trip down nostalgia lane then turn to 749.

If on second thought you don't see any need to start exposing yourself to this place again after all this time you can just loiter around the house until some time passes - turn to 1326.

173

You're wise to the ways of elf-kind. These jerks are going to send you off to do something insanely dangerous, and should you succeed you'll get nothing more than a handful of pinecones and a half-remembered quote from some elfen self-help guru masquerading as timeless elfish wisdom. Hells, you used to do that to human travellers all the time, and you're only a half elf.

Instead of subjecting yourself to any more of this abuse you simply punch the elf leader on the nose and barge on pass. Unfortunately your punch isn't as strong as your aim and the elf quickly recovers. Seizing a convenient tree branch he clobbers you across the back, knocking you to the ground hard. Since the branch was rotten it doesn't harm you too badly, and after some flailing and gasping on the ground you leap to your feet, only to find yourself confronted by half a dozen very cranky elfs.

"You've got a lot of balls treating us with so little respect, half elf", sneers the leader, "Time to teach you the manners your human parent failed to teach you, because he or she is a human and therefore crude and unmannerly, much unlike the noble elf".

🔪**BUNCH OF ELVES: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 -TOUGHNESS 5**

The burn is over-elaborate and very weak but the elves' fists are hard enough..
If you want to surrender to your brethren then turn to 639.
If you're still fighting after three rounds, turn to 1212.

174

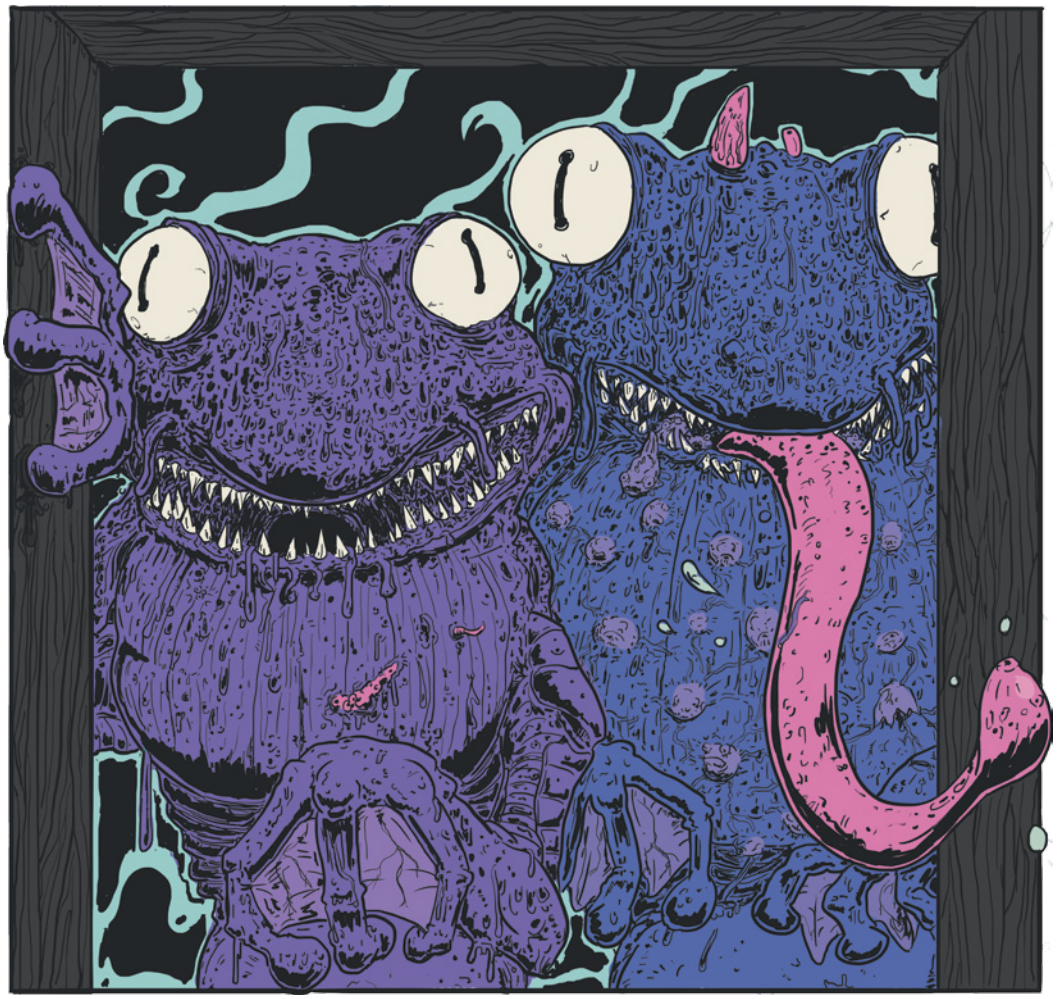
You're out of options: too scared to fight and too lazy to flee. There's nothing for it - you put your arms up in the air to indicate that you've surrendered. A group of guards come out of the gate to arrest you. You're given a complementary light beating before having your arms wrenched behind your back and your wrists clapped in manacles. One of the guards read you your rights:

"You have no rights".

Following this brief presentation you are dragged through the Noble Gate and into the city. As you're hauled through the streets of Bilgeton on your way to the infamous Tradegate dungeon you get a chance to look around: first at the prosperous noble quarter and then, on the other side of the Bilge, the rather shabbier quarters set aside for merchants and the numerous poor of the city. You don't really make much of the sights - the city is mindbogglingly huge to your countrified, forest-dwelling brain, the guards are hustling you along too quickly and the numerous passers-by keep pelting you with refuse.

It's almost a relief when you arrive at the Trader's Gate gatehouse where you are handed over to the dungeon guards. They lead you in through the guardroom where you are strip searched before all your gear is confiscated. You watch it being secured in a wooden evidence chest at the back of the guardroom (keep it on your Adventure Scroll for now, but none of it's available for you to use). You're finally unshackled before being given your Prisoner of the Count starter kit - a couple of filthy sackcloth tunics, a toothbrush with only one bristle left and a pot to piss in (don't bother adding these loathsome items to your Adventure Scroll). Now that you've been formally inducted into the Bilgeton prison system, a couple of the surly prison guards march you down a narrow spiral staircase to your new home. Turn to 49.

175



Your lack of caution or (more likely) laziness has betrayed you. Drawn on by your satisfied snores a pair of Vodyanoi have come to see if there's anything good to eat! These scavengers have bodies like tall, wiry men (or elfs, you suppose) and the faces of frogs, with moist, leathery, greyish-green skin and huge, bulging milky-white eyes. Most dangerously, their wide mouths are filled with razor sharp teeth. Grinning horribly, they lunge at you! You must fight:

🔪**VODYANOI: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you fail you meet the same fate as the villagers who once lived in this ruined town - you're frog food, baby! Your adventure ends here.

Otherwise should you succeed you manage to pummel the frog monsters back out through the door and you slam it shut behind them, this time not forgetting to latch it! You also collect a good fistful of frog teeth in the struggle - add 20 Frog Teeth to the cash section of your Adventure Scroll. You then spend the remainder of the night awake, listening to the Vodyanoi croaking furiously outside your room and hammering at the locked door. Restore 5 EFFORT from the broken and fraught rest. It's only after sun-up that the monsters give up and flap away, probably returning to whatever dank hole they come from for the day. Once you're certain they're long gone you emerge and continue into the mists, leaving this cursed place behind you. Turn to 22.

176

It turns out that the goblins aren't so bad - they're used to travellers popping out of their mines from time to time and are just glad you're not some violent fiend or one of Them!. The only consternation you cause is from your apparent lack of adequate "PPE", whatever that means. One of the heavily-armoured goblin miners who introduces himself as the foreman forces a hard metal hat into your hands as you pass and demands you put it on. It's a helm of human manufacture of the type worn by their militiamen, very loose and dented. You briefly wonder where the goblins got this, but the foreman interrupts your ponderings with his apologies about the lack of approved goblin-made headwear in your size. Add the Dented Helm to your Adventure Scroll in the Equipment Section (unless you already have a helmet equipped in which case you may politely refuse this item).

The foreman is also kind enough to point you to the nearest mine exit and give you directions to Gobholme, the local capital of the goblins where you might be able to find somewhere to rest or buy supplies or what-have-you. It's a little ways to the north through the foothills of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains once you leave the mine. Done here, you make your way out of the mine shaft and back into the light of day. Following his directions, you wind your way through the hilly terrain that characterises the southern edge of the tall mountain range and eventually locate a well-travelled dirt road which has a signpost pointing towards Gobholme, only a few miles away. You hurry along, hoping that the place is less dangerous than the hole you just crawled out of.

Turn to 204.

177

If Nilde is still with you for some reason then turn to 1721. Otherwise read on:

You cock an eyebrow and begin working the room, but for some reason these women are not receptive to romantic overtures from a guy who just shredded himself up pretty good slithering his way in through the toilet window. Still their screams of horror turn to shouts of outrage which you take as a sign that your approach is working.

If you'd like to keep pushing your luck in here then turn to 641. If you'd prefer to take your depressingly poor game out on the dance floor before all the yelling attracts the guards then turn to 585 to head out the toilet door and into the ball room.

178

You stop to see what the colourfully-attired man wants. Seeing that he's got your attention he introduces himself.

"Good day, gentle traveller. I am Sergeant Sibot, pleased to make your aquaintance", he says, bowing deeply with a flourish of his silken sleeves. "Allow me to introduce you to my compatriots - Gawin of Brunnenfeld and Manegold of Bilgeton". With this he gestures towards the two surly-looking guardsmen. They sneer at you unpleasantly as they lean on their wagon.

"You seem like the adventuring type. Care to sample our wares? The finest military surplus from all over Nonce". The bearded guard who your interlocutor described as Gawin pulls a cloth back from the wagon, revealing a pile of weapons, armour and clothes. Manegold stares at you intently, his hand moving to the hilt of his shortsword.

If you'd like to mosey on over for a look then turn to 1538. If you don't want to haggle over human garbage then turn to 423 to move along.

179

The metal head of the shovel intones clearly, like the ringing of a bell, that you've murdered the town priest. Goodman Fettwanst might be the laziest man in town and a terrible crook to boot, but he's also a member of the militia and is sworn to avenge this terrible crime. He makes no attempt to arrest you but instead tries to mash you with his iron mace.

🔪**FETTWANST: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you defeat the enraged guardsman then turn to 265. Defeat here will mean being pulverised into meaty chunks and should be avoided at all costs.

180

After some hours of unpleasant trudging in the dark, during which time every single item you own gets covered in swamp juice, you begin to suspect that the Pixies inhabit a "glade" in much the same way that the cramped and crumbling heap you grew up in was an "enchanted tower". Your suspicions are confirmed when you come to the end of the woodland track that was supposed to lead to the Glade of the Pixies.

A rotting tree stump sits in the middle of a soggy clearing. Perched atop the stump is a small bottle with a label reading, "Drink Me". There is a thick fog of marsh gas obscuring the foliage around the clearing but you can make out movement and hear some snippets of inane banter about house prices. You're still being watched, probably by pixies. Their town must be around here someplace, though you doubt you'll find it without the pixies' permission.

If you throw dignity to the wind, get down on your belly in that swamp and appeal to the pixies' benevolence and hospitality towards a traveller in need, turn to 163.
If you do what the pixies evidently expect of you and drink the potion that was painfully obviously left there for you, turn to 834.
If you're sick of playing pixie games and you think you have what it takes to beat a bunch of swamp peasants less than half your size, turn to 1509.
If you'd rather take the unbelievably dangerous option of trying to make your own way through the dark swamp at night then turn to 1111.

181

The Count plays slightly better this time, but he's still only got a low pair against your three of a kind. You reach out to collect your winnings. The guards start rubbing their hands together with glee, but the Count has gone red in the face.

"One more hand", he says tersely. "I'll put my entire county against your winnings. I must have that sword back! It belonged to my father".

You look are and see that the guards are all shaking their heads emphatically and motioning with their hands that you should leave while you still can. They stop as soon as the Count looks at them.

If you want to play for the title of Count of Nonce then turn to 1018. If you'd prefer to walk (or rather, ride) away with what you've already won then turn to 653.

182

The rogue is doomed - or he would have been, if you didn't stumble in and ruin everything. Rather than managing to help the goblins you mostly get underfoot. The rogue, realising you're a bumbling klutz, dodges under one of your slow attacks and races up the stairs. You're hot on his tail and the goblins come pouring in through the now-undefended door. Sensing triumph, you don't realise the trap you've fallen into until it's too late: the rogue turns on his heel and boots you hard in the chest, sending you tumbling back down the stairs and knocking over most of the goblins who had rushed into the house with you. As your seriously irritated goblin allies attempt to clatter back to their feet the rogue lets out a hearty laugh and runs back out the door, trampling over your prone bodies. It takes a minute and a lot of jostling but you manage to eventually get up from among the goblins who are still flailing about on the ground like a bunch of overturned turtles. You rush to a window and see that the rogue and that huge barbarian have made good their escape and are fleeing into the Mazyrinth, with the slower goblins lagging far behind.

"Such a pity", you hear in a wry tone. Leaning theatrically in the door behind you is what can only be the Goblin King: a tall, thin man, flamboyantly dressed in a huge cape, tight silver leggings and equipped with an imposing codpiece, though not quite as imposing as the fairy stories your mother used to read you indicated. "Bring this bitter disappointment", he says haughtily to the goblins before somehow transforming into a white owl and flying back in the direction of the castle. You follow, far less gracefully, dragged along the ground, up the hill and through the front gates of the castle

Turn to 1314.

183

You know you're in mortal danger but if there's one thing you hate, it's humans. You open your mouth to lambast your tiny captors with an ill-timed correction.

"Me? A human? I'm not one of those elf-murdering torture monsters!", you spit.

The tiny knight rides a little closer and scrutinises you with a squint.

"Is what you say true? Are you truly an enemy of man?"

BULLSHIT: DIFFICULTY 8

Add 4 to the DIFFICULTY if you won any rounds of combat against the brownies earlier.

If you succeed in convincing your captors of your good intentions then turn to 543. If you fail, turn to 1332.

184

Your surprising martial prowess notwithstanding, your puny muscles are no match for the net. However, you do manage to get hopelessly tangled up in it and flop around on the ground as you become more and more upset at your predicament. Within seconds you're openly weeping and screaming curses at bloody Jeff for allowing this fate to befall you. The taurcents, already on the fence about whether it was worth hauling you off into captivity, have their minds made up for them by this shameful display and they leave you wriggling, screaming and crying on the ground as they cart their more valuable prisoners off into the steppes.

After the man-horses leave you calm down a bit. By the time the sun has set you manage to disentangle yourself from the net and trudge back to the road, heading around the corner to the east. You're feeling tired, sore and seriously unhappy with your treatment today, but at least you're back on the right track instead of being put up for sale in a man-horse slave market.

Your ordeal in the net has cost you 10 EFFORT. If you need a souvenir to remind you of your close shave you can take the net with you if you want: add the Weighted Net to your Adventure Scroll. Assuming you still have the will to carry on turn to 1715.

185

Your devastating finishing move doesn't quite finish the priest. It looks like your patented Humbler is more of a Bumbler.

Still, the priest should be out of action for a while. You roll him and the remains of his skeletal gardener into the grave and shovel a little topsoil on top just to be sure. The shovel vibrates subtly and you get the impression it's paying attention to what's happening, somehow.

Now you've finally bought some peace and quiet would you like to have a look around inside the church (turn to 870) or just continue up the lane before anything else goes wrong: turn to 1236.

186

Two very beefy men are hitting each other while a couple of other hulks look on with great interest through black and swollen eyes. Another human in colourful silken clothes and a foppish hat stands close by, yelling about the proceedings in a very animated fashion. You guess he's the mastermind of whatever's going on here. Just as you're about to tap him on the shoulder and ask him what's going on, one of the fighters connects a powerful haymaker with the other's jaw. There's a resounding crack and the recipient of the love tap collapses to the floor. A bit of money changes hands between the spectators.

"That's three in a row for Ignatz, the Brunnenfeld Brute! Is anyone here ready to step into the ring for another shot at the town title?", he shouts, looking around. The bruised and sorry men, reluctant to receive another beating at the hands of the Brute, look away sheepishly.

"Well, if there are no more challengers..." says the announcer, who suddenly notices you as he scans the room for suckers who might chance it against Ignatz, "Hey you! How about it? Reckon you can take this guy on? The kitty's up to five big ones plus the championship belt!"

If you're prepared to risk having your face staved in for a shot at five big anythings and a belt then turn to 968.
If you'd prefer not to get killed by this huge man, you can instead make a few pitiful excuses and back out of the bar by turning to 54.

187

You go to leave the establishment by the way you came but find your path barred by a trio of mean-looking elfs.

"Where do you think you're going?", sneers one, a vicious-looking specimen in a heavy leather jerkin. You nervously reply that you're going off to take a leak, but he doesn't seem to buy it.

"Can't have you sneaking off to the humans, not after you've found our village and heard all our plans", continues the tough. You protest that you don't really know where you are and that, even if you heard anything, your lips are sealed. The elf shakes his head.

"Better safe than sorry". Drawing a stiletto blade with one hand he throws a high sign over your shoulder with the other. Realising that at least one elf has snuck up behind you, you duck just as an overly-embellished chair leg swings through the air where your head was but a second ago. Swivelling around quickly you see there's another couple of thugs you need to deal with! Treat this as a Multiple Hassle.

🔪**MENACING TOUGHS: DIFFICULTY 8 - TOUGHNESS 2 - FISTS 1**
🔪**SNEAKY THUGS: DIFFICULTY 7 - TOUGHNESS 2 - FISTS 1**

Should you defeat your adversaries then turn to 1469. If you can't beat them then turn to 1262.

188

You check to see if the farmer's breathing - he is, it turns out, and you begin to panic. What if he rats you out for your completely justified crimes? There's no point stealing a horse-drawn cart to get to Bilgeton if you're going to be arrested for the theft as soon as you arrive!

Suddenly you come up with a brilliant scheme that will let you take the cart but pin the blame on the unwitting farmer. Firstly, you tear a chunk of mushroom from one of the specimens on the back of the cart and cram it into Hurensohn's mouth. Then you find some dry hay and, packing it against the side of the farmer's hut, you set it afire with a flint you keep buried in the bottom of your pack. Soon there's a merry blaze as the dried wood walls and thatch of the cottage catch alight. No doubt the guards will think that Hurensohn's been sampling his produce and burned down his own farm as part of some psychedelic freak out - it wouldn't be the first time that's happened - and any missing horses bolted to escape the fire.

Chuckling at your own nefarious wit you unhitch one of the horses from the cart and climb up onto its back. You whip the reins hard to get the animal to get a move on. The column of smoke rising into the sky will no doubt attract the militia and your really don't want to be here when they show up. The horse gallops out of the property and you steer it south, away from the town and on your way to Bilgeton. After a couple of hours of very hard riding you reach the Count's Road, and with no sign of pursuit you allow your stolen workhorse a more leisurely pace as you continue on your way towards the big city.

Add the Clapped-Out Old Nag to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1455.

189

You consult the map which you sensibly packed before you left home. Bilgeton is a few days' walk away even if you take the most direct route, but if you go around the cave and cut east through the forest for a few hours you'll find a human town called Brunnenfeld from which you can probably arrange transport. On the other hand, your mother always warned you about humans, especially the hicks in this neck of the woods. If you'd prefer not to deal with humanity until you absolutely have to you can set out for the main road cutting through something called the Glade of Pixies.

Turn to 453 to approach the human town or 520 to chance the Glade of Pixies. If, despite knowing the way you want to go, you still want to poke around in the bat's lair then turn to 768.

190

Intermittent deep booming noises and the sound of shattering pottery guide you onwards through the mountains. After a couple of hours, you're making your way around a tight turn in the mountain trail when a stoneware bottle comes sailing out of the sky to shatter on the rocks just behind you, spraying you with shards and a mist of foul-smelling liquor. The smell is abominable and it burns to breathe it in - whatever was in that vessel could be used to strip paint. This minor explosion is followed by a salvo of deep booms, sounding what you'd imagine boulders would sound like if they could laugh.

Ahead of you in the direction of the ruckus you've been listening to all day the path rises sharply to climb up to the top of a flat-topped mountain just ahead. To get up that butte, turn to 256. If you'd rather avoid whatever's up there a narrow trail splits off to pass around the southern side of the mesa to the east - turn to 1075 to go this way.

191

The guard notices the tell-tale mark of a bad guy imprinted on your chin by that indefatigable fighter of crime, The Spectre.

"Oh, I see The Spectre has taken a dislike to you", he says nonchalantly. Fearing the worst, you try to explain but he cuts you short.

"Yeah, I know. He means well but he's a little over-enthusiastic. That's vigilantes for you. Tell you what: you can prove your good intentions with a security of 5 Guilders".

If you want to pay this fee then deduct the 5 Guilders from your Adventure Scroll. You pack up your stuff and the guard ushers you through into the interview room where you'll complete your application for Bilgeton residency. Turn to 1549.

If you can't or won't pay then turn to 624.

192

Outside once again, the goblins are still rushing around like crazy. You don't really have the patience or fortitude to put up with another battering at the armoured shoulders and elbows of these annoyingly busy creatures as they clatter around doing their business, so you decide against another bruising foray into town.

The market stalls in the town square are relatively easy to get at and you can probably check to see if they've got a caravan heading out of the goblin city any time soon. Turn to 443 to head over there. Or if you're happy with what you've accomplished here you can leave town the way you came in - turn to 1277. Finally, if you still think you still have some business here in Gobholme and can put up with another tenderising you can jostle your way through the square in the direction of the castle - turn to 707.

193

You creep into the undergrowth and have a good skulk. Since you're not all that good at camouflage or hiding or sitting still or not yelling when forest insects bite you, you're spotted by the nobles' guards. They don't come after you but they keep looking in your direction and you're pretty sure they'll spring into action if you try to launch any kind of scheme. You squat in the undergrowth for long enough that it'd feel real awkward to just mosey on over and introduce yourself, even if you were inclined to go chat with potentially dangerous humans. You just sit there and practice your skulk while you watch the nobles playing cards.

Eventually one of the guards gets sufficiently curious about your reasons for loitering about in the bushes and yells at you in his crude human tongue: "Oy!". He starts striding briskly towards you from across the clearing. You guess it's time to stop crouching.

If you want to run for it, turn to 1207. If you don't like your chances of getting away from this guy despite having a huge head start on him and his wearing at least moderately heavy armour then turn to 630 to see what he wants.

194

You creep right up to the side of the tent, trying not to trip over your own feet or otherwise get noticed by whoever's rummaging around inside. You carefully move the entrance flap aside and slip in, weapon (or, in a pinch, your fist) raised to brain the looter, who on closer inspection looks very much like Amelie! She's stuffing her petticoats with the various valuables located around the tent! You draw a sharp breath in shock at this discovery and the Countess, hearing you, freezes in shock and drops the pouch she was carrying on the ground. The count, lying in his four-poster camp bed, snores merrily through this nocturnal scene. Before you can open your mouth and make a fool of yourself the lady speaks, hissing angrily.

"You've ruined everything. I was going to fleece the jerk and blame it on y... I mean one of the hands", she snarls. "I'll tell you what, since I'm your half sister- yes, don't look at me like that, I'm obviously not a Countess of some place called De Fraude, I'm really the poor and landless daughter of the same armiger that sired you - if you'll go right away without causing a scene you can take the pouch of Guilders that I dropped as your cut and you can even take my horse so you can get out of here faster. Otherwise, well..."

If you'll take her up on her offer then turn to 1602. If you're not going to get involved in this human greasiness then turn to 896.

195

You curse at, kick, punch and stab at the swarm of fairies, clearing them away from the dwarf and allowing him to crawl over to the spray can. As soon as he lays his hands on the sprayer the fairies panic and begin to flutter off, but it's too late for them - the dwarf pumps the device several times, emitting a huge cloud of noxious chemicals which engulfs the swarm. There's a chorus of high-pitched screams followed by a score of little thuds as the fairies plummet to the ground where they lie twitching.

"That's the lot", says the dwarf with evident glee as he hobbles around, poking the fairy corpses with a stick.

You ask the dwarf if he knows where the door to the Mazyrinth is. After a short sequence of evasive answers you threaten to hit him and he hobbles over to an innocuous-looking section of the wall. As you watch in amazement it swings open. It's just a wooden door painted to look like the stone wall. The way into the Mazyrinth is clear!

"That's the problem with you.... half elfs. You take too much for granite."

Sneering at this horrible joke you shove the squat fellow to the side and make your way through the entrance. Turn to 901.

196

You don't think you stand a chance against this gang. Desperate times call for desperate measures: retrieving the huge testicle from your backpack, you open wide and take a huge bite. The elfs freeze in horror, transfixed by the grotesque action you have taken. Grinning despite the foul taste of this disgusting, raw piece of rancid cuisine, you step forward and the elfs step back. Another step forward, and they flee, screaming in horror into the forest. You showed them!

Suddenly you begin to feel weird - more manly, somehow - and your back, chest, chin and upper lip begin to itch uncontrollably. Before you can even bring your hands up to your face to give it a scratch the lower half of your head erupts in a great wild profusion of dark, tangly follicles. Your shirt bursts open as a dense thicket of hair explodes from your chest, shoulders and upper back. Consuming a semi-rotten euphemism has made a man out of you - something that years of Jeff's passive-aggressive "parenting" failed to achieve.

Remove the Big Rock Goblin Mountain Oyster from your Adventure Scroll and add the Manly Hairs. You may also add 1 maximum and current ÉLAN from the permanent changes the Oyster has wrought in your physique.

While this remarkable transformation was taking place the elfs have dispersed into the woods, but you can still hear them thrashing and cursing in their haste to get away. If you'd like to get after them then turn to 779. If you'd prefer to check out this scene a bit more first then turn to 568.

197

Harman and Giselle apparently survived the earlier fracas and have set up on stage where they're tuning their instruments. Or rather, they've been set up on stage - Eilika has chained them to the stools they're seated on, though she's nowhere to be seen at the moment. The expressions of utmost misery they wear on their faces turns to disgust as you smarm up to them and ask which room the lovely Eilika might be staying in.

"Piss off!" shouts Giselle and chucks her dulcimer at your head. It collides with your face, knocking you to the floor in a messy heap. Luckily the instrument didn't break too badly in the process of smashing your nose! Lose 5 EFFORT but you can drag the Bloody Dulcimer along with you if you like as you crawl out the door, humiliated and thoroughly cockblocked but one musical instrument the richer.

Once you're back in the thoroughfare you wipe the blood from your nose and stand up. Turn to 192.

198

You yell orders at the guards to the effect that there's a scout out there and they need to take him down! Unfortunately, you're not all that used to public speaking or giving orders so your instructions are a bit garbled and imprecise. The skeletons waste valuable time stringing their bows and looking for the elf as he slips away, but the guards in the front two wagons get a bead on him. They draw their shortbows for a shot before he disappears into the undergrowth.

Roll 2 dice - if either roll is 6 then the scout is hit! Turn to 130. If you didn't roll a 6 then the scout gets away. He'll be sure to pass on news to his buddies that you're on the way, but now they know you've spotted them and are prepared for a fight. They'll be sure to pile on reinforcements. Add 2 to your PROBLEMS and turn to 1749.

199

It was perhaps a mistake to bring an enchanted shovel of snitching to the highest authority in the town, especially given the terrible crimes you've committed. The shovel's metallic testimony is damning and for your crime of murdering the beloved town priest the knight's household guard summarily turns you into a porcupine under a rain of crossbow bolts. Your adventure ends here.

200

You both throw rock again. Kaspars grins, emitting an unsettling grinding noise as his huge stony face adjusts.

"Great minds, huh? Again". He begins shaking his fist, ready to throw the next sign.

If you want to go with rock again then turn to 1318. If you'd rather throw scissors then turn to 629. For paper turn to 1654.

201

Despite having nothing worth a damn to Bilgeton other than a limited amount of pluck and a rapidly-shrinking pool of determination, you plead for the guard to let you in. Your cries fall on deaf ears - the officious guard has already figured out he's not going to get anything out of you and is ready to move on to his next mark.

"Sorry. It's not that I can't help you, it's that I won't. Exit's back the way you came. Right this way". He rises and reaches out to grab you by the collar, ready to haul you back out of the gatehouse.

It seems that your adventure is doomed to come to an end within the walls of the very place you were setting out to reach. If you're ok with this then turn to 493. If you're determined to make it into the city one way or another then turn to 698.

202

The thief is an expert fighter, trained in several schools of swordsmanship from all the various corners of Palaver and probably beyond. He moves with skill, grace and economy, and as is often the case with a skilled warrior battling a completely untrained novice he is completely baffled by your sudden lurches, complete lack of reaction to his feints and your habit of occasionally bursting into tears. Long story short: he lunges, expecting you to step back. You don't. He trips over your clumsy feet and lands heavily in the middle of a group of goblins, who proceed to brain him and trample him under their heavy iron boots before rushing out to the aid of their comrades who are facing the burly barbarian. You are now free to loot the corpse, collecting a set of Extra Buckles and a Regular Shortsword before a goblin screams at you to get the hells out and help them.

If you're currently wearing the Elfish Cloak of Invisibility then turn to 742. Otherwise you watch as the barbarian, swearing mightily, is finally overwhelmed by the goblin horde and cut down. Despite your heroics nobody seems to be looking for you to give you your reward so you satisfy yourself with inspecting the loot you picked up. Eventually things settle down a little. Turn to 218.

203

The cart trundles across the bridge on the road out of town. Suddenly the sheriff yanks the reins and the horses come to a stop just on the other side of the bridge.

"Bilgeton, straight ahead" says the Sheriff as you leap off the cart. "And if you want some friendly advice, a haircut and take a bath. You wouldn't get hassled so much. Hope this ride helped you out", he says cheerily. "You have a nice day, huh?"

The sheriff is staring at you intently, waiting for you to move on. It begins to rain miserably. You hike your shirt collar up.

If you take the "friendly" advice and head on towards Bilgeton, turn to 774, If there's no law against you getting something to eat here then turn to 1438.

204

You head for the front gates to the city of Gobholme. As you approach along the road you see groups of goblins going about their business, pulling up weeds, pushing carts of crap around and standing around in large groups leaning on shovels. They don't seem to be very interested in making your acquaintance so you let them be and head straight for what you assume is the entrance to the goblin city a little way ahead of you.

The road terminates at a tall stone wall, completely bereft of anything that could be considered a gate. You can't see any way into this dump.

You've immediately given up and turned to walk away when you hear a dribbling sound coming from further along the wall. A dwarf, wizened and grotesque even by the standards, is taking a piss on the stones. You're about to turn away from this revolting scene when a couple of dozen little winged fairies come swarming out of the weedy vegetation nearby and attack this piddly pisser from behind, literally catching him with his pants down. He drops to the ground,

screaming under the bites, kicks, punches and minor assault spells of the fairy host. He rolls around in the dirt, futilely trying to swat his oppressors away. As he's attempting to grab a nearby spray can, inconveniently just out of reach, he spots you and cries for help. None of the goblins in the vicinity seem to be particularly interested in coming to the dwarf's aid and the few that pay him and his squeals any mind just chuckle before going about their business.

If you'd like to go over and lend him a hand then turn to 1636. If you can't see any reason to favour dwarfs over fairies you can leave him to his fate and collect whatever's left over afterwards - turn to 1072.

205

After a bit of investigating it appears that the spring water that should be flowing down the little creek bed that runs along the base of the mesa has been stopped by the copious piles of bottles and rocks that the trolls had been throwing down there, probably for years. It'll take a lot of work to clear it away. You roll up your sleeves and prepare to spend the rest of the night shifting broken stoneware out of the way so the water can flow to the human town again:

SPRING CLEANING: DIFFICULTY 3 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 4

If you succeed turn to 1323. Otherwise you can't be bothered with it and give up. Brunnenfeld can find something else to drink. Turn to 843 to continue into the mountains, leaving this scene of slaughter and subsequent laziness behind you.

206

You bellow a bunch of insults up at the birds but they don't seem particularly inclined to come down and talk to you, or to pay for your shirt's dry-cleaning. At least it's a good sign that they're not pecking your eyes out.

If you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes and want to use it to converse with these avian annoyances then turn to 782. Otherwise you must climb the spire for a chat - turn to 1769. If their continued rudeness makes you murderous with rage and you've got a ranged weapon then turn to 1674 to crack it out. Otherwise you give it up and move on - turn to 138.

207

The Confessor's Shovel is a cursed object and it would take the full resources of a master of magic or a saintly holy man with the ear of the gods to unhand it without serious consequence. You, on the other hand, barely have the willpower to get out of bed before noon. The effect of the shovel's curse takes a serious toll on your psyche - you feel its loss as keenly as you would that of your right hand or the filthy, crudely-illustrated pornographic vellums you keep stuffed at the bottom of your pack. Your braggadocio has departed, your swagger is gone and in general you don't feel anything like as smug and self-superior as you did before. In short, you're rid of a very dangerous cursed item but at a terrible, terrible price.

Lose 1 FIST and turn back to the page from which you came. Note that you will regain the FIST if you somehow get your hands on the shovel again.

208

You stay on in Brunnenfeld as Sir Witold's squire, taking up residence in the rich end of town. You find that a lot of the work of ruling in human society involves chiselling others out of what they've stupidly worked for, and whenever possible also abusing your authority to make sure you get your beak wet whenever anyone else does some chiseling. As a lazy crook this suits you down to the bone.

While your economic advice is of little use to Witold and, eventually, his successors, you do provide a steady stream of income to the coffers without quite wringing the townsfolk completely dry. Your lack of scruples or drive to do anything other than receive sacks of cash are respected by the town guard, shoddy merchants and the numerous local criminals and you soon find your political position unassailable. You live the rest of your life in relative luxury on your wages and the moderate kickbacks you receive as a minor provincial official. Sometimes you wonder if you could have done better but then you realise you probably really couldn't have.

209

You head south along the filthy dirt road, the forest off to the left of you and the rolling plains to the right. It'd be pretty if your legs weren't aching from even this small amount of hiking and you weren't so apprehensive about your immediate future - you've never been this far from home before, or been homeless for that matter.

You're lost in such thoughts when you round a bend on the road as it turns to avoid a copse of trees and you encounter a quartet of elfs from your home town - Biff, Joey and a couple of other gimmicky jerks whose names you never bothered to learn. These guys bullied you through most of your childhood, even when your relatively quick growth made you much larger than them. They're currently all stooped over a section of the road where the dirt path gives way to a proper cobbled highway, apparently conducting some kind of ritual at what must be a holy site for the whimsyflicking order. A cart stands nearby, partially loaded with the same stones that pave the highway - probably some kind of mystic accoutrement for their ceremony. By a strange coincidence these stones look very similar to the kinds of stones that all the towers in Elfsdale Downs are made of. Beyond this scene the road continues south, following alongside the forest.

The elfs haven't spotted you yet, engaged as they are in their ritual. If you want to continue in their direction along the road then turn to 1479. If you'd like to hide before these guys spot you then turn to 1243.

210

The fox snarls and snaps its sharp little teeth at you as you head for the door. Telling it to piss off and aiming a kick at its head is enough to encourage the vulpine to scamper out of the way, and you leave the store without further incident. You soon complete your climb to the end of Trade's Row. Turn to 1236.

211

Far from being scandalous your nudity is regarded as a hilarious statement and cutting satire on the foibles of the administration of Count Hugues of Bilgeton and the plight of the Bilgeton nobility under his reign. For all that none of the eligible ladies seem interested in getting to know a naked half elf, whether because of your filthy condition or the painfully obvious erection you sport while attempting to chat them up. Eventually one of the household guards, tired of your antics and perhaps worried about what the Count and Countess might make of your jackanapery when they arrive, marches you out of the ball at sword point.

Turn to 13.

212

The battle rages on for three days and nights, long enough for news of the showdown for the survival of the world to spread. Soon the quarry is ringed with rubbernecks, lollygaggers and busybodies from all over Nonce and from even further afield, all wishing you well or at least no immediate harm while you fight the Shiny Demon.

No matter how hard you try you can never quite get one up on the demon - perhaps this is because he's had an eternity to play with his instrument whereas you only picked yours up a few days ago and all you've got to go on is some bizarre divine inspiration that seems to be a reference to something outside the medieval setting. It's not enough, and you're about to give up. Scanning the faces of the onlookers for signs of encouragement you suddenly notice none other than Jeff standing there, proudly wearing a tunic he's bought from some enterprising soul stating that he is the father of the champion of the world and holding up a sign saying that he's always loved you. This gives you an idea. As you continue to play your rendition of Louie Louie as you've done ceaselessly since this battle started, you speak to the demon, informing him that while destroying the entire world sure would be horrible for you, it would be nothing compared to the torment of knowing that your messing with demonic forces and then playing poorly cost you your loving father. You would live out the rest of your days in misery knowing that Jeff's soul was chow for some pound shop Satan. You helpfully point Jeff out and he waves back to you, proud that the man he thinks of as his son has noticed him out there in the crowd.

The demon grins horribly and, playing one final riff, leaps into the audience and messily devours Jeff's soul before disappearing in a flash of light, taking your STEP DAD with him. Since no one cares about Jeff and they aren't aware that you were the cause of this demon being here in the first place, you and Queynte are considered the greatest heroes of all time. On top of that, since Seed Drille were disintegrated by the demon you're also reckoned as the top musical troupe in Nonce and beyond. While the Count of Bilgeton is far too indebted to hire you thanks to his gambling problems, you're able to dine out on your deeds until word reaches you from the King of Palaver himself that Queynte has been appointed as the official troupe of the royal court. You will soon begin your travels to the capital of the human kingdoms where you will spend the remainder of your life wallowing in the incredible happiness and fulfilment that all musical superstars enjoy.

213

You leap out of the river on the south bank.

If you had the Glorious Vessel, you sadly had to leave it behind in the river. Perhaps some other water rat will put it to good use, but you must remove it from your Adventure Scroll. If you were in the barrel you find your prolonged exposure to the foul and corrosive water has rotted away your clothing and you're buck naked under the thing. Fortunately a couple of belts survived and you rig these into straps which keep the barrel over your torso. All outfits on your Adventure Scroll other than the Barrel are similarly affected and must be discarded!

Regardless of your clothing situation, you're happy to be away from that foul-smelling soup. After a brief walk south you come across a beautifully-maintained paved road, lined on both sides with decorative shrubbery and the flag poles you saw earlier from which long heraldic banners flutter in the gentle breeze. These must be the banners of the local nobility that humans always seem to be so proud of - most numerous are banners featuring fishbones, but you also see a few other designs and, worryingly, several with the grisly sign of a decapitated elf head (in gold) on a field (parted per bend sinister) of brown and red.

This road runs east-west, and since you can see the walls of Bilgeton looming large to the east you decide to head that way. Turn to 1005.

214

You are still following along the outside of the forest when the sun sets. The rolling plains to the north have given way to equally rolling hills and ahead of you are some lofty mountains receding into the darkness. The scene is lit by a nearly full moon. Aside from crickets chirping in the forest and the haunting sound of a wolf howling in the far distance it's very quiet and a bit lonely.

An hour or two after sundown, the forest gives way to rising slopes, sparse thin pines trees and scree as you enter the mountains proper. It's getting late and all this uphill walking is wearing you out: you could use a rest. The moonlight streaming into the mountain pass illuminates the area but as you proceed further you find yourself tripping and falling over the loose gravel and randomly scattered chunks of rock. You decide to make camp here, though your options aren't all that promising - a bed of gravel or some firmer but sharp-looking chunks of shale.

If you'd like to bed down in the comparably soft gravel then turn to 1076. If you'd prefer to sleep on something that won't slide away down the mountain pass if you roll over during your regular bouts of night terrors then turn to 1764.

215

Sensing that this undead beast wants to talk, you sit down by the fire for a natter. The wretched skeleton is starved for company - just like you, it has spent its whole existence as an outcast, even before it was skeletonized. It was raised in a small village by a doting mother who lost interest in it when a homewrecker - also called Jeff - moved in and booted it out into the cold. It was on the way to Bilgeton to find its father and got lost, fell afoul of a lich and was turned into the skeleton you see before you. Unable to get into Bilgeton due a labour dispute it began to make its way north, trying to put as much distance between itself and the hated Jeff as possible.

In short, this skeleton is you, somehow. Noticing your shock and consternation, the skeleton chitters out an explanation.

"Do not be so surprised. I...we... you are the most important thing in the land of Palaver. Without you none of this would exist. In fact, it exists only for you - and only for this quest, which you are doomed to repeat endlessly, over and over. Perhaps you have already done this quest before, maybe more than once... and your adventure will end, sooner rather than later. But I must stay here forever, in case another of us comes along. I have failed in my quest to find some place to crash and I failed even to get revenge on Jeff, who ruined my life and doomed me to this fate".

This gives you an idea - perhaps you can get revenge on Jeff and give this skeletal version of you the peace it craves. Turn to 1276 to put your scheme into motion.

On the other hand if you're done talking to this depressing bone bag you can stand up and, following its advice, head south towards Bilgeton - turn to 819 - or ignore it and just carry on towards the Alp which lies just a little ways north by turning to 478.

216

Several of the peasants, merchants and other assorted riff-raff in the queue look like they'd like to pop you one to stop you spouting off, but just as a challenger is about to step forward you begin to hear the whispers being repeated up and down the line:

"That's the Jabbing Jabroni - the reigning Feewald, Brunnenfeld and Gobholme champ"

"They say his fists have to be registered as a lethal weapon"

"I heard he punched a man so hard that it killed his entire village", and so on.

No one seems all that keen to receive a beating. As soon as you realise no one wants to fight, you muscle your way to the front of the queue and right in through the gatehouse door.

Turn to 851.

217

"Next!" yells the teller, "Next!"

You realise with a start that the teller is yelling at you. You're Next! You stride to the counter and ask for change. The teller takes a Guilder from you and hands you a hefty sack of copper groats, hargroats, groatfarthers, half-farths and a selection of shavings, clippings and rusty nails. Remove 1 Guilder from your Adventure Scroll and add the Pouch Full of Shrapnel.

Finally you can return to the market and buy one of the many items that you'll probably need to finish this quest right! Turn to 244 to stride back out of the bank and start haggling with the merchants or turn to 827 to take your hard-won coinages into the end game with you.

218

With the adventurers gone, life very quickly returns to normal in the Goblin Town and the chaos of regular life resumes. The goblins hustle to and fro about their business, pulling carts and running around with chunks of ore, pieces of metal and other junk. They don't really pay you much mind - while visitors to Gobholme are infrequent they're not completely unknown, and in any case everyone's busy. While you're not attracting the sort of hard stares you're accustomed to receiving you're also not getting any guidance about where to go next. According to various signs nailed into every free surface in this town the goblins have an apothecary, an inn and something called a "bank" : any of these might be of interest to you. Also looming above the town on the other side of this busy square is the huge white castle where the Goblin King is supposed to reside.

If you'd like to roll up your sleeves and bash your way through the crowd it's going to take some doing:

CROWD SURFING: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1

If you succeed in this difficult crossing, you manage to bash your way through half the population of Gobholme, taking a bruise or two in the process. Were you heading to the apothecary (turn to 669), the inn (turn to 705), the bank (turn to 119) or the castle (turn to 707)?

If you fail or you've been through enough you can instead go check out the nearby street stalls and see if you can find a quick way on to Bilgeton by hassling the merchants - turn to 443.

219

Hurensohn's eyes narrow. You feel like you've failed a test somehow.

"I don't ride with narcs", he says through gritted teeth. "Take your show on the road".

Nothing you say convinces him that your intentions are any good and he's starting to show signs of impatience with your pathetic begging. You really need that ride though, otherwise you might have to walk to Bilgeton!

If you're prepared to take what you want by force then turn to 338. Otherwise there's nothing to do but move on: turn to 268.

220

You unfurl the map and take a look. According to this thing you're just a bit north of Elfsdale Downs. The nearest place where you could conceivably rest in any semblance of comfort is Brunnenfeld, a human town at the base of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains almost a day's walk away to the east, though you could save some time by cutting through the forest. The area to the north is mostly blank but there are some ruins marked down about half a day's walk away. You could also cut southwest through the forest to join up with the Count's Road which supposedly leads to Bilgeton.

While you're scrutinising the map something stings you again - once in between the shoulder blades and another time in the leg. Looking down you see a wooden splinter protruding from your leggings. When you pluck it out you notice it has a mean little barbed tip and it draws some blood. Lose 1 EFFORT.

If you'd like to take the most direct route to Brunnenfeld, following the map, turn to 1694. If you'd prefer to keep out of the forest then you can skirt around the outside in the direction of the town by turning to 145.
If you'd rather head for the ruins in the north then turn to 1024.
Finally, if you want to backtrack a little and head southwest through the woods to the Count's Road then turn to 1237.

221

Unable to defeat even this pitiful enemy you leap back out of the barrel, apologising profusely for invading the decroded skeleton's personal space. Unfortunately all the chittering attracted the attention of several more of the undead! As you emerge you stumble into a trio of mean looking skeletons who have come over to find out what's bothering their barrel buddy. Since you couldn't handle the decroded skeleton you don't think you stand a chance against three of the things. You therefore immediately grovel for mercy.

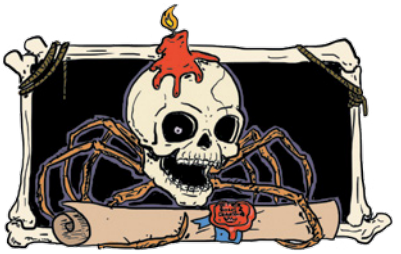
Turn to 1268.

222

You attempt to calm yourself down and fail. No longer able to contain your rage and indignation, you burst into tears. The guard, more used to punching brigands in the face and yelling at criminals than anything else, is unable to cope with this unmanly behaviour and just leaves you to shuffle slowly away towards the road, sobbing and bemoaning your miserable fate.

Eventually you calm down after plodding a few miles down the road but the emotional drain is quite significant - lose 5 EFFORT. Still, you think as you dry your tears, you'd rather embarrass yourself with a gigantic tantrum than be chopped in half.

You continue onwards. Turn to 1445.



223

There's more than money at stake here! You pay the 5 Guilders.

"She's in room 3", grunts the bartender. You're racing up the stairs as fast as you're able, sweating and grunting under the weight of these packs you've lugged all this way.

By the time you get up there you're wet all over from sweating, but Eilika seems happy to see you anyway. She's lying on her bed, wearing only her undergarments (a shapeless smock, coarse linen braes and thick woollen hose). You put the bags down in the corner of the room and then turn around, ready to receive your reward...

"Thank you for all your help", she says. "I promised to reward you handsomely so here you are, my big, strong helper". She reaches down into the neckline of her smock and fumbles around for a moment before withdrawing a tiny gold cold which she places in your hand.

"One Guilder", she says cheerfully, "And keep the change".

As you're about to argue about the reward, Harmon and Giselle barge into the room carrying their stringed instruments. They both give you a look like thunder but say nothing as they climb up onto a couple of stools and begin practicing for tonight's set. This effectively ruins your chances of getting so much as a hug from the charming Eilika - all you got out of this was a very sore back and a single lousy Guilder.

Feeling pathetic after pledging your heart and soul to a girl and doing all that work and not even getting any sex out of it, you forget all about the room you hired. You storm out of Eilika's chamber, back down the stairs and out onto the streets.

In all these wheelings and dealings you spent five Guilders to gain one. Deduct 4 Guilders from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 192.

224

Lucky for you this old guy is a horrible shot and not too quick on the reload. Once he's fired a couple of shots off and noticed that you're not going anywhere he panics. Throwing his weapon to the ground he flees. Unencumbered by crossbow he scrambles like a mountain goat up the rockface behind his dwelling. If you like you can chase after him - turn to 534.

Otherwise you let the old fellow go. You can, if you wish, take his discarded Heavy Crossbow- add it to your Adventure Scroll. With the way clear you can carry on along the dried ravine (turn to 395) or, if you're not too worried about the old guy coming back, you can loot his shack - turn to 1496.

225

The guard looks closely at you. Noticing your blue pallor, sunken yellow eyes and the sickly smell of decay, he recoils in horror.

"Sorry, but we don't allow persons suffering from a loathsome or a dangerous contagious disease to enter Bilgeton. Actually, I'm not sorry. Get out and take your corpse rot with you", he says, pointing back out the door. It seems your quest to find a place to crash has been a rotten failure.

If you know where you're not wanted then turn to 493. If you're not going to give up so close to the end then turn to 698.

226

You head straight to the address on the milkman's card. After wandering around in a nearly completely undeveloped part of the city, little more than a swamp with stands of trees and the occasional grazing cow or sheep, you find the place you're looking for at the end of a dirt track - an old gravesite hard up against the eastern walls of Bilgeton. There are several graves and burial mounds here but only one seems to be in anything like a decent state of repair. As you approach it you see that it's littered with scraps of paper - calling cards, just like the one you're carrying, filled out with names and addresses. You look at the simple gravestone slab and see in horror that you've found the resting place of one Wandering Q Milkman.

You do some quick mental arithmetic - if you're 60 years old and the milkman must have been about 20 when he sired you, then that would make him 80... but the average lifespan of a human in a dangerous late medieval setting is such that 50 is considered to be a very advanced age. That must mean...

You slump to your knees as you realise that the entire premise of this quest was a lie. You were never going to be able to find your father, never crash on his couch. The wind howls sadly through the trees as a light rain begins to fall. You throw your calling card onto the grave. Having paid your respects, you suppose it's time to move on: turn to 400 to return to civilisation.

Whether out of dedication to the memory you don't have of your father or just tiredness you remain seated before the grave for a long time, until after a while you hear the tinkling of bottles coming from the path behind you. You turn around and to your surprise you see a very old human in a bright white milkman's uniform and carrying a shoulder bag packed with milk bottles. He stares at you with frank disbelief.

"Well, I'll be jiggered" he laughs merrily. "You must be one of my bastards. I never thought any of you would find me, but here you are and here I am, the jig up! Now pardon me, we'll have plenty of time to get to know one another, but I have to get those order slips out of the rain before they get soggy". With that he steps past you to collect the calling cards from his grave.

"Postman usually drops them off, but once in a while one of you lot tries to hand deliver them. Quite a few of my bastards in Bilgeton, actually. I try to avoid them. Saves on child support".

You explain to him that you've been kicked out of home and ask him if he's got a spare couch you can crash on. He looks thoughtful as he considers your situation, but his expression is quickly replaced with a cheerful smile as he makes his decision.

"Tell you what, son. You promise not to tell anyone you found me, and you've got yourself a couch!"

You cheerfully agree and follow your old man back to his place where you crash out at last, your adventure at an end.

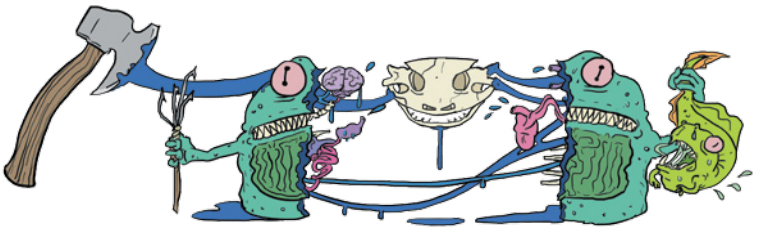
Or is it? Turn to 1825 if (and only if) you have the Sword of the Bastard Elf.

227

Locked in the prison wagon, the rest of your journey to Bilgeton is completely uneventful. The guards harass and make fun of you to relieve the tedium of the road, but no more than you're used to from any other sentient being in Nonce. Although your feelings aren't spared, at least you're safe from the various monsters and brigands that plague the countryside.

Soon enough you're driven in through the huge gates of Bilgeton and handed over to the guards in the gatehouse, who lead you in through the guardroom where you are strip searched and your confiscated gear is itemised. You watch it being secured in a wooden evidence chest at the back of the room (keep it on your Adventure Scroll for now, but none of it's available for you to use). You're finally unshackled and given your Prisoner of the Count starter kit - a couple of filthy burlap tunics, a toothbrush with only one bristle left and a pot to piss in (don't bother adding these loathsome items to your Adventure Scroll). Now that you've been formally inducted into the Bilgeton prison system a couple of the surly prison guards march you down a narrow spiral staircase to your new home.

Turn to 49.



228

Reasoning that the enemy of your enemy is your friend, you turn to help the skeletons against the remaining elfs. Your friend seizes the opportunity to try to bury his hatchet between your shoulder blades. Luckily the blow glances off one of the numerous belt buckles holding your whole half-elfish ensemble together but it still hurts your feelings and causes you to stagger: lose 5 EFFORT.

If you survive this loathsome bit of skulduggery, you hear a hoarse voice bellowing an impressively vile stream of billingsgate from the open window atop the tower:

"THIGHBONE YOU FUCKING OAF, CAN'T YOU BLOODY SEE HE'S NOT A BLASTED ELF. LEAVE THE POOR COCKSUCKER ALONE FOR THE FUCKING TIME BEING AND GET THOSE WORTHLESS PRICKS OFF MY SHITTING LAWN."

Thighbone looks as embarrassed as is possible for a skeleton. He chitters an apology and goes to look for an elf, but most of them have either died or nicked off. Thighbone now gestures for you to follow him and his companions to the tower. Do you want to follow immediately so as not to further irritate the source of this foul language? If so you continue along with the skeletons right to the tower - turn to 1295. If you'd like to risk taking a minute to pocket what you can from the fallen first then turn to 1359. If you want nothing further to do with any of this then you turn back towards the road to Bilgeton: turn to 1424.

229

Drying yourself off as best you can you head north overland.

If you had the Glorious Vessel, you sadly had to leave it behind in the river. Perhaps some other water rat will put it to good use, but you must remove it from your Adventure Scroll. If you were in the barrel you find your prolonged exposure to the foul and corrosive water has rotted away your clothing and you're buck naked under the thing. Fortunately a couple of belts survived and you rig these into straps which keep the barrel over your torso. All outfits on your Adventure Scroll other than the Barrel are similarly affected and must be discarded! If you ever lose this barrel you'll be naked, so be careful!

Regardless of your sartorial situation you're glad to be off the water at last. After a brief trek through a dung-covered field you find a nicely-maintained paved road which runs east-west. You head east in the direction of Bilgeton.

Turn to 1732.

230

The guard regards your outfit and gives you a very hostile look.

"You don't look like a guardsman, so there's only one way you could have come by that stuff".

You hurriedly begin to explain that you could have bought it or borrowed it from a serving town guard who was a friend of yours, but your transparent excuses are hacked short by a sharp swing from the militiaman's halberd. Your adventure ends here.

231

Your romantic exploits are almost paralytically depressing even to you, so you figure that hearing about them might have the same effect on the giant phallus demon that is currently bearing down on you. You struggle to raise your voice over the din of crashing armour and the thundering noise of the Phalloknight's terrifyingly rapid advance. Even if, as seems unlikely, the demon somehow heard your tale of woe, there's no time for him to reflect upon the existential horror of your squalid little life before he's upon you.

Turn to 618.

232

You stagger up to the wretched hovel and just about manage to collapse in exhaustion on the doorstep. The door creaks open and you find yourself looking up at an ancient and weathered human being. You're more than half-expecting him to rob and kill you as humans are wont to do, according to everything you've ever been taught, but instead he takes pity on you.

"By the K-NG, man, what happened to you? Ran afoul of some elfs or pixies out there? Well, never mind. Let's get you inside and patched up".

The old man drags you over the threshold and into his house. It's not much more impressive on the inside than the outside: its dried mud and plant fibre walls are propped up by rough wooden beams which rise up into the thatched roof, and the floor is little more than trampled hay mixed with plenty of dirt. Still, it's cosy thanks to the warm fire burning in a shallow pit in the middle of the room. The old farmer, who introduces himself as Aldrecht - a gourd farmer and good Samaritan by trade- sits you down in the straw alongside the fire pit and binds up your injuries. He tries to probe you about who you are and what you're doing, but you're too tired to talk and are already nodding off. He promises to talk to you tomorrow and as you lay down on the filthy but comfortable straw matting he blows out the lights and retires through an opening in the wall to his own chamber.

Although you're slightly concerned that he appeared to be staring at you like a piece of meat you're too tired and too cosy to do much about it. You drift off into a deep slumber.

Turn to 1558.

233

A couple of miserably boring hours pass before a messenger arrives from the lord of Brunnenfeld with a sealed scroll. The moustachioed guard cracks it open and reads it aloud.

"For yer'n outrages and crimes aginst Brunnenfeld it pleases his lordship Sir Witold of Brunnenfeld to sentence ye to three days in the pillory, after which time ye will be hurled from the town walls."

With this the guards open your cell door and drag you out of the prison house and into the town square. Your ineffectual pissing and moaning about this rough handling earns you a knock on the head so you submit to being dragged into the market square and locked into the pillory - a board with holes for the head and hands attached to a post. The marketplace isn't all that busy since the town only has a couple of hundred residents, but your face still attracts its fair share of rotten cabbages and other refuse as the passers-by have their fun. Finally the sun sets and all you have to worry about is the occasional drunk from the nearby tavern hurling his dregs on you as he stumbles home. Turn to 736.

234

It's a man with a broken mirror for a head. How tough can it be? You draw your weapon and screech a war cry, charging across the soggy ground to smash this reflective fiend once and for all.

Unbeknownst to you, demons of the Hell of Introspection consider combat to be a gentlemanly art, and an archduke is considered one hells of a gentleman. The third in line to the Brooding Throne has spent countless epochs honing his art. Sighing with boredom at your amateurish and predictable charge he slides one of his great bladed feet free of the muck and fillets you like a fish with a graceful arcing slice. Your adventure ends here.

235

Since you don't want to spend any time in the oubliette (and a month is long enough to be forgotten in one of those places) you let out a terrified scream, bundle up as many of your possessions as you can and flee. The guards give chase but once you're out of the market square they let you go. Still, you don't stop running until you're a good distance away from the shopping district.

While you're repacking your bag you realise that you left a couple of items behind in your haste to get away. Remove two items of your choice from your Adventure Scroll. Cursing, you decide that you've had enough of the Bilgeton shopping experience and should really get on with whatever you came here to do. Turn to 827.

236

The guard looks horrified at his find. Apparently it's suspicious that you'd be hauling around the remains of persons reported missing and presumed dead, and no explanation you can stutter out satisfies his or the other guards' curiosity about the matter. You are summarily executed and displayed in a gibbet above the Trader's Gate as an example of what happens to criminals who try to waltz into Bilgeton via the front gate.

237

Putting the skeleton behind you, you continue on. No further encounters present themselves and you are soon approaching the Alp of Abandonment, finding yourself at the base of the forlorn mountain before long.

Turn to 791.

238

The minstrel show continues for a while despite the growing rage of the audience, until eventually someone in the crowd hurls a stone at the crumhornist and knocks him senseless. The music stops and the rest of the Zwarte Piets drag their fallen comrade off the stage as the audience cheers.

Well, this shouldn't be too hard an act to follow. You stride out onto the stage. Mysteriously the cheering stops.

"Bilgeton! Are you ready to rock?" you scream.

"We're already in a stone quarry", some wag replies in the ensuing silence, "There's nothing here but rock".

"I said ARE YOU READY TO ROCK!" you yell back. Another member of the audience replies by hurling a stone at you, missing narrowly. You guess they're ready to rock! You launch into a blistering canso:

A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1

If you fail then you're even less entertaining to the crowd than the Zwarte Piets: turn to 72.
If you succeed then turn to 746.

239

Your persistence is rewarded with a crossbow bolt fired by a guard standing on the second floor of the balcony. It plunges through the lattice and punches into the ground between your legs. You're given to believe that you're not welcome in the mansion grounds, and also that the next shot isn't going to miss.

If you want to kick the gate again to show you really mean business then turn to 1116. Otherwise you can head for the northern gate (turn to 963) or backtrack through the town and leave through the southern gates near the market square by turning to 338.

240

You wander on into the mists, putting any content that may be in this adventure off some ways to the south of you. As you stumble along the fog becomes denser - you can barely see a few steps ahead of you and the light from the sun penetrates only murkily through the rolling clouds. It's also becoming deathly cold. Unless you're wearing a cloak of some kind lose 5 EFFORT from the freezing mist as you feel your life shivering away from your bones.

The day wears on and you become hopelessly lost, no longer knowing which way is north, south or whatever direction Bilgeton is meant to be in. The sun is nothing but a dim and diffuse glow somewhere above you in the mists and you can't even tell what time it is. Still, you press on hoping that you're going the right way. You begin to hear muffled sounds, almost like voices in the fog - but they must be hallucinations, surely? Nothing could live out here. And then you see it, ahead of you - several little dim eldritch lights, dancing in the fog just above the ground maybe twenty feet away. The sounds of high-pitched voices and laughter are coming from there!

If you'd like to head over to see what's up then turn to 722. If you don't want anything to do with glowing things in the mist then turn to 1290.

241

You hope to overawe the guard with the incredible skills that you've picked up over the course of this adventure, but then you remember that you haven't really been out here all that long and drinking too many potions, robbing corpses and throwing violent tantrums aren't considered particularly marketable skills in Bilgeton (even if they do come in handy sometimes).

If you have been completely skeletonised you might be able to pass yourself off as a worker - turn to 396. If you've got a musical instrument and want to convince this guard of your chops then turn to 1773. Otherwise you're pretty much out of luck and must admit to having nothing. Either you pay your way in with the 20 Guilders - turn to 808 - or admit you've got nothing going on by turning to 201.

242

You face the Malrog! Standing to its full height of 14 feet tall, it showers you with sparks and ashes as it bellows an earth-shaking roar. You briefly wonder if you've done something unwise before the monster is on you with a speed completely out of proportion with its bulk, flailing at you with flaming fists the size of beer barrels.

🔪**MALROG: DIFFICULTY 13 - FISTS 3 - TOUGHNESS 4**

If you lose a round of combat one equipped item of your choice is destroyed by the shattering force of the attack - remove it from your Adventure Scroll. If you have no equipped items then lose one unequipped item or 10 EFFORT.

If you defeat this fiend then turn to 34. Otherwise, since it will not accept your surrender and it's too fast to flee, there's only one thing you can do - ducking under a swing that would have ripped your head off you take a flying leap into the abyss! Turn to 144.

243

You hear a sigh of disgust from several pixies around the clearing.

"Forget it, lads", one says, "another gods-damned time waster. I told you he looked like a lousy elf."

The pixies melt away into the undergrowth. There's no chance of finding their grove now.

If you like you can swipe the unattended potion - add a Potion to your Adventure Scroll. You suddenly feel exhausted - it's late and you've been slogging through the forest all day. You really could use some shuteye but on the other hand you can sort of see the road to Bilgeton in the distance, shining in the moonlight behind a dense thicket of trees and probably a whole lot of swamp. It might be safer to head straight there rather than try to rest in the forest.

If you want to sleep then turn to 462. If you'd like to continue on then turn to 711.

244

The market is much as you left it. As you're passing through the crowd you feel someone bump into you but think nothing of it until a few minutes later: in one of Bilgeton's rare moments of quiet you realise that your coin purse isn't jangling quite right! You check your inventory and your heart sinks: you've been robbed!

Lose 10 Guilders or half the amount of Guilders in the Cash section of your scroll, whichever is the greater (if this brings your Guilders to zero then so be it). If you have a Pouch Full of Shrapnel that's been swiped too! Remove it from your Adventure Scroll.

If you want to flag down a guard to report this crime then turn to 700. If you just want to get out of here while you have anything left to your name then turn to 827 to muscle your way out of the market square and into the end game.

245

After a gruelling fight you and Rouge-Gorge subdue the lich. The monster disintegrates into a pile of bones and leathery skin. His earthly remains - a pair of wavy-bladed longswords, his ivory wand, his golden crown and his dressing gown, weighed down by the two cool-looking glowing green lanterns that hang from the drawstring - clatter heavily to the floor. Rouge-Gorge, having sustained a nasty cut, is a bit slow on the uptake so you get first dibs on the looting. You can take any two of the Bathrobe, the Ivory Wand, the Gold Crown and the Twin Swords of Corruption before Rouge-Gorge can hobble in to get his share.

You're about to continue looting the lich's lair when you realise the gig's up - Rouge-Gorge's men have finished plotting and are now moving on to the action phase of their mutinous designs. The surviving thugs, wanting to get out of the monster hunting game and seeing no reason to split the winnings here with a greedy aristocrat, round on their leader, cutting his victory speech short under a rain of cudgel and sword blows. You have no doubt that you're next: you skulk off before they turn their attention to you.

You'd better hurry - will you run deeper into the crypt (turn to 805) or make a break for the main entrance (turn to 832)?

246

A convenient signboard is plastered with various notices and among the adverts, personal missives, religious rants and offers for a good time you find several wanted posters. One of them corresponds to the half elf you've been hauling around all day: he's wanted by the Bilgeton militia to the tune of 10 Guilders!

As you're flagging down a patrol to get this profitable nuisance cashed in, the half elf wakes up and groggily looks around.

"W...wait. Don't turn me in. We're half-brothers. I can prove it" he stutters weakly. You arch a disdainful eyebrow in disbelief at this claim, but he continues. "Inside my shirt is a locket. Open it."

You reach into the bound elf's shirt and retrieve a locket which was too cheap and worthless-looking to even consider pocketing before. Sure, it looks like it might have sentimental value but you can't pawn sentiment, At your captive's urging you open it and revealed to you is a painting of an elfish woman holding a half elf baby. In the background you see the white uniform of a milkman. This must be the Wandering Milkman you've putatively been seeking this entire adventure!

"Let me go and I'll tell you how to find him".

If this appeals to you then turn to 1271. If you'd rather have the money then turn to 151.

247

You casually attempt to steal an apple out of the sack carried by the merchant in front of you.

APPLE ABDUCTION: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then turn to 1763. If you fail then turn to 315.

248

The moth gives you a ferocious battering with its wings and huge body and you stumble, tripping over a root and falling flat on your back. In this compromised position you are ripe for the disgusting thing that happens next.

You're not really an outdoorsy sort of half elf otherwise you might know something about the life cycle of the giant moon moth, a relatively common creature in the deep woods of Nonce. Moths of this species live for only about a week, during which period they mate and try to find somewhere suitable to lay their eggs before they kick the bucket. Fortunately for you this moth has already successfully mated, but it's still looking for a place to drop its eggs. Until now. The moth matriarch flaps her wings madly as she hovers over your prone form and coats you from head to toes in a stick and rank-smelling goop which contains thousands and thousands of tiny eggs the size of poppy seeds.

These will hatch in the coming days but for the meantime the mother moth, her life's work complete, flaps away towards her exceedingly brief retirement in the direction of the fire. For your part you struggle back to your feet, almost slipping a couple of times on the sticky gunk.

You are now infested with moon moth caterpillars! Add the Moth Eggs to your Adventure Scroll (make sure you check the item effect - it removes any positive modifiers you get from your outfit).

Feeling suitably horrible you brush yourself off to the limited extent possible and carry on your way south. It's a long slog and the sun sets on you in the woods, but no further misfortunes befall you. Eventually you break clear of the woods and onto the paved surface of the Count's Road.

Turn to 1715.

249

You make a blatantly illegal move with your queen's bishop, yell "Checkmate!", and push the Prince's king over. Expecting to be summarily eviscerated, you are taken by surprise when the Prince of Shards accepts this defeat graciously. He bows curtly and speaks in a voice like the tinkling of shattering glassware: "Very well, you have won. I will honour our arrangement. Here is the traditional prize." He presents you with a beautifully made, demonwood fiddle with "Idle Hands" engraved on the lower bout. You feel like you've earned this, even if in a somewhat greasy way. Restore 10 EFFORT and add Idle Hands to your Adventure Scroll. From now on, whenever you begin a new game you may choose Idle Hands instead of one of your three starting items. Furthermore, should you ever need to roll on the Demonic Apparitions Table again you may simply choose the demon you wish to encounter instead of rolling (make a note of this in ink in the Word of Power Section of your Adventure Scroll).

"Now, begone". The demon turns his back on your dismissively and begins an incantation which will reopen the portal to his hell dimension so he can return home. If you figure now is the time to leave, you head off in search of a road or any other way out of this wilderness: turn to 1609. If you'd rather keep pestering the demon, turn to 397.

250

The goblins have more pressing concerns than some insane interloper trying to get in on the action. After giving you a bit of a kicking they leave you groaning in the dirt while they deal with their actually dangerous problem. Lose 5 EFFORT.

In the end your attempts at assistance were painful for you but helpful for the adventurers. Using the minor annoyance and distraction you caused, the warriors manage to turn the tables on the goblins and break free of their armoured attackers. They leg it for the Mazyrinth and manage to slip out of town, a crowd of armoured goblins clattering furiously along right behind them.

They might have gotten away, but you're still stuck in town surrounded by a bunch of annoyed goblins. Just as you're pretty sure they're about to cut you in half you notice a white owl fluttering overhead. Suddenly it transforms, revealing itself to be the Goblin King! You'd know him anywhere from the suspiciously detailed descriptions in the fairy tales books your mom used to read

to you - his flowing mullet haircut, silver tights and generous codpiece (though it's not quite as imposing as indicated in the fairy tales your mother used to read to you). Having completed his transformation from owl to splendid man, the Goblin King turns his attention to you and raises one of his magnificent eyebrows.

"Such a pity", he says wistfully. "What are we to do with this one?".

You're already in the process of grovelling, crying and begging for mercy but the Goblin King cuts you off: "Enough!", he says imperiously. "I know what to do. Bring him".

With a snap of his fingers he transforms back into an owl and flies up towards his castle. You follow, dragged along the ground, up the hill and in through the fortification's front gates.

Turn to 1314.

251

"You call that a knife?" you sneer and draw your weapon (or clench your fist extra-tight). "That's a knife", you continue, waving your weapon of choice around.

If the weapon you've got equipped is a sword of some kind then turn to 965. If it's a knife, dagger or something small and sharp (including the Lorewardening Key) then turn to 1110. If it's some other weapon or just a clenched fist then turn to 385.

252

You elect to take the scenic route and are rewarded by a bracing hike through the mountains, following the winding trails upwards through the mountains. The air is fresh and the view is spectacular. You very soon become thoroughly sick of both of those things and start fervently hoping for some kind of way out of these miserable, cold alps.

Luckily the trail you're following cross another path at a saddle between peaks and at the crossroads is an ancient way stone with Bilgeton carved on it, though any relief you may feel is crushed when you read the faded text chiselled beneath: "3 days".

Sighing, you set off again, following the mountain road to Bilgeton. Turn to 955.

253

The skeleton stabs incredibly hard but his treacherous blow bounces off the shield with a resounding clash. You stagger forward and away from the murderous barrel dweller before it gets another chance to slash at you with its blade, but you find to your dismay that the ruckus has awoken the warlock. She leaps out of bed in a fluid motion and glares at you with a look of pure hatred through bleary, sleep-deprived eyes. You guess you're in for it now.

Turn to 1335.

254

The merchant launches into his sales pitch but you immediately cut him off. “Wouldn’t mind a few rounds of cards,” you mutter, ”Kent, specifically”. The merchant looks utterly despondent as he reaches for his deck.

Turn to 176.

255

Either through pure luck or consummate skill your shot flies out of your puny shortbow, sails over the heads of the assembled elf horde and plunges down towards the ballista commander, finally lodging in the unlucky elf’s eyeball and felling him with a shrill scream. The surviving crew leave their leader and their weapon and flee back into the forest as the elfs look on aghast, forgetting to advance on you or the wagon you freed. This is your chance!

Turn to 670.

256

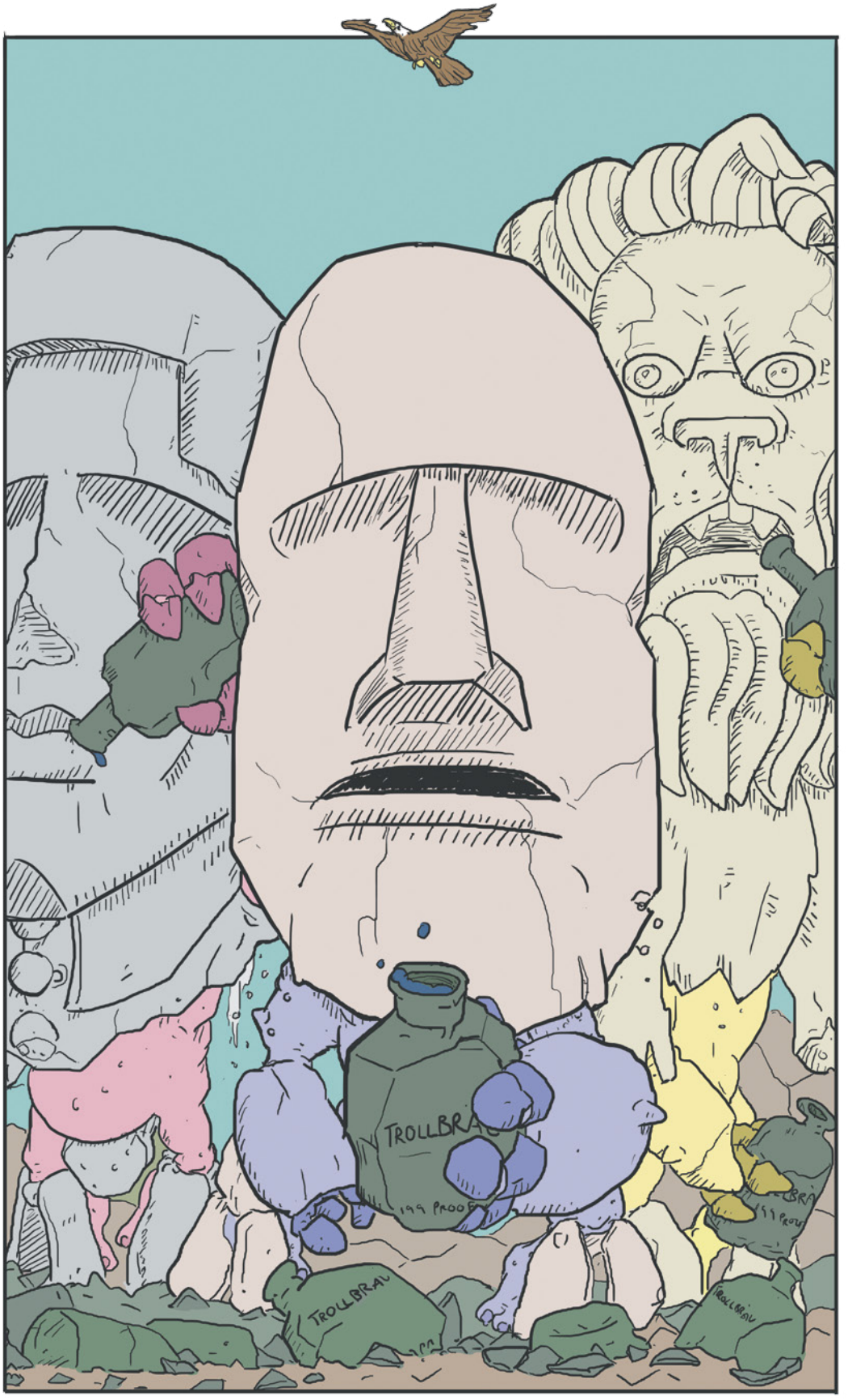
You clamber up on to the top of the butte and enter what the local bumpkins have been referring to as the village of the Big Rock Goblins. You, however, as an erudite explorer who owns the Bestiary : the essential guide to the world of the Bastard Elf and Beyond (available at a couple of good and many terrible bookstores) are able to instantly recognise these things for what they are : Rock Trolls. These creatures are like regular trolls but their skin is made of living rock, which they take great pride carving into interesting shapes and styles. There are about twenty of them sitting in a wide circle around a huge heap of stone bottles. All of the trolls have one of the bottles in hand and several placed around their feet. They’re hammering whatever’s in the bottles down with alarming speed before hurling the empties off the side of the plateau with great force. One of the trolls, upon finishing its drink and finding that all the ones around its feet are empty, stumbles to its feet and totters over to the pile of bottles. As it's selecting its next drink it spots you standing at the edge of the plateau.

“Oy, I see you! Come over here and introduce yourself!” it booms. The other trolls swivel to look at you, transfixing you in the impassive gaze of twenty carved stone faces.

You figure you might as well go say hello since you’re here and because you don’t want to spit on the hospitality of a group of three-ton rock monsters. You approach the troll that called you over - a huge slab that would look like a moai statue to you if they existed in this setting - and begin to make whatever excuse you have for yourself. The troll, apparently not all that interested in your shaggy dog tales, speaks over the top of you.

“We talk over drinks. Sit, friend, and have a bottle of trollbräu”, it says, proffering you a large stone bottle that is no doubt full of the kind of liquor that would get a rock troll hammered, or a lesser creature dead.

If you can’t see a way out of this situation you sit down and have a drink with these trolls - turn to 1637. Otherwise, if you’ve been given a job to do by Witold of Brunnenfeld then you can inform them that you need to get down to brass tacks - turn to 1155. If you’d really rather not risk alcohol poisoning then you can politely refuse the bottle - turn to 1421.


TROLLBRAU
199 PROOF
TROLLBRAU
TROLLBRAU

257

Nilde isn't done talking.

"But I don't want to be married to him. He's lazy, stupid, mean and heartless, and he's treated me so cruelly", she says coldly. "Your excellency, is it not in your power to annul marriages? Please grant me my freedom from this horrible half elf".

Bedüdelt begins to remonstrate with her but Nilde gives an account of your actions. The Bishop is stunned - he even vomits a little in disgust but that might have more to do with the barrel of baptismal whisky behind the altar that he's been dipping into with a ladle since you arrived. He fixes you with a fiery but somewhat uneven glare.

"I have heard some pretty filthy things during confession but the way you've treated your wife is the worst thing I've ever had the displeasure to hear about. Out, cursed half man! Out! Your marriage is hereby annulled!" he thunders. "Now begone, and never stain the holy places of The K-NG with your presence again!"

You're about to argue the toss but the Bishop mutters a prayer and you're instantly struck with some kind of invisible magic force. Tumbling end over end you are blasted back the entire length of the Synod's nave and through the doors, landing painfully in the dusty street outside. Lose 5 EFFORT as you struggle back to your feet, assuming you survive.

Since getting hit by a Smite spell isn't an experience you'd care to repeat you decide to get the hells out of here. Remove Nilde from your Adventure Scroll - it was never going to work out anyway. Now, are you going to get your mind off this bruising breakup with a bit of retail therapy in the market - turn to 244 - or are you eager to find some other way to bring this adventure to a close? Turn to 827 if so.

258

The Spectre is furious to see you going through his stuff, but luckily for you he's far too much of a hero to do anything more than relieve you of the loot you recovered before binding you up again and heaving you back onto his horse.

You're soon on your way towards Bilgeton once again. Turn to 1659.

259

You're a forest elf (and a half one at that), not a mountain elf! Nonetheless you luck out and despite a few scrapes, bumps and narrow escapes as you teeter over nearly-bottomless abysses you manage to survive and get horribly lost in the untracked mountains.

After several hours of stumbling around in what you hope is a consistent direction, winding your way along crags, oft-times barely clinging on by your fingertips and keeping yourself from falling by grabbing on to scraggly mountain vegetation, you find that the air is becoming somewhat

colder, denser and mistier. Winding your way around the summit of the peak you're currently scrambling across you look down and see below you what looks like a squat mountain shaped like a skull. The eyes, carved into the side of the mountain whether naturally, manually or by some arcane force, glow balefully with a dim internal light. Its horrible mouth yawns open as though waiting to consume you. At least it looks like it might be easy to get to from here - the peak you're on descends gently enough on that side, though it's unclear why you'd want to visit.

If you'll hazard this skull mountain rather than spend any more time out here in the mountains then turn to 1300. If you'd rather find somewhere less ominous then you return to your new-found mountaineering hobby - turn to 1453.

260

You throw your hallucinogenic grenade as hard as you can into the dragon's face and inhale a good portion of the fumes yourself. You've effectively imbibed a potion! Roll on the Potion Effects chart and resolve the effect (and remember you'll have -1 ÉLAN thanks to the effect of the potion at least until you sleep it off as normal).

Assuming you survive, things start to get strange really quickly. The dragon doesn't want to eat you, it just wants a hug. It smiles suggestively, and was that a wink? It's a friendly dragon. A friendly dragon....

Turn to 1810.

261

Hurensohn gurns at you with a nearly-toothless smile.

"Well, guess you did meet Hanse after all. Can't be too careful these days, you know. Anyway, it's a long trip, so just one more thing I gotta know before you ride with me", he says, glancing around cautiously as he reaches into his pouch and proffering a giant slice of what looks like dried mushroom, "are you... cool?"

If you're "cool" then turn to 1013. If not, then turn to 459.

262

You demand your drink.

"5 Guilders", says the wizard, without any apparent shame at this monstrous fee.

DON'T HIT THE WIZARD: DIFFICULTY 9

If you fail turn to 1641.

If you succeed then you temporarily resist the reflexive urge to punch him in the face. If you've got 5 Guilders and wish to pay up then turn to 1371. If you'd rather not pay more than a month's wage for a cocktail then turn to 1532.

263

The Spectre notices the skull-shaped scar on your jaw. You've no memory of how you got it: Jeff told you that it came from a time in your early twenties when you drunkenly picked and lost a fight with a particularly fluffy bunny, though you don't believe that slandering, home-wrecking scumbag even for a second. You probably got it doing something manly, or at least elfly. However, The Spectre seems to have his own theories about how you picked it up.

"The mark of the ring... we've met before! Evildoer, surrender or you'll taste the kiss of my ring once again!" he bellows.

The Spectre is a very big and threatening opponent despite his weird taste in clothes. If you'd like to give up you can surrender: turn to 986. If you didn't come all this way to throw in the towel to some purple-clad mountain lunatic then turn to 663.

264

You guess the stories about humans are true. The guard spits and unslings his bow from his shoulder. He proceeds to nock an arrow and pull back the bowstring but the horrible display of begging, crying and cringing you put on unmans him and he lowers his weapon.

"K-NGdamnit. Let the forest have him. He be already in his grave anyway. Let's move out".

With this the guards move on, leaving you in your pit.

Turn to 744.

265

The fight rages on for far longer than you're comfortable with, but after ducking and dodging several of the fat fighter's slow but powerful blows you finally have him where you want him. He makes a final swing at you with the mace which would have taken your head off had it connected, but you're away, darting right between his legs and out of the gate before he can recover from his attack. Fettwanst roars in anger and calls for reinforcements but you'll be long gone among the peaks of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains well before they can get a search party together.

Turn to 1698.

266

Another tunnel, another cavern. Again the floor here is covered in rubble, and striking your flint you see there are no stalactites on the roof here, just like in the next cavern over. As you're looking around for exits you feel a palpable shudder and are showered with more rock dust.

There are four ways out of this cavern - to the northeast (turn to 317), to the south (turn to 1525), the west (turn to 295) or the northwest (turn to 312).

267

You curl your lip in a parody of a smile.

"I work alone", you say smugly, ignoring the thing that just happened.

Brenda looks disappointed.

"Oh well", she says, then brightens up as she draws her dagger again.

🔪**BRENDA THE ELF: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you defeat Brenda turn to 998.
If you can't or won't fight this particular elf then turn to 873.

268

Nestled between the Feewald and the shadow of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains, this part of the country is kind of riverine area. The creeks that flow down from the mountains pass through here and combine on their way west to the forest. It's a pleasant and green land and though it's a bit boggy in places you have a far more relaxing walk than you've had up until now. You even catch a bit of rest whenever you feel the need in the shade of the occasional stands of trees which litter this riverside grassland. Restore 5 EFFORT.

After a few hours of this idyllic stroll you're hopelessly bored and hungry - The King of The Ring, your favourite fantasy novel, glossed over the long days of trudging that formed the backbone of the story, and you're footsore and sick of snacking on the lint at the bottom of your pack - when, upon passing through a shady copse of trees you see in the distance a weird little house all alone in the field just ahead of you. It's a bright ginger colour with bright red roof-tiles which look almost like large boiled sweets. As you draw closer despite yourself you see that the doorframe and window panes are glossy and striped like candy canes, and even the glass in the windows looks like it's some kind of translucent candy. Weirdly, bits of the wall look like they're covered in teeth marks, as though it's been nibbled at...

Your observations are interrupted by a hiss as a small ginger cat, perfectly camouflaged against a wall of the house, wakes up and spots you. Not deigning to make your acquaintance it trots for the door, which instantly opens for it to allow the animal to squeeze in. You didn't see anyone at the door, though, and it remains open for you. A chill shoots up your spine.

Do you want to approach the house for a closer look? If so turn to 322. If, despite your rumbling stomach, you want to steer clear of whatever no doubt foul magic is going on here then turn to 1581.

269

Screaming with rage you leap forward and clobber Bruce in the back of the head. Years of humiliation fuel the rage which gives this punch a nearly supernatural force, and Bruce is a small reptiloid with a paper-thin skull. He goes down for the count.

The other nobolds hear your scream and turn in time to see the fate of their co-worker. They're miners, not warriors, and their bottle doesn't hold in the face of this nearly-unprovoked savagery, They drop their tools and flee - to no avail - your long strides allow you to overtake them and send them to their reptile hell one by one. Soon there's only you, dripping in lizard slime and hauling an armload of grizzly trophies as you stride onward through the tunnels.

Add the Detachable Tail and the Frill Neck to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 811.

270

Following the stream back from the mesa you return to Brunnenfeld. You're soon back at Sir Witold's manor where the fountain is once again flowing, filling cask after cask with fizzy water which will soon be sold at a horrendous mark-up in Bilgeton.

You're brought before Sir Witold who, via his butler, expresses his gratitude, though he asks suspiciously slyly whether the "Rock Goblins" are still alive. You are put up in the manor for several days while the preparations for your award ceremony are made and soon enough, before the population of Brunnenfeld and several bored-looking travelling merchants you are officially ennobled as an Armiger of the Kingdom of Palaver. This comes with a stipend of several Guilders a week. You are given 20 Guilders in advance and another 10 if you wiped out the trolls - add this noble sum to your Adventure Scroll. While you're there, you will notice a section for your noble crest - draw one in ink. From now on you will start the adventure with noble heritage among the humans, with the right to bear the arms and styles that you draw now on the Scroll.

Once you're done with that, Witold's ready to offer you a job - will you stay on in Brunnenfeld as his squire and part of what his butler tells you he calls his "brain trust"? If so then turn to 208. Otherwise if Brunnenfeld's too small a pond for your newly noble self then you refuse his offer - turn to 1707.

271

The bartender rolls his remaining eye.

"Another troupe. Great. I thought I was paying Plike to keep you lot out. Guess he's asleep on the job again" he snarls. This doesn't fill you with great hope.

"Listen", he continues, "I'm going to tell you the same thing I tell every other bard that wanders in here: if we want you we'll come find you. Prove yourself on the streets among all the other bards and you might get a paying gig, but until then are you drinking, fighting or getting the hell out of here?"

If you're here to drink then turn to 689. If you want to fight then turn to 12. If you're eager to get on with whatever you came to the big city to do then you can leave, stepping out onto the streets of Bilgeton once more: turn to 827.

272

Not a bad name! You can go around asking people if they're experienced with regards to having seen your troupe playing, but it's also a reference to their experience level!

Turn to 1747.

273

Your perfectly serviceable outfit is so similar to that worn by the servants that you are continuously mistaken for one. Whenever you smarm up to a lady you are immediately besieged with endless requests for food, drinks, to unclog the latrines or to take a houppelande to the cloak room. While this is still better than your usual fare of being ignored or slapped, it's not exactly the kind of attention you were hoping for.

Eventually the head butler approaches you to berate you for not doing your job before informing you that you're fired. You tell him that you can't be fired, because you quit! That'll show him!

Furious, you storm out of the building. Turn to 13.

274

Explaining to Emilie that Sven sent you, you give the ring to the young lady. At once she relaxes and a broad smile breaks out across her face as she slides the ring onto her thumb. Instantly the disobedient animals stop their horrible racket.

Well, you've done a good deed, or at the minimum did something you were obliged to do. Aside from helping a struggling business franchise it appears that the effect of the ring has seeped into your very soul, improving your affinity with animals. Remove the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes from your Adventure Scroll but make a note in INK that from now on all HASSLES involving animals (though not monsters) will be at -1 DIFFICULTY in all future adventures.

Seeing that you seem to have a calming effect on the critters Emilie offers you a job as a shop assistant, but you didn't come all this way just to do an honest day's work. If you've still got animals or animal parts you want to sell then turn to 686 to fence them, otherwise you bid the young lady farewell and step back out into the market square. Turn to 244.

275

You attempt to use the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes on Them! but it has no effect. Either the ant's queen exerts a great hold over the ant's mind, or it simply has no mind to speak of that can be manipulated by such sophisticated magic.

Turn back to 1189 and pick another option.

276

The Lorewarden's Arms is a pretty traditional Elfish pub - a residential tower with most of the load-bearing internal walls knocked out, painted (hastily and probably using non-union gnomish labour) with pictures of elfkind's greatest victories. About a dozen elfs populate the ground floor, lounging ornate but flimsy chaise longues and drinking aelfwine which is doled up by the chaliceful by a surly-looking gnome who is barely able to see over the countertop. Nearby an elf fop tootles nearly tunelessly on a wind instrument and is largely ignored by the revellers. A dangerously unsupported spiral staircase, propped up by nothing more than a creaking stack of booze barrels, rises up from next to the bar. Judging from the sounds coming from upstairs there are more elfs on the levels above - probably the whole village is here.

Your entry has roughly the expected effect - most of the elfs ignore you and continue with their arguing, bragging and drinking, but you can't help but notice that you're attracting a couple of sideways glances. You'd better watch your step - the elfs might seem and be lazy, weak and cowardly, but so are you. You still remember how much elfen fists and mean words can hurt.

Not wanting to take your chances on that insanely unsafe staircase you can instead try to strike up some casual conversation with the locals by turning to 1419, or approach the musician by turning to 1727. Otherwise you can head straight for the bar by turning to 594.

277

Even by your standards the bartender was worthless, and you tell Hurensohn as much. He grins widely, displaying his disturbing lack of dental hygiene.

"Well, sure seems like you met the guy. He keeps hassling me about going to Bilgeton but I always have an excuse as for why I don't have room for him. Reckon you'll be my excuse this time round."

He continues, "Anyway, it's a long trip, so just one more thing I gotta know before you ride with me", he says, glancing around cautiously as he reaches into his pouch and proffering a slice of what looks like dried giant mushroom, "are you... cool?"

If you're "cool" then turn to 1013. If not, then turn to 459.

278

The bartender doesn't take your insistence that his prices are too high all that well. In fact, he retrieves a spiked mace from behind the bar and takes a swing at your head in one fluid motion, only very narrowly missing. You decide the get the hells out before he can put an end to the adventures of the Bastard Elf. Luckily he's not able to jump over the bar in his armour and you make use of the time it takes him to circumnavigate the counter by running back out into the street. He doesn't seem inclined to pursue you and is satisfied to yell some pretty crude things abought your cheapness and your upbringing from the doorway of his establishment before returning to his duties.

Turn to 192.

279

You emerge from the tunnel into a large cavern. Water cascades down one of the walls in a sheet, disappearing as it hits the floor through numerous small holes and crevices eroded into the ground. Since poking around in the holes will probably wet your flint and get you nowhere anyway you decide to move on.

You smell something horrible to the north - if you want to go that way then turn to 1787. If you'd prefer not to go near anything horrible you could instead go south (turn to 319), southeast (turn to 1778) or take the exit to the east (turn to 1301).

280

You decide to stick around and wait for the hosts, but there's only so many times you can dance the saltarello before it gets old. You're starting to run out of things to say to your new lady friend and she's beginning to look desperately bored. As you hop around you begin to hear some of the other guests muttering among themselves about whether the Count is planning on coming at all.

Maybe it's time to give up waiting for the newly engaged couple: if you want to suggest to Isentrud that you get out of here before she works out that the only attractive thing about you is your outfit then turn to 6. If you're determined to give your well-wishes to the Count and Countess in person then turn to 1713.

281

The dragon grows weary of your tactic of alternating between surrender and defiance. It opens its mouth to blast you with a jet of blue flames, roasting you instantly. Your adventure ends here.

282

It's a long and uneventful walk south along the Brunnenfeld Plains before you reach the Count's Road heading to Bilgeton. As it's late evening when you arrive you set up camp under a tree a little way back from the road, and after a long day's walk you quickly slip into an exhausted slumber.

283-285

You wake refreshed in the late morning after an undisturbed sleep. Restore 20 EFFORT. After a quick breakfast of whatever you can find in the bottom of your backpack you break camp and continue along the road.

Turn to 1445.

283

"Next!"

Someone coughs. The line lurches forward and then stops. You know what to do.

If you're still with us, will you keep waiting? If so turn to 217. If you're done then you can leave the queue and get on with finishing the book - turn to 827.

284

You somehow slip through, disappointing the murderous drifters who were looking forward to looting your corpse. Not wanting to attract the guards' attention they slink away as you drift exhausted and mostly dislocated along the Bilge and into Bilgeton.

Within the walls of Bilgeton the Bilge runs through a high-walled canal which is quite impossible to climb in your state, but fortunately there are numerous docking points for small boats and barges and the like. Pulling yourself up onto one of those you lie for a moment until your head stops spinning from all the toxic fumes you've inhaled from your time in the river.

Although your lungs will recover, your threads do not. Exposure to the noxious Bilge has rotted away your clothes. Any outfits other than the Barrel, should you still have it, (whether equipped or not) are destroyed and must be removed from your Adventure Scroll. Despite your difficult sartorial situation you must still make a go of your debut in Bilgeton, and so after you've caught your breath you climb a narrow staircase leading away from the canal and onto the streets of the big city.

Turn to 1364.

285

Since you're a member of the living dead you can understand these skeletons and they can understand you. You wander up to the nearest skeleton who looks you up and looks as concerned as possible for a creature with no facial muscles to look.

"No, don't come any closer. I don't want to catch what you've got. Go talk to the boss in the shop, he's paid the big bucks to deal with your type". He points to the office door. Shocked at this abomination's rudeness you comply and slump along into the office where, after a short wait, you are brought into the union rep's office. The rep, a skeleton who looks much like any other skeleton except for his ring-bedecked fingers and outrageously fine garb, puffs on a comically oversized cigar despite not having any lungs.

"Looking for work? Bilgeton's a closed shop, at least as far as the skeleton workforce goes. You want to work in this town, you have to be in with the SWU. And I don't think you are. You look like a temp to me, and we represent the permanent skeletal workforce".

Somehow noticing that you're confused, he elaborates, rolling his eye sockets impatiently.

"Temps are scab labour made by that rotten lich, Hardmod. They're easily breakable, decrode rapidly and won't reform if they're busted up. The human employers have started bringing them in to undercut our wages and we're not having it. So if you're one of them, you'll be working in Bilgeton over our undead bodies".

As a 'temp' you're obviously not welcome here. Unless, that is, you have a SWU membership card on you : turn to 1758 to produce this. Otherwise you have no choice but to chitter a farewell and get your bony butt the hells out of here - turn to 1400.

286

The skeleton, though defeated, is still clinging on to its stuff. As you go to empty its pouch its remaining ribs shift over to get in your way, and it takes quite a bit of prying and bashing to get them loose. After considerable swearing and a couple of bites from the skull you manage to jimmy your way into the skeleton's remaining possessions. However, all the fussing and feuding has alerted the church's priest, who comes barrelling out of the rear entrance to the church to see you slamming the upper torso of his discombobulated groundskeeper against the stele of the grave you've just robbed.

"What have you done?" wails the priest, a fat old man in a brown cassock. Before you can think of a convincing lie a voice rings out from the head of your shovel like the pealing of a bell. "THE HALF ELF HAS STOLEN ME, DESECRATED A GRAVE AND DESTROYED GREENBONES THE GARDENER WHEN HIS CRIME WAS DISCOVERED. FURTHER, HE TARRIED TO ROB HIS VICTIM". This causes you to nearly leap out of your skin and you'd throw the shovel away but somehow it stays stuck to your hand.

The priest is furious.

"You devil! He was my friend and the best groundskeeper this church has ever had", he yells, his face beet red, "and you- desecrator, carrion-bird, graverobber, sinner - will restore him or pay the price!"

You don't know anything about skeleton repair or necromancy, and in any case the bag of bones had it coming, creeping up on you like that. You try to slither out of the thing you're responsible for in the greasiest conceivable way.

"You'll do it, or I'll smite the smarm right out of you" replies the priest.

If you're willing to make amends then turn to 1709. If you'd rather teach this priest a lesson in humility then turn to 53.

287

The guards shout out for you to halt but you turn and flee, sprinting down the cobbled thoroughfare towards the bridge. It's a large stone arch over a wide, filthy looking river with a current moving swiftly towards a large city, the walls of which you can see in the near distance. Could that be Bilgeton?

Your musings and sprintings are cut short : as you step onto the bridge you see a couple more guards approaching from the opposite side, no doubt drawn by the shouts of their compatriots. You're trapped! Worse, a guard high up in a guard tower on the far side is taking aim at you with a crossbow. He fires a warning shot which ricochets unsafely off the stones of the bridge.

With guards advancing from both sides will you try to power through and get to the southern bank - turn to 1510 - or will you bravely leap into the water for a quick getaway? Turn to 291.

288

The guard might look slow, padded as he is with furs, silk and thick fabric armour, but you're not all that nimble yourself. After a particularly near miss from the human's dagger you twist to the side and catch a heavy boot right up the backside. In shock and pain you tumble right out of the carriage, landing flat on your face in the dirt.

With the fight knocked right out of you and your dreams of joining Biff's gang of cronies in tatters, you panic and flee screaming into the forest, accompanied by a chorus of laughter from the elfs and the human.

Turn to 785.

289

You draw the bow and aim carefully at the commander of the siege engine. The green-clad elf is peering at you through a spyglass as he yells instructions to the other two elfs who are crewing the device and making minute changes to its facing and elevation. In a couple of seconds they'll have you zeroed in and then it's curtains.
This will have to be one hells of a shot - the commander is far outside the bow's useful range (at least for you, no more a student of archery than any other elf) and there's a crowd of jeering elfs advancing on you between you and the engine. You aim a little higher and, with no more time to think, take the shot...

🔪**LONG SHOT - DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 2**

If you succeed then turn to 255. If you fail then the ballista finishes aiming and, with a final twang, knocks you clean off the back of your steed and into the afterlife. Your adventure ends here.

290

You smash the skeleton down but stay on guard in case it gets up again like most of these things are supposed to do. This one just lies there, a sad little pile of bones. After a while you realise it's not going to reanimate and permit yourself to relax a little.

Disappointingly, this skeleton doesn't have much worth having but if you want to loot its mortal remains you find a collection of Extra Buckles, A Bastard Sword of the Elf and, strangely, an old, crumpled Milkman's Calling Card. Add any or all of these to your Adventure Scroll if you like.

With this accomplished there's nothing else to stick around for so you move on. Turn to 237.

291

They're not going to take you alive! You bravely clamber up onto the railing on the edge of the bridge and prepare to jump in. From here it suddenly seems to be a long way down. You begin to have second thoughts…

JUMP: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1

If you made it then you hurl yourself over the edge and into the river. You hit the water with a splash and the River Bilge swiftly bears you away from the guards: turn to 1456. If you failed or can't bring yourself to try then there's nothing left to do but climb down and surrender. Turn to 958.

292

"Good on ya", says the padre as you get up peacefully. "While you're in the area why not come visit Busted Hill? It's a little ripper of a place. C'mon mate, follow me. You lot, back to it, eh?"

As the other nobolds get back to their work of digging at the tunnel walls you follow the priest into the passages towards the nobold town. After a couple of twists and turns you arrive - the tunnel opens up into a huge, well-lit cavern which contains the entirety of a hill which has somehow fallen in through a gaping hole in the cavern roof far above. The dwellings of this town are cut directly into the side of the eponymous Busted Hill. It all looks a bit rough to you, but before you can question the padre, he speaks.

"Mate, I know it's a bonzer place but we can't stand around lollygagging all day. Righto, this way. I'll get you patched up".

With that the priest drags you towards one of the two buildings in town that aren't some kind of lizard hovel - the First Church of Hells. With no reason not to follow him in you go see what he's brought you here for.

You enter the carved stone entrance of the church and find yourself in a small chamber which consists of nothing more than a few benches in rows in front of a small wooden table. The pedestrian scene is bathed in a menacing dull red light emitted by several oil lanterns with red-stained panes and a number of crudely carved statues of what you assume are nobold demons

leer at you from the dark corners of the room, flickering blood red light illuminating their sinister eyes, bifurcated tails and ridiculous frills. The padre takes a seat on a stool on the other side of the table, which you guess probably doubles as an altar and, reaching under the table, produces a bottle of dark brown firewater and a couple of small metal cups.

"Pull up a pew and let's have a natter", says the priest, pouring some liquid from the bottle into the cups. You infer that you should drag one of the benches closer to the table and sit down to partake of the priest's hospitality. If you'd like to do that then turn to 1246. If now seems like the opportune moment to attack then turn to 399. If you'd rather just leave you can rudely walk out and, once you're outside, head right next door to the tavern (turn to 458) or try to find some way out of this place without dealing with any more of these lizards by turning to 591.

293

You curtly instruct the old eccentric to piss off, and roll over to recommence your shuteye. This tactless reply seems to have bruised this old man's pride as you soon find out as he promptly blows his top.

"Boy I say, boy! Ah do declare you have insulted my honour! Ah challenge you to a duel!"

You've incensed him enough that the old gentleman forgoes the rest of this strange ritual and instead of giving you a time, place or selection of weapons he charges right at you, fixing to brain you with his walking stick! You must defend yourself:

🔪**THE COLONEL: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2**

If you defeat this old coot then he stumbles off into the night - turn to 8.
If you fail, you must instead beg for mercy - turn to 70.

294

A bit further along the road you see a wagon parked up with a few skeezy-looking guys seated on logs nearby. As you approach you see that they're humans - two helmeted guardsmen wearing slightly different uniforms from one another and a third fellow, bare-headed aside from a pompadour and dressed in a hodgepodge of silk fabrics. A long sword hangs from his belt, the tip of its handsome leather scabbard almost touching the ground. It is this fellow who spots you and rushes out in to the road, waving to get your attention.

These people immediately strike you as pretty seamy, even for humans. If you're on horseback (or birdback, or whatever) you can try to ride on by - turn to 90. If you're on foot and want nothing to do with these guys then turn to 423. If you want to approach the human and see what he wants then turn to 178.

295

Another trek through a pitch-black tunnel brings you to another cavern. This one is a low-ceilinged affair with a lot of stone rubble on the floor. As you try to negotiate your way around the room to find your bearings the cavern vibrates noticeably, letting a spray of rock dust down from the roof. Was that an earthquake? You guess that's why there's so much rubble: any stalactites would have ended up on the floor at the first tremor.

The vibrations let off and you feel your way around, locating tunnels in the eastern, southwestern and western walls of this cavern.

Turn to 266 to go east, 529 to go southwest and 1634 to go west.

296

The hills north of Gobholme give way to the rolling plains east of the Mist Steppes. Milner's a gods-awful pain in the arse to ride and he only gets worse and worse as the Alp of Abandonment looms closer, but you're glad you have him : as you pass over the landscape you see various shamblers and other random encounters roaming around over the over plains. The Mist Steppes and their surrounds are pretty enough what with their grand scale and unspoiled lakes and mountainous backdrops and all, but really no place for a sane adventurer to go wandering around on foot. Hours pass uneventfully aside from the odd near-spill as the hateful old donkey tries to throw you whenever he thinks you're not paying attention.

Later on in the afternoon you begin to draw near to the huge Alp, a forbidding black rock with an icy peak. Milner, already the cantankerous sort, really begins to go nuts; kicking and braying and generally being a lousy steed. It takes all the thrashings you can bestow upon the rotten animal to make it continue towards the forbidding landmark. Your ride is starting to be way more trouble than it's worth.

You're easily within walking distance of the base of the mountain - if you want to let Milner go then turn to 360. If you want to ride on then turn to 767. On the other hand if your donkey's behaviour is starting to worry you, you can abort this mission and steer the donkey back towards Bilgeton - turn to 1783.

297

Losing the +1 Ring of Silvermanes was a bad idea, not least because the ring bore a mild curse which notified Sven Silvermane the second it left your possession. Mightily annoyed by your uselessness and your presumed weaseling out of the deal he summons a horde of animals to tear you to pieces! You suddenly find yourself beset on all sides by the filth of the earth and air : rats stream from hidden burrows to nibble at your legs while pigeons darken the sky, descending on you like a black cloud as they rip at you with sharp talons and cruel beaks. There is even a hedgehog trying to encourage you to fall over onto it. You must fight for your life!

Treat this as a Multiple Hassle:

🔪**RAT PACK: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 3**
🔪**PIGEON FLIGHT: DIFFICULTY 5- FISTS 2**
🔪**INCONVENIENT HEDGEHOG: DIFFICULTY 3 - FISTS 1***
*When you defeat the hedgehog you must lose as much additional EFFORT as it got on its final FISTS score to reflect all the spikes it got in you.

If you lose then these animals will tear you to pieces - it's a fight to the death! Should you win you find that the Silvermanes' malign influence is not completely spent - for the rest of this adventure, any time you fight an animal (intelligent or not) the DIFFICULTY and TOUGHNESS increase by 1! This curse will afflict you whether you somehow recover the ring or not - the Silvermanes are furious! You do not have to turn to this page again if you somehow recover the ring and manage to lose it a second time.

Now turn back to the page from which you came.

298

You decide to pay the mushroom farmer a visit. Perhaps he'll be wanting some company on his trip to Bilgeton.

You head out of town through the gates and find that the farm is clearly visible only half a mile away near a wide dirt path that leads away from Brunnenfeld. You arrive there shortly, only getting a little bit wet fording the brook that crosses over the track.

Turn to 967.

299

You hammer the door hard four times. The rickety entrance groans a little under the assault but doesn't give. There's more to the secret knock, apparently. Do you want to hit the door three more times quickly (turn to 1057), give it three hard thumps (turn to 1577) or really go to town and hit the thing 8 more times hard (turn to 5).

300

Giving the Malrog a wide berth you sneak from stalagmite to stalagmite, keeping the rocky protrusions between you and the monster. It's occupied enough with what it's doing that it doesn't notice you moving around the edge of the cavern behind its back.

Not liking your chances with the bridge, you make your way over to the abyss in hopes of finding an easy way down. Perhaps you can climb up on the other side? Regrettably, it appears that this chasm is unfathomably deep - the bottom is lost in the pitch blackness far below.

If you have Enough Rope you could try to descend into the pit - turn to 62 to do this. Otherwise there's no way you could attempt to climb down, at least not without far better motivation than you currently have. Would you like to sneak over to the bridge and attempt the risky crossing (turn to 1136), or would you prefer to creep up closer to the Malrog and see what it's up to (turn to 828). If you're sick of skulking you could issue a challenge to the beast - turn to 242 to attempt this foolhardy action.

301

You've blundered into a well-prepared elfish ambush. Able to prepare well ahead of your arrival, the elfs are heavily armed and present in alarming numbers. Barrels are rolled out onto the road, blocking the passage for your wagons almost completely, and as almost a score of armed (and even partly-armoured) elfs race out from the tree line as archers pour arrows upon the caravan from up ahead. The wagons, stuck where they are under the withering fire of the archers, can do little but await the charge of the elfen raiders. Your brave guards make a pitiful attempt to return fire but mainly succeed in putting themselves in harm's way. Roll a die for each GUARD you have - on a result of 1 or 2 you lose the guard instantly as the specially blunted bone-smasher arrowheads do their dreadful work on the hapless skeleton. Luckily the rain of arrows slacks off moments later as the raiders close in, slicing and hammering at the guards and drivers with their swords and clubs.

You're in a tight spot - with the wagons swarming with elfs the archers have nothing to target but you, and to illustrate this fact an arrow whistles by threateningly close to your ear. Even getting out of here alive is going to prove a challenge, let alone saving the caravan you've been tasked to protect. If you want to try to escape then turn to 1315. If you want to try to save the skeletons instead of your own skin then turn to 146.

302

Using the mighty power of the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes you will the most expensive-looking of the chicks to follow you and to keep its peephole shut. The other two baby birds are occupied tearing at the food you left them and, if they notice their sibling leaving at all, are glad to have a little less competition. Add the Owlet to your Adventure Scroll.

You walk to what you judge as being a safe distance away before crawling into a hollow log for some shut-eye. You're tuckered out so a deep sleep comes pretty easily. The Hulking Owl spends several hours looking for its chick but your contented snores drown out the distant stomps and screeches.

Turn to 386.

303

Having relieved you of everything he wants and presumably ready to go back to bed, the barbarian warrior finally stops kicking your arse long enough for you to half-run, half-crawl out of the clearing. You stumble back to the road and try to put as much distance between you and this humiliating beating as your endurance will allow.

Eventually you find another place to lie down that you deem sufficiently far away and you drift off to sleep. It's not a particularly restful sleep - you keep waking up in terror at the thought of that big blue boot finding its way back to your buttocks - and you arise in the mid morning feeling pretty unsatisfied. Still, any rest is better than no sleep at all - restore 10 EFFORT.

Rubbing the sleep from your eyes and cursing your not-dad Jeff for forcing you out into a world populated with thiefs and barbarians you continue along the road to Bilgeton. Turn to 1446.

304

Less one WAGON and its crew (remove 1 WAGON from your Adventure Scroll) you are allowed to continue on your way. The captured skeletons chitter angrily at you as you ride off, leaving them to their fate.

If this was your final wagon then you're on your own once again - make a note that you failed Aggie and continue onwards through Bilgeford and on to Bilgeton by turning to 1732.

If you still have at least one WAGON then you lead what's left of the caravan on. You cross the bridge and emerge out the other side of the small town without incident. Aggie's agent might be pissed but at least your wallet is still full! You can think up some excuses for losing the wagon on your way to Bilgeton: turn to 1002.

305

Over a warm meal rustled up by the diminutive refugees you half listen as the knight tells you all about his people's woes in exhaustive detail: these brownies are household sprites who lived in the human homes of nearby Brunnenfeld where they enjoyed churning butter, cobbling shoes and performing other menial tasks for the humans while they slept. A few months ago the humans decided to run the lot of them out of town for no reason and here they are, clinging on to the meagre hope that one day they'll be able to get back in. Now that they've finally got a big person on their side they have a fighting chance at going home again - all you have to do is smuggle them in. If you can cram all of them into your spacious rucksack and talk your way through the front gates then they'll do all the rest. You're not certain you like this plan but they seem enthusiastic and it's hard to get a word in edgewise anyway.

Your new friends are exhausted from hounding you all day so they head off to their slums for a night's sleep before the big assault. You pull up a vacant spot tucked in under the boulder and drift off.

Turn to 821.

306

You commence to brag about your mighty deeds. The guard only seems inclined to listen to one of your tales so make it a good one!

If you annihilated Aelfsburg then turn to 859. If you've butchered Bhad turn to 1629. If you destroyed a demon then turn to 490. If you eliminated the Elf Bastard then turn to 891. If you gutted The Goblin King then turn to 1286. If you liquidated the Lich then turn to 765. If you murdered the Malrog then turn to 1128. If you terminated the Them! Queen then turn to 1306. If you whacked the Warlock of Warlock Tower then turn to 824.

No other deed is relevant enough to Bilgeton or impressive enough for the guard to let you slide on through, no matter how you gussy it up. If you want to get in you'll either have to cough up the 20 Guilders - turn to 808 if you have this sum - or admit you've got nothing and rely on your top-notch begging game (turn to 201).

307

You wander through the woods for a while. There's no path but the forest is pretty easy to traverse in the daylight. You soon emerge from the trees, almost right into the shadow of a wooden palisade! There's a strip of fallow land between the forest edge and the wall, and you can see the figure of a fat balding man in brown cassock lugging a huge sack around the field. As you watch from the foliage on the forest edge you can see him reach into the sack and scatter around an assortment of what looks like busted footwear, broken belts and other worthless junk.

He doesn't look like he'd be much of a threat, even to you. If you'd like to approach him and find out what he's doing then turn to 394. If you'd rather rob him blind then turn to 866.

308

Through a very lengthy series of gestures, drawings and foreign but fierce-sounding oaths Karol gives you to understand that, since you were able to fool the guards into thinking that you are Sir Tedbald of Bilgeford, you might be able to continue to pretend to be him and take possession of his manor and all his stuff without anyone being the wiser. He circles the location of Tedbald's manse on your tourist map and even draws a path through the backstreets between here and there. Even though it's the dead of night by the time you've grasped of what the Pole's telling you, you deem it safest to avoid the main boulevards - Karol's residency situation here is iffy at best and jumping the walls generally attracts a death penalty, but more importantly you might get a fine for skipping out on your tab. Your skin crawls at the prospect.

If, despite your misgivings, this plan sounds like a winner then turn to 1080 to put it into motion. If you'd rather not engage in such a risky hi-jink you tell the Pole to cram it and resume your scheming - turn to 692.

309

Defeated again the elfs fall back on the wreckage of the wagon they destroyed earlier. They seem absolutely determined to defend this prize and they have numerous bowmen approaching from the forest on both sides of the highway. You also hear an ominous rumbling coming from behind the tree line accompanied by the sound of cracking twigs and branches. Overall it doesn't seem all that safe. If you'd like to finish the elfs off and get the final wagon clear then turn to 1011. Otherwise you yell to the wagons to move out while they still can!

If you don't want to push your luck you can escape with the two wagons you've saved by leading them around the stuck lead wagon to safety: turn to 953. If you'd still like to assist the lead wagon by clearing off the archers who have it pinned down then turn to 427.

310

With no way of leaving your room without getting locked out again, this time permanently, you become some sort of horrible shut in. Though that creep Jeff and your Mom aren't bringing you any food in an attempt to starve you out you are able to trap a variety of birds and small woodland creatures that come in through your window looking for nesting materials among the filth on your floor. It's not much of a life but you weren't really doing anything with it anyway.

311

You sit in bed for a while, watching this woman cook. Are you in love, or are you just grateful that somebody, anybody, has loved you physically? The old witch, evidently feeling your puppy dog eyes boring into the back of her head, turns around, and you nearly jump out of your skin. The witch's haggard features have been replaced with those of a beautiful young woman. In fact now you notice a cloth covered with green face paint and her fake witch nose lying on a shelf next to the stone oven. Before you can overcome your shock and immediately propose marriage (or whatever sad, foolish idea is flitting across your half elf brain), the witch speaks.

"Oh, you're up. You've got to go. I'm expecting company", she says bluntly. As you're sheepishly putting your clothes back on she hands you a card.

"I don't know what it means but you remind me a lot of this guy". You look at the card - it's a milkman's calling card. "Are you related? No, don't answer. That'd be weird. Anyway, get out."

Add the Milkman's Calling Card to your Adventure Scroll. Suddenly you notice that the children aren't around anymore - the cages are empty. You begin to harbour suspicions about just what the witch is cooking.

If you want to confront the witch about the missing children then turn to 377. If you know when to keep your mouth shut then turn to 7.

312

After a long walk spent stooped over double in a stone tunnel which vibrates quite menacingly you arrive at another dark cavern. This one is smaller than most: there's barely room for you to sit down on the floor. Encouraged by the fact that the vibrations are far gentler here than in the earlier cavern you lie down and take a short breather. Restore 5 EFFORT if this is the first time you've passed through this cavern.

Eventually you get sick of sitting in the dark and start looking for exits. A tunnel heads north from here and another back the way you came. Turn to 951 to head north and 266 to return to the cavern you were just in.

313

The colossal running bird is easy to control despite your lack of experience with any kind of mount, and you proceed swiftly but comfortably along the paved road to Bilgeton, stopping only to take a leak as and when your thimble-sized bladder requires. If there was any trouble behind you, you're pretty certain it's now far behind.

After what would have been a long walk you reach the southern edge of the forest and the road turns sharply to the east. You're now racing directly towards Bilgeton! The sun begins to sink lower in the sky as your bird tirelessly sprints along the road, trees whizzing by to your left, until even those are gone. You've now well and truly left home behind - even if you were allowed back you don't think you could be bothered riding all that way just to see Jeff and his dumb smug face.

Eventually you stop for the night and make camp by the side of the road. You light a little fire and cook yourself a small meal from whatever unfilling garbage you find in the bottom of your pack (your lousy cooking might ward of starvation but won't restore any EFFORT unless you have a food item you wish to consume). Your repast complete you begin to feel real tired and, cozied up against the flank of your birdy pal you begin to drift off. Suddenly it occurs to you that you might be spotted here by the side of the road in the middle of the wilderness if you don't put your pitiful little campfire out.

If you're too comfortable to be arsed then you ignore your misgivings and drift off - turn to 563. Otherwise you decide to put the fire out - turn to 1307.

314

You don't react well to stress, including the stress of fighting your way up some rock spire in the middle of a mountain range only to be confronted with a gaggle of irritating talking birds. You start roaring in insane range, hulking out to the extent possible with your weedy half elfish frame, and wildly hacking, slashing and pummelling at anything within reach.

The eagles, horribly startled by this outburst, all try to take to the air at once and crash into each other, slamming into the part of the spire which protrudes into the nest and generally turning into a confused tangle of feathers, talons and beaks. They do their best to defend themselves as you commence your onslaught:

🔪**EAGLE TRIO : DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

If you defeat these birds then turn to 160. Otherwise the eagles disentangle themselves and a hard peck in the chest sees you spilling over the side of the nest and to the ground below. Luckily your fall is broken by a colossal heap of bird manure lying near the base of the spire. The eagles seem to be satisfied with this punishment and let you go about your business while they recover from their scare. You dig yourself out of the deep guano, brush yourself as best you can and sidle along the path, utterly humiliated.

Turn to 190.

315

You sneak up behind your victim, snapping several twigs loudly and finally stub your toe on an uneven cobblestone. Letting out a loud yell you stumble forward, bashing into the unfortunate merchant and causing him to drop his sack in surprise. The contents go everywhere, rolling all over the road.

While you're apologising profusely and helping the merchant pick up his wares, you pocket one of the fruits. Finally, once everything's in the sack and the merchant's placated and looking the other way, you take the delicious pale fruit out and take a huge bite with a loud, satisfying crunch. The merchant rolls his eyes but doesn't make a fuss - it's not worth talking to you over a single potato, and someone had stepped on that one anyway.

As you're munching on your starchy snack a dubious-looking fellow sidles up to you.

"Name's Oddler. Couldn't help but notice you've got the Knack" he whispers as soon as he notices you side-eyeing him. He's a greasy little fellow, all wild uncombed hair and baggy clothes. One of his eyes is noticeably bigger than the other. He clearly wants you to ask him what "the Knack" is.

Bored out of your mind, you ask him what "the Knack" is.

"The knack of thievery, my son, the good game, the sweet sport. You don't need to be waiting around out here with these plebs - the Thieves' Guild will bring you in and show you the ropes". He squints at you as if appraising you like a piece of meat. "Just 10 Guilders - think of it as an investment".

You've always wanted to join a guild, especially one that would be able to use all your talents of sneakiness, deception and general greasiness!

If you're interested and have 10 Guilders then turn to 845. If you're interested and you've got at least 1 but less than 10 Guilders then turn to 29. If you're flat broke or not feeling it, turn to 867.

316

The demon has returned to the Hells, leaving behind only a burn mark in the middle of the road. Pity no one was here to witness your victory, and you're already forgetting how the song you played went. Slinging your instrument across your back once more you continue your trek.

Ahead of you the road splits, heading southeast over undulating plains dotted with farms and cattle. It winds gently to the huge main gates of Bilgeton, several hours' travel away and yet still clearly visible due to their massive size. To the northeast the road turns to follow alongside the forest, sloping down towards a ford over the wide Bilge River where a small human settlement squats over the water. You can see the smoke rising from chimneys and, more threateningly, the sun reflecting off steel helmets and blades in the watch towers. An obelisk set beside the road indicates that the southeast road is to Bilgeton via the Noble Gate, and the northwest is also to the same place but via Bilgeford and the Trader's Gate.

If you'd like to head straight for the Noble Gate then turn to 1005. If you'd prefer to take the slightly more roundabout route via Bilgeford to the Trader's Gate then turn to 678.

317

As you progress down the tunnel it begins to feel as though the walls are actually shaking. The rock begins to give way to thick clay and packed dirt which has been shaped into a perfect tube eight feet in diameter. This tunnel starts to drop precipitously downwards, becoming a steep slope which descends into the darkness. You hear somewhere ahead and below the sound of stampeding feet and a strange, warbling high-pitched sound coming from strange being. You feel as though there may be no way back if you head down there.

Are you brave enough to descend deeper into the darkness? It's highly likely that you'll find an early grave down here if you proceed unprepared. If that's OK with you then turn to 1820. Otherwise you turn around, following the tunnel back to the southwest. Turn to 266.

318

The Spectre's garb is so outlandishly form-fitting as to make the task of removing it nearly impossible even for someone of your flexible sensibilities. The smell's also overpowering: you don't think this guy has washed the thing, ever. Still, you're determined to grab everything you can, even if there's no godsly reason for actually wanting it.

SQUEAMISHNESS : DIFFICULTY 12

If you fail then you give up. Restore up to 5 EFFORT as a wave of relief washes over you. Turn back to 1779 and make another choice.

If you succeed you manage to remove the garb without throwing up or ruining it in your haste. Add the Lavender Bleggings to your Adventure Scroll and turn back to 1779. Or... do you want to become the new Spectre? Turn to 1471 to don his garb and continue his legacy.

319

After a long walk through a dark tunnel you find yourself in a tiny chamber dominated by a single huge stalactite which you can see hanging precariously overhead each time you strike your flint. Since the size of the thing and the near certainty of it landing on your head should it fall makes you nervous you decide to stop looking at it and concentrate on getting out of here.

Tunnels exit this dangerous little chamber to the north (turn to 279) or the east (turn to 1778).

320

Did you use a weapon while battling the bouncer (other than knuckledusters or rings)? Then turn to 642. Otherwise at some point during the fight you manage to scramble between his legs and into the club! Since he's not allowed inside himself he doesn't pursue you. Turn to 699.

321

You manage to work yourself up into a towering rage over what this awful human probably intends for you. You bet he's got a room in that hovel full of the ears of half elfs that he's harvested for his own sick ends. This will not stand! You'll put a stop to his evil scheming!

You give the door a thunderous kick and it flings open, knocking the farmer to the floor. Unhappily for you, like most backwards peasants without two groats to rub together, this farmer keeps his most valued livestock inside his wretched shanty. Your noisy nocturnal antics have aroused a particularly frisky billy goat who leaps over his prone master to butt heads with whatever's causing all the fuss. Lose 5 EFFORT as this gruff goat slams you in the crotch with horrifying enthusiasm!

Horrified and bewildered by this unexpected turning of the tables you take a stumbling step backwards, clutching your smarting privates.

If you beg the farmer to call off his goat then turn to 1681. If you'd rather bleat...I mean, beat it, then turn to 1668.

322

As you approach the house you hear some cries for help! High-pitched voices like those of children, screaming like they're about to be eaten. Never one to miss out on a fiasco you slip into the suspicious cottage for a nosey around.

The interior of the cottage is quite well-lit and airy, though the decorations are about as sickeningly twee as those of the exterior. It's all candy-themed. Whoever owns this place is clearly sick, and clearly a witch - on the numerous shelves lining the walls you can see scrolls, books and potions propped up between little pewter statues of unicorns, sad clowns and other cutesy garbage. And speaking of the owner you can see her bent over double right in front of the stove, stoking the fire and cackling to herself. It's a witch, in traditional witch garb - the floppy hat, the black ragged robes, the works! Her firm butt bobs back and forth as she pumps the bellows, the noise of which has distracted her from noticing your entry or the sound of the cat yowling for her attention in an attempt to rat you out. Behind her you can see a cage containing two of the stockiest children you've ever seen, one boy and one girl you think. They might wear the ridiculous garb of human kids, but they've got shoulders like line-backers.

"Help! Help! She's going to eat us!" screams the girl.

"In just a second, dearie - once this oven's hot enough!", cackles the witch in response. She still hasn't noticed you.

You'd better act! Do you want to heroically save these unfortunate children? If so then turn to 475. If you'd rather continue to admire this witch's surprisingly shapely rump then turn to 1818.

323

"Ar, it was that Hanse feller, wasn't it? He sends all kinds my way. Well, it's true enough, I take passengers. Hanse'll have told you the fee. How much?"

You must reply:
a Guilder - turn to 1016;
an item in trade - turn to 219;
the pleasure of your company - turn to 261.

324

Despite the agonising pain you manage to force yourself back onto your feet, where you sway unsteadily while you decide whether to fall down again or not. At least the crowd cheers you for showing some spirit. Fistface wastes no time: he's already advancing towards you.

If you'd like to stay the hells away from this threatening ogre then turn to 1263. If you're ready to fight then you stand your ground - turn to 1157.

325

You soon locate the elfs - they're sitting around a small fire near the road. They seem surprised to see you again and even more surprised that you managed to kill the warlock for them and get out of the tower alive. The leader of this little band clears his throat.

"Teach that bitch right for trying to cut us out of our arrangement. I mean, for oppressing us. Elfen towers will sing your praises from Aelfsburg to Elfsdale Downs and beyond. I present you with....", at this the elf leader stops and looks around, his gaze settling on a long stick protruding from a nearby bush which he seizes and holds before him with an apparent attitude of great reverence, "The Staff of Elfen Magick". Sensing that you're unimpressed with this, he hastily adds, "Plus three". This mollifies you somewhat, though the stick is charred on one end like it's been used to poke the fire.

"Oh, you can also have this", says the leader of the band, handing you a bottle of milk. "We swiped it from the warlock's doorstep this morning. Real elfs are lactose intolerant but maybe you'll enjoy it with your unrefined half-human guts".

Bridling a little at this slight against your heritage you take the bottle and hit the road towards Bilgeton before you say something you'll regret. Add the Bottle of Milk and The Staff of Elfen Magic +3 to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 294.

326

You haven't come all this way to listen to a bunch of lizards gibbering unintelligible bollocks at you. As far as you're concerned they're a low-level dungeon encounter, good for nothing but a little bit of experience and some nearly-worthless loot. You draw whatever weapon you might be carrying and lunge right at them. The nobolds are horrified - shouting "strewth", "stone the crows" and other nonsese, they do their best to defend themselves against your furious onslaught.

🔪**BRUCE - DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1**
🔪**STEVO - DIFFICULTY 9**
🔪**SHEILA - DIFFICULTY 4 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**BAZZA - DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1**
🔪**BLUEY - DIFFICULTY 7 - TOUGHNESS 2**
The clumsy pick axes they're trying to use to clobber you with are a bit heavy for them to swing properly with their spindly forearms. They will therefore only attack you one at a time. This doesn't count as a Multiple Hassle.

If you defeat them all turn to 772. If you lose turn to 899.

327

"Sir", says the guard sternly, "How can we provide an efficient and secure guard force if merchants won't pay their taxes? Now I won't ask you again". The guard up in the watchtower winches his crossbow threateningly by way of illustrating the point.

If, on second thought, you will pay the amount requested (and have it available) then turn to 26. If you're not going to be bullied by these big government bureaucrats then turn to 98.

328

While you're not confident in your fighting prowess you're pretty sure that the wagon's fast enough to get out of the tight spot it's currently in. As is quite often the case you are incorrect. Once the guard's made good his escape the elfs turn back to the wagon and begin pelting it with renewed vigour. One of the elfs lands a lucky shot on a rear wheel, shattering it and tipping the cart over. You're flung from the sideboard as the wagon overturns with an all-consuming sound of splintering wood and the shrieks of giant panicking birds. You land head-first on the road with a horrible crunch and everything goes black.

You awaken sometime later at night with your face mashed into the dirt of the road. You sit up and are immediately overcome by a wave of nausea as the stars spin crazily overhead. You're still in the middle of the road, mercifully alive and in one piece though you've taken a nasty crack on the dome from the fall: lose 5 EFFORT. Biff and the others are long gone and you've been relieved of all of your cash and any loot you're carrying (remove these from your Adventure Scroll), though you still have your rations so long as you haven't eaten them yet. The cart looks to have been torn to pieces as the elfs rummaged for valuables to take away. It's now nothing more than splinters of wood and iron scattered all over the road. You won't find anything of value in there.

You lurch to your feet and wobble unsteadily to the south along the cobbled road towards Bilgeton. Turn to 25.

329

You do your best but it's not good enough. While the crowd admires your pluck it doesn't make up for the 1000 pounds and two feet this giant has on you. He quickly lays you out cold with a hard right cross that permanently rearranges some vital parts of your brain. Lose 1 ÉLAN as you pass out.

Although you didn't win the title you did at least give the champ a good workout, so the bartender and the bouncer refrain from robbing you too much as they hurl your unconscious body on the refuse pile out the back of the tavern. Deduct just 5 Guilders from the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll (if you have less then you lose all of them).

Eventually you wake up and slide off the filth pile and away from the Dribbling Wand. Turn to 827.

330

Karol is already investigating the lip of the abyss. You ask him to go down there and look around for you.

The Pole, always up for a lengthy and tedious investigation of a site of archaeological interest, grins and pulls a long rope from his pack. Tying it to a stalagmite he chucks the loose end into the abyss and then climbs down into the utter darkness below.

It's a long time before he returns, but after a lengthy period of crouching and hoping the Malrog doesn't decide to stretch its legs the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole reappears, pulling himself up the rope and back out of the pit.

"Nie wspinaj się tam. To jest gniazdo olbrzymich mrówek", he says. He throws you a leather pouch which you catch clumsily. You open it, expecting to see gold, but are surprised and slightly disappointed to see that it's full of a white, granular substance.

"Cukier", gibbers the Pole. Add the Sugar Sack to your own Adventure Scroll. As you're packing this slightly disappointing treat away you take a quick look at your travelling companion. He looks as pale as a sheet and he's shaking like a leaf- something down there scared the bejesus out of him. You may not use the Pole's ability again at least until you leave this chamber.

Turn back to 300 and select another option.

331

With the demon returned to its Hells there's no particularly good reason to stick around. You decide to set off, leaving the scorch mark in the soil as the sole monument to your epic victory other than all the bragging you intend to do from here on out.

Though the road is visible to you there's a lot of marsh and thick woodlands between you and it, and it's mid-morning by the time you finally stumble out of the woods and back onto the cobbled Count's Road to Bilgeton. Your filthy, bedraggled appearance and wild eyes belie the fact that you've only been on your quest for less than a day. Next time, you promise yourself, you'll just take the road in the first place.

Free of the woods at last, you strike out along the road to Bilgeton. Turn to 1446.

332

There's no reason to have anything more to do with this podunk elfish village than you have to. You press on.

The Schleimwald isn't all that dangerous in the light of day, though it's still slow going. You make your way clear of the forest, emerging on a patchy, half-paved road. Bilgeton, its walls looming large, lies just a few miles down the road to the south east.

Turn to 1732.

333

The red mist finally dissipates and you gather your senses enough to figure out your next move. There's no way you got every single one of those little beggars, and there's a whole village of them nearby. However, they'll certainly outnumber you and they might be ready for you by the time you get there. From where you are, you can just make out what you're pretty sure is the road to Bilgeton shining in the moonlight in the distance. There's still a decent-sized marsh and a dense thicket of trees between you and it though.

You feel exhausted. Dawn isn't far off and you haven't slept since GODS-DAMNED BLOODY JEFF kicked you out. As a professional loafer you need a solid 12 to be at your very best.

If you just want to put as much distance as possible between yourself and this place, you decide to make a bee-line for the road to Bilgeton. Turn to 711.

If you want to find the closest safe place to rest before you pass out, turn to 462.

If you want to try to cover up your crimes first, turn to 530.

334

A couple of sparrow riders throw yarn strings weighted down with pebbles over you. You could break free of this flimsy restraint easily enough, but you can no longer be bothered. Instead you sit down on the battlefield and wait to see if these guys are going to parlay with you or just poke you to death with their sharp little sticks.

As the sparrows circle overhead draping you with more threads and the artillery crews load their pieces nervously one of the knights rides up to you on his dormouse. He shouts at you from mouseback, this time through an open helmet so you can understand his high-pitched voice to at least some extent:

"Treacherous and vile human, you are vanquished. Have you any final words before we send you to your singular human Hell?"

If you object to being called a human then turn to 183.
If you've got nothing more to say for yourself and bravely await your fate then turn to 1708.

335

You crush a couple of hovels down flat for a bed and ease yourself under the protection of the rock. While it's not the most comfortable place to rest it beats camping in the open, and the residents left enough food behind for you to scrape together at least one filling meal before you get some shut eye.

You wake refreshed the next morning - restore 20 EFFORT. Now that the sun's up you can see that the forest just to the south of the clearing thins out a bit, and you spy sunlight glinting off what looks like water not too far away in that direction. According to your map that's the Suss-wasser. A path runs along its south bank to a nearby human settlement called Brunnenfeld. If you want to head that way then turn to 453. If, after consulting your map, you'd rather approach the human town through the woods to avoid being seen by the humans there then turn to 307.

If you'd like to steer entirely clear of the place then you could instead skirt around the lake and head southwest out of the forest in a direction the map assures you is "to The Count's Road" - turn to 44.

336

The skeletons can do nothing but chitter with concern as you leg it back down the road and away from them, abandoning the caravan to the not-so-gentle graces of the human guards who are emerging from the gates to imprison anyone they can catch. The skeletons slow down the guards enough that you're able to make a clean getaway and are soon far from the chaotic scene you just created by virtue of your inability to read road signs. Make a note that you failed Aggie and remove any remaining WAGONS and GUARDS from your Adventure Scroll.

Since there's no reason to hang out here you follow the road all the way back to the junction and take the other route towards Bilgeton. Perhaps the Trader's Gate will be more accommodating.

Turn to 678.

337

You ask the nearest skeleton about the Skeleton Workers Union. Although he's on a break he's always happy to talk about the benefits of union membership and he spends the next ten minutes chattering away about the history of the union, its battles and victories and the vital service it provides to the hundreds of skeleton workers employed in Bilgeton and its surrounds in guaranteeing them wages and conditions far greater than those of their non-union meaty fellow workers. Despite the downward pressure on wages from the city nobles who are straining under taxes levied to cover Count Hugues of Bilgeton's sizeable gambling debts, the SWU has preserved all the rights won for its workers through skilled negotiation and industrial action where necessary.

Regrettably this is all just chattering to you since you can't understand the clacking and clattering noises that skeletons make when they try to talk to people.

Unsatisfied by this waste of time you decide to do something else. Are you here to talk to Aggie's agent (turn to 449)- or are you inclined to hire a worker (turn to 776). If you really have no business here outside of idle curiosity you can return to the market square by turning to 244.

338

Ignoring the remaining attractions that might lie in store for you in Brunnenfeld, you trudge downhill back the way you came. Crossing the market square, you walk right through the southern gates. The town guards, probably at least as happy about your departure as you are, don't try to hassle you for the traditional bribe on the way out and you make your way free of Brunnenfeld without further incident.

Turn to 372.

339

Although you're not completely certain that this dragon is any kind of blacksmith, you tell him that you've been sent to place an order for the Goblin King's codpiece. The monster must have picked up a hint of uncertainty in your voice.

"What, you think I can't do it? Why do you think they call me Bhad the Black and not Bhad the Blue? I've been making fine weapons, armours and objets d'art for the goblin, dwarf, and even the human communities for aeons and aeons now".

You shrug.

"It'll take me about a week, but don't worry. The Goblin King will send someone else to pick it up. Still, it's going to be dark outside, why not stay for dinner? You can stay here until tomorrow morning if you wish".

You're ravenously hungry although you're not sure what kind of dish this dragon intends to serve up. If you'd like to stick around for dinner then turn to 407. If you'd prefer to get a move on now that your job's done then turn to 943.

340

The gaseous mess you made explodes, producing a huge explosion. The fireball is bright enough to been seen from Bilgeton, still a couple of days' journey distant. You're not a couple of day's distant though - you're right in the middle of it! You are pulverised along with the warlock, the tower and everything within about a hundred yards. You always told that usurper Jeff that you'd make your mark on the world, though you never expected it'd be a huge smouldering crater (though Jeff might have suspected as much).

Your adventure ends here.

341

Having brought this eldritch abomination into the world, you feel that you are morally responsible for removing it. More to the point, you'll never be able to loot its corpse while it's still trying to gut you with a sword.

Even in weakened and immobilised the Phalloknight is still a very dangerous opponent. You decide to resort to chemical warfare, flinging your satchel of pixie parts right into his helmeted face. The shot is true and the pouch explodes, spraying pixie dust, gore and giblets all over the clearing including on yourself.

You have effectively imbibed another potion thanks to the hallucinogenic effects of being coated in chopped-up pixie! Remove the Pixie Bits from your inventory, subtract 1 from ÉLAN and roll on the Potion Effects table.

Should you survive, you notice that the Phalloknight is faring even worse than you. He inhaled the rind of something like a dozen pixies and, since Phalloknights are known for their abstinence, he's a total lightweight. After a few minutes he drops his sword and begins staring intently at his hands while intermittently emitting a high-pitched squeal.

As an experienced shitheel you recognise a vulnerable being when you see one. Wasting no further time, you sidle up within earshot and start loudly regaling the Knight with tales of your pathetic romantic exploits, starting with your marathon experiments with hand techniques and culminating in the unbelievably sad tale of you losing your virginity in the process of cuckolding a bat forty-five years later.

The knight is not capable of dealing with this right now. Your awful existence combined with the overdose of pixie particles snaps both his mind and his sex drive simultaneously. The very core of his being broken, he goes completely and permanently flaccid, He deflates, slumping to the ground sadly and quite dead.

Wasting no time, you pick over his carcass. Everything on him is incredibly bulky and heavy, but you think you can haul one item away with a bit of creative hacking and prying. You can take the Massive Helmet, the Big Rock Goblin Mountain Oyster or the orange-sized Cockeye from the steed.

As a huge jerk who happens to have slain a demon, you are now possessed of insufferably swaggering and boastful airs: regain add 10 to your maximum and current EFFORT and add 1 to your maximum and current ÉLAN. Should you ever need to roll on the Demonic Apparitions Table again you may simply choose the demon you wish to encounter instead of rolling (make a note of this in ink in the Word of Power Section of your Adventure Scroll)

You are finally able to head back to the road. Turn to 1609.

342

It's late in the afternoon and you've left the Big Rock Goblin Mountains well and truly behind you - the rocky foothills have given way to rolling, grassy hills interspersed with streams flowing down from the mountain range. Ahead you can begin to see a dark forest looming on the horizon and even over the sound of your panting breath you can hear a river roaring to the south - not the streams you've heard trickling all afternoon but something far larger. At this point Legless the thief, realising that they're not getting rid of you all that easily, finally stops to speak with you.

"Thank you for your aid, but we must now continue the next stage of the journey alone. Ahead of us lies the Schleimwald, where we must slay a terrible Basilisk. You wouldn't want to be there for that - you're too low level. So here is your share of the plunder, more than fair we think, and we bid you a good day. I suggest heading south and riding the river into Bilgeton, though you can do whatever you like as long as you're not following us around". Cronan, standing by with his huge arms crossed, nods in agreement

Legless reaches into his pouch and drops 2 Guilders into your outstretched palm. This hardly reflects the value of your contribution to the adventuring party, though that sentiment doesn't stop you cramming the coins into your purse (add the Guilders to your Adventure Scroll). If you absolutely insist on not being ditched by these guys, you can continue to follow them - turn to 1547. Otherwise, too exhausted to complain, you watch them run on while you take a breather. After half an hour wheezing on the ground you recover to the point where you can get up again. Shoving the burning feeling of shame deep down along with all your other shameful memories you head on south to the river as suggested: turn to 1181.

343

You can't help yourself and scream out in a combination of surprise, disgust and self-pity. The statue, improbably, leans down to see what the fuss is about.

This thing is what the locals call a "Big Rock Goblin" but which you, as the owner of The Bestiary (the indispensable guide to the world of the Bastard Elf, available from several bookstores and various rummage sales worldwide) instantly recognise as a Rock Troll. It roars in surprise at you having seen it taking a leak and retreats from the edge of the cliff. This is immediately followed by a barrage of stoneware bottles and small boulders as the other trolls atop the plateau take time out of their busy schedule of drinking and yelling to pelt the peeping tom who's just been caught skulking around in their bathroom.

The bottles and stones are raining down hard - it's time to flee.

BOTTLING IT: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you fail then you get unlucky: the shots, though unaimed, are sufficiently heavy and flung with enough force to kill a being far sturdier than yourself. A boulder, plummeting in an arc from atop the mesa smashes directly into the top of your head, killing you instantly. You are buried in litter from the mountaintop and forgotten.

If you succeed then you manage to get away with only a few bumps, bruises and scrapes from the shattering stones. Only after the sounds of shouting and smashing recede into the distance behind you do you allow yourself a brief stop to catch your breath. You then press on into the seemingly endless mountain range, heading roughly (you hope) in the direction of Bilgeton.

If you were on a mission from Witold of Brunnenfeld you've failed it. Make a note of this if necessary and turn to 955.

344

You plant the money down on the counter. Deduct either 5 leaves or 1 Guilder from your Adventure Scroll. The gnome retrieves a tarnished and dented pewter chalice from somewhere under the bar and fills it from one of the casks behind him before plonking it on the bar in front of you. Taking the chalice you down it in one go. As a half elf, you don't experience the exquisitely delicate taste that fine aelfwine is supposed to possess. It doesn't even get you drunk. It's vaguely reminiscent of water containing a trace amount of piss.

You're about to plumb the bartender for information but he guesses your intent and cuts you off. "Gnomes don't snitch. Now, you want another drink?"

Another tasteless and expensive glass of aelfwine doesn't sound real tempting, and you say so.

"Got some harder stuff in back. Extra-fermented. Same price", says the gnome, displaying his unnerving ability to read his customers.

If you're willing to part with 5 leaves or a Guilder for the good stuff then turn to 1463. Otherwise you bid the gnome a good night. You can either approach the locals by turning to 1419, or you can go to leave by turning instead to 187.

345

As you're fumbling ineptly with the skeleton's belt so you can get at whatever's in that pouch you feel a horrible bony grip on your wrist - the skeleton has come to life! The collection of bones commences to slap, kick and punch at you, its teeth chattering wildly. You must defend yourself!

🔪**GREENBONES: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you're able to subdue this scrappy skeleton then turn to 428. If this possessed pile of pugilistic parts has got the upper hand and you want to plead for mercy then turn to 1784.

346

Hardmod's used to his lovers sneaking out on him, but he's pleasantly surprised to find you drooling on his pillow when he wakes in the morning. You in turn awake to the delicious smell of eggs (you don't know what kind) and meat (ditto) frying over the eldritch green fire. Although you're pleased that Hardmod is considerate enough to cook you something you can probably eat, you're rather less pleased to find that the lich has, during the course of the night, inscribed a complicated pattern of ritual sigils over every inch of your flesh. Aside from it being rather painful it's at least moderately rude to tattoo a fellow with sinister runes without at least asking first. Hardmod sees the expression on your face.

"When you stayed I knew you were the one for me, so I got up early and transferred my soul's essence from those green lanterns I was wearing into you. You're my phylactery now, and so long as you live - or at least remain in one piece - so will I. Since you're my only one I'll need to keep you very close and look after you very carefully. So would you like these giant centipede eggs sunny side up?"

You try to tell Hardmod that you're not really looking for anything serious at the moment but he's not having any of it. You're doomed to spend the rest of your life (and a significant amount of time afterwards as well) as the lich's personal phylactery. It beats sleeping outside, you guess. Your adventure ends here.

347

Opening the door as quietly as possible you creep in through the door.

Although the tower doesn't appear to be the home for the skeletons you encountered outside there are a few other undead residents about. One of them is a decrepit skeleton in a barrel who is lurking around in a rotten old cask just on the other side of the door. Since you're not accustomed to worrying about barrels except for looting purposes you step past it on your way to murdering the warlock in her sleep, and this gives the old skeleton a chance to do the only thing that really gives it any pleasure in unlife. Leaning out of the barrel it stabs you hard in the back with its rusty dagger.

Do you have a shield equipped on your back? If so turn to 253. Otherwise turn to 35.

348

You leap down from your steed and aim as carefully as you can. Contrary to popular belief, elfs aren't naturally good with the bow and you're only half an elf so you're only half that good.

🔪**LONGSHOT: DIFFICULTY 12**

If you succeed then turn to 130. If you fail then the elf has not only gotten away but they know you've spotted them and are prepared to fight : they will be sure to pile on reinforcements. Add 2 to your PROBLEMS and turn to 1749.

349

You return the passionate kiss and, flinging aside the blanket, pull Nilde in towards you, feeling her warm furry body as it presses against your skin. She bleats and headbutts you affectionately, her horns jabbing into your forehead kind of painfully...

Suddenly Aldrecht comes bursting into the room, leaping out of one of the darkened chambers with a lit torch in one hand and a pitchfork in the other.

"AHA! Caught you in the act..." he shouts before trailing off. In the flickering torchlight you can clearly see that it wasn't the buxom farmer's daughter that you were rounding first base with, but rather a particularly randy billy goat. Nilde is standing in another doorway looking jilted.

Like most dirt poor farmers Aldrecht and his family keep their prized livestock indoors where they can be kept safe from the elements. Butthead the billy goat had come out from his room to investigate the new arrival and you ran with it from there. Now everything's all awkward.

Everyone goes back to bed and you sleep well for the rest of the night (restore up to 20 EFFORT). When you wake the next morning, you find that Aldrecht won't look you in the eye.

"You'd best be off", he says. "And take the goat. I can't look at it anymore".

With nothing more for you here you set out on the road to Bilgeton once again, the billy goat skipping merrily behind you and occasionally ramming you affectionately. Add Butthead to your Adventure Scroll.and turn to 1446.

350

You lose the metre halfway through the second verse of the King's Advice To Hugh and never really recover. It's barely three quarters of an hour in to the epic ballad when you flub the stanzas describing the precise dimensions of the concert hall and the rotten fruit starts raining in from the audience. As your little band does its best to dodge and weave around the barrage The Waits launch in to their second act, drowning out your flagging efforts. The audience cheers wildly as you slump off stage, your dreams of musical stardom shattered.

Since you're not really in the mood for any more music it's time to get the hells out of here. Returning to the rickety staircase you leave the quarry the same way you came. It's time to go see if you can find your father, and maybe that place to crash. Turn to 1793.

351

You can't bear to see a damsel in distress, so you turn around and leave the bar immediately, Turn to 54.

352

Although you're in serious danger you decide to do the honourable thing. You tell Biff that you agree to his suggestion, and then sucker punch him as soon as he turns his back on you. The elf collapses onto the road just as the first wagon of the approaching caravan clears the bend. It's like nothing you've ever seen - a team of four huge, long-legged birds pulls a huge and ornately painted carriage atop which sits a man in ornate silk robes and a bowman riding on the back They've spotted you and are hurriedly stringing and nocking arrows to their bows. You watch transfixed in horror as three of these carriages pull around the bend and approach, coming to a halt right in front of you.

You've been fed from birth on a bunch of nursery rhymes and tall tales about the stupidity and cruelty of human beings and you're certain that you're about to be skewered like a pincushion by the archers aboard the wagons who have by now taken aim at you with their curved bows. You almost go into shock when the driver of the first wagon calls down to you instead of murdering you where you stand:

"Who dares halt the caravan of the merchant Hulagu in elf country? Wait... defeated you this elf? This is a great deed. He has been chucking rocks at our caravans for many years. Give him unto us so that he may face justice and you will be rewarded."

If you accept then turn to 730. If you could never turn a fellow elf over to a bunch of humans - even for an unspecified reward! - then turn to 812.

353

The chubby priest guides you through the living quarters and into the main hall of the church - a large dingy room packed with pews and dense with smoke from burning censers hanging from the walls, Chlothar gives you the run down. The priest and the skeleton you've just been battling are followers of The K-NG and therefore are more than ready to forgive you - all you need to do is accept The K-NG into your heart for yourself. And then go through a Redemption ceremony and agree to a holy quest. Otherwise he'll have Greenbones (waiting just outside for the priest's call) come in and hold you down until the guards arrive to haul you away. You've already disgraced yourself against that sack of bones once - you really don't want to go through that again if you don't have to.

If you're ready for whatever getting Redeemed entails then turn to 908. If you'd rather take your chances with Greenbones again then turn to 960.

354

Maybe the suspicious herb really is a gateway drug after all. Emboldened by your rapid promotion from square to hip, you grab all the mushrooms out of Radabastard's hand and cram them into your face. The wizard looks at you in absolute horror.

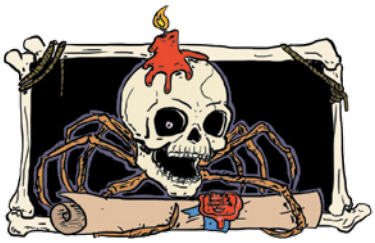
"Whoah! Do you know how much you just took, man?" he says.

"These things don't work. I don't feel anything....." you begin to say, but before the words are out of your mouth you're already starting to feel a bit odd. Radabastard laughs.

"You took too much, man. Too much. Too much.", You notice as he moves he leaves rainbow trails in the air behind him.

Suddenly you hear a terrible roar all around you and the sky is full of huge bats, swooping and diving at you, and the clearing is whipping through space and time at a hundred miles an hour in the direction of oblivion, And from somewhere a voice - your voice, you think - starts screaming: "What the hells are these godsdamned animals?"

You have overdosed on insanely potent wizard mushrooms and the rest of the trip is a terrible blur. The good news is that you survive, probably - the bad news is that you don't remember a damn thing that happened. Close the book and your eyes then pick a page at random and touch your finger to the page. Continue the adventure from the section you landed on but with -1 ÉLAN until the next time you try to get some rest. If you touch an illustration or some part of the book that's not part of the adventure (like the rules or the equipment table) then try again.



355

Having had enough of the freezing fogs and meagre rewards of the Mist Steppes you decide to go where the action is. As you head towards the mountains the ground slopes uphill, gently at first, but gradually developing into hills and then craggy peaks. As you ascend into the mountain range the fog disperses and you're finally able to see properly again. Soon you're high up in the mountains, following goat trails and precarious passes deeper into the range.

Turn to 892.

356

You follow along with this band as it proceeds out of the woods and cuts south-east through fields, marshes and wild scrublands. You're feeling like a real monster slayer and you briefly wonder if you could make a life leading men like these into battle against the realm's monsters. You can think of one home-wrecking monster you'd like to pay a visit with these guys...

A brief glance around dispels these fantasies, at least in relation to these particular men. They seem unhappy about your growing share of what was their reward to divvy up, and the looks they're giving you and the whispers they're swapping indicate that they're planning out the best way to divvy you up into pieces at the next available opportunity. From the little snippets of conversation you overhear they don't seem to think much more highly of their leader, Rouge-Gorge who, aside from having something called "airs", takes far too large a cut for himself and isn't too careful about his men's safety, morale or comfort.

The sun sets and, making matters worse, Rouge-Gorge pushes the band on instead of setting up camp. There's an ugly feeling in the air and the grumbling reaches a fever pitch. This might be a good time to slip away - if you'd like to make a quiet exit then turn to 731. Otherwise since you've got nowhere else to be you carry on with the Merry Men: turn to 51.

357

By the crescendo of your ballad, reached at the point in the saga where the Dwarfen King breaks his harp over his knee in disappointment at the low ticket sales for his final comeback tour of northern Nonce, The Waits have given up their attempts to sabotage you and are actually retreating from the stage, hurriedly making the sign of their human god as they stare at you with wild, terrified eyes. You've defeated the number two band in Bilgeton! But just before you complete the final verse of your epic saga, topping off an otherwise flawless victory, you hear a terrifying sound. Wafting over the all-encompassing roar of the audience and the matching cacophony of your band's instruments it's the trill of a flute. The lead flautist of Seed Drille is literally descending onto the stage blasting the flute as he goes, one of the band's magicians having cast a spell of levitation on the talented showman. As soon as his foot touches the ground the stage curtains go up to reveal the rest of the Seed Drille ensemble set up behind you. As you look about in shock the band launches into their greatest hit, "The new horse-houghing husbandry, or, An essay on the principles of tillage and vegetation wherein is shewn, a method of introducing a sort of vineyard-culture into the corn-fields, to increase their product, and diminish the common expence, by the use of instruments lately invented by Jethro Tull"

"Prithee, tis but a trifle shoulds't thou remain seated throughout this saga
My words heareth thou not - they are but a whisper, thine deafness a CLAMOUR
Mayhap my prattle maketh thou till but I canst not cause thou to reason
Thou ploughest thine fields with wrong tooles in wrong season..."

And so on, for a very, very long time. Without divine intervention you don't stand a chance of defeating this band.

Are you on a Mission From The K-NG? If so turn to 1174. If no turn to 982.

358

You never displayed any talent in the lyrical arts before, and this streak continues as you warble tunelessly at the demon. It looks embarrassed for you, but it politely waits for you to finish your refrain before devouring your soul. Your adventure ends here.

العلاقات الدولية
مقال عن مجتمع الأمم

359

Reasoning that the last thing you'd want is to come out of this mine halfway up a mountainside, you decide to head deeper into this one, taking several forks sloping downwards. Goblins are as efficient as they are greedy and their mines all wind up connecting with one another, you recollect as you descend down a rough-cut spiral staircase. You should be able to find another way out although it'll mean a hell of an underground slog. At least the fungus on the walls is lighting the way - and there's a subtle orange glow coming from the bottom of the stairs, getting brighter and brighter as you approach. And is it getting hotter?

You step off the stairs and into the adjoining cavern where you discover the real reason the mines have been abandoned - a horrible Malrog, no doubt unearthed when the goblins delved beyond legal limits. The Malrog, a gigantic elemental being of fire and hate, hasn't noticed you yet - it seems occupied with a pile of metal plates, its red-hot brow fissured with concentration as it peers at the steel sheets through thick crystal lenses. Even sitting it takes up a huge amount of room, dominating the large natural cavern. The light from the burning being illuminates the stalactites and stalagmites scattered around the cavern roof and floor respectively but fails to penetrate into the darkness just beyond the monster where it seems as though the floor drops away into a pitch black abyss. Aside from this pit the only other exit from the room that you can see is a small tunnel on the other side of the chasm, reachable by a precarious wood and rope bridge dangling across the chasm unnervingly close to the monster. There's no way you'll get across that thing without being spotted.

Do you want to attempt the bridge anyway? If so turn to 1136. If you'd rather sneak up a bit closer to the Malrog to see what it's doing then turn to 828. If you'd rather take your chances in the abyss then turn to 300. If you're feeling really brave you can simply swagger into the cavern and challenge the beast to mortal combat - turn to 242.

360

You get off the cantankerous mule and give it a hard kick in the flank by way of saying you're sick of its company and you'd wish it'd piss off. The animal doesn't need to be thrashed twice - with what you interpret as a grateful bray it gallops away over the steppes to the east with the kind of speed you only wish it would have used for hauling you around.

You watch it until it's a speck on the far horizon and walk towards the Alp of Abandonment where the ominous-sounding Blue Blacksmith awaits. You soon arrive at the base of the huge, lonesome mountain.

Turn to 791.

361

You're feeling altruistic, or more likely you're hoping for a reward of some kind. Either way you try to help the girl the only way you know how - with mostly ineffective force. You grab the nearest stoat and try to cram it back into its cage.

ROUND 'EM UP : DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes you automatically succeed - the animals trot into their cages for you. Turn to 638 if you do this.

If you succeed without the ring then after a couple of nasty bites from that stoat later you've managed to suppress the animals. Turn to 691 if you had a weapon other than the knuckledusters or a ring equipped during that fight or turn to 161 if you were unarmed (aside from the items just mentioned).

Should you fail then all this is too much of a hassle for you - leaving the girl to her problems you stride out of the store. Turn to 1475.

362

There's no way you're paying to get what's coming to you, and you tell Otto as much. The guard captain sneers.

"Have it your way. I'll escort the skeletons from here and collect your delivery fee. Since you don't have a job you're what we call a vagrant, a type of person who isn't wanted or allowed inside Bilgeton. So bugger along or I'll break both your legs".

Perhaps excited by the prospect of an easy payday, Otto waves your caravan through the gatehouse and follows it into the city, fortunately not following through on his unpleasant threat. The skeletons chitter you a farewell as they disappear into the streets.

You guess you got the skeletons to where they needed to go, but you're not going to get the credit or the fabulous cash prizes. At least Aggie paid something up front you guess. Remove all WAGONS and GUARDS from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 681 to find some other way into Bilgeton.

363

The warlock isn't amenable to your cries for mercy and not even your most pitiful begging can forestall her righteous vengeance for what you've done to her, but then you realize that, being partially embalmed and all, she's not going to be able to keep up with you if you simply walk away. Accordingly you get up off your knees and step down the spiral stairs, letting yourself out through the heavy oak door at the bottom. The warlock screams her dire oaths and vicious threats at your back, but since she's unable to safely get down the staircase and is too badly hurt to concentrate enough to cast the really nasty spells she no longer presents much of a threat to you. Whistling a jaunty tune you make your way clear of the tower.

Despite having failed to kill the warlock, if you agreed to help the elfs and want to talk to them again for some reason then turn to 879. If you took a more hostile tack in dealing with them or don't see the point in hanging out with those losers again you can leave them to their fate and continue back on the road towards Bilgeton : turn to 294.

364

This struggle in the dark is long and brutal but thanks to your recently-learned martial prowess or blind luck you drive away your mysterious attacker before it sinks your boat. Whatever it is lets out a final desolate roar and retreats downstream back the way you came. Like almost everyone else in your life it finally realised you weren't worth the effort.

Although you're exhausted by the battle you can't face being swept back to where you came from or risk encountering that beast again. You continue paddling, and soon you're rewarded by a dim glow coming from the tunnel ahead. As your eyes adjust you begin to make out glowing dots and the sight of moonlight reflecting on the surface of the water. Soon you're outside again in the fresh night air, the moon hanging high in the sky overhead. You're in some godforsaken wilderness - behind you to the south are hills which grow into mountains in the distance, and to the north is a long and open plain, dotted with scrub, patches of frost and not a lot else. In the very far distance you can see the white peaks of the huge Skytrap Mountains jutting up towards the stars.

Just up ahead you can see where your stream branches off from a wide, fast-moving river which is descending from the hills behind you and winding away to the north.

Do you want to paddle upstream to join the main river? If so turn to 1169. If, now you're on the surface, you'd rather head straight towards Bilgeton instead of deeper into the wilderness then you'll need to find some way overland - turn to 889.

365

Time for a daring escape! If you've been skeletonised you can see an obvious way out of here (turn to 1390), otherwise you can think of a couple of uses for the trusty toothbrush with which the guards foolishly entrusted you.

If you want to use it to dig your way out of this cell then turn to 750. If you'd rather shank your way out of this mess then turn to 1000.

366

As much as the enraged pixies would enjoy killing you, they can't tell if you're an elf or a human and the last thing they want is another raid from the Bilgeton militia searching for missing persons. They settle for running you out of town, beating you mercilessly as they herd you over the city limits where they let you go, threatening to finish the job if you ever come back. Bruised, tired and feeling incredibly sorry for yourself you get hopelessly turned around as you flee from the pixies and you soon find yourself wandering miserable and lost in the trackless deep woods. Eventually the land becomes firmer, the trees thin out and you stumble out of the woods and into a field, squinting as you try to adjust to the bright light of a sunny day.

Lose 5 EFFORT. If you survive, turn to 268.

367

You lean down and, with a particularly vicious flick, dispatch the former heavyweight champion of the Wald. While you're down there you slide the little championship belt off the boxer and on to your middle finger. Add the Feewald Championship Belt to your Adventure Scroll.

Your heavyweight title now confirmed you set about looting and pillaging. Trampling the lifeless legend into the dirt you stomp your way into the refuges nestled under the rock, violently rummaging around for plunder and smashing everything and everyone that gets in your way. Half an hour of frenzied work and the destruction of most of the shanty and its remaining occupants yields some minuscule Enchanted Tools and 5 Bilgeton Guilders in hard cash. Add these to your Adventure Scroll.

With the brownies all dead or dispersed and the sun going down, this might be a good time to rest. If you want to take a load off, turn to 335. If you'd prefer to press on then turn to 1358.

368

Count Hugues grins broadly and rakes his money back over to his side of the rug. He begins tying the sword back onto his belt. The guards give you a look like thunder.

"Tough luck old sport", he says cheerily, "Can't win them all. Thank you for a riveting game though".

You start to ask for another chance but now he's won a round he won't hear of it.

"Sorry, we must fly. We're already running behind - we have the Grand Ball to organise in Bilgeton. Should you find yourself in the capital please drop by, it'll be at the Countess Amelie's Manse on the corner of Tent Avenue and Fort Lane. For now, it has been a pleasure making your acquaintance, and safe travels back to Aulde Git, wherever that is. Guards, please see him back to his caravan".

With that the guards appear by your shoulders to escort you back to the road. It turns into more of a drag than anything else once you're through the trees and out of sight of the Count. The guards are furious that you allowed yourself to squander the winnings, half of which belonged to them.

"What the hells was that?" snarls the guard who first spoke to you. "How did you lose to The Mark? You've got to be kidding me. Well, we're getting paid either way. Hand over our 10 Guilders!"

If you have 10 Guilders then you can part with them: remove them from your Adventure Scroll. Otherwise they start shaking you down - they take all the Guilders you have (assuming you have any) and the Feewald Map if you have it in your possession. If you have nothing at all they want - no Guilders and no map - they give you a beating instead. Lose 5 EFFORT.

Make any necessary adjustments on your Adventure Scroll. With this humiliating and unprofitable encounter completed, there's nothing for you to do but continue trudging towards Bilgeton. Turn to 1445.

369

You sit down in the classical thinker pose and rack your brains for a strategy you can use that is less likely to get you all, but especially you, killed:

DEEP THOUGHT: DIFFICULTY 10

If you succeed then inspiration strikes! You have a winner: turn to 1731. If you fail you don't come up with a damn thing. Having wasted the time you could have used to creep off, you are ready to follow the brownies' plan for lack of a better option. Turn to 1098.

370

This is too weird and low down even for someone as sleazy as you. You make your apologies and go to leave but the lady caterpillar starts sobbing at your rejection of her advances and the first caterpillar you met comes rushing out of the kitchen, inching as fast as possible for such a small creature.

"Oy! What's wrong with you? She's a beautiful lady and she's practically throwing herself at you!" he yells, throwing a tiny cooking pot at you. It catches you on the knee with surprising force and you howl with pain, your legs buckling underneath you. In the subsequent collapse you smash just about everything in the living room and smush the two unfortunate caterpillars as you flail around trying to get back up. Lose 10 EFFORT from this harrowing experience.

Horrified by the way everything turned out you crawl out of the caterpillars' home and make a break for freedom. If you've had enough of the Mazyrinth you can walk straight back out the exit by turning to 1277. If you'd prefer to continue on regardless you can head through the breach you made and go deeper into the maze. Once again there are only two ways to go - left and right. You find yourself going left without thinking, but then you reconsider - you've taken everything for granted so far, are you so sure this is the best way?

If you want to carry on the way you initially intended to go then turn to 571. If you'd like to turn around and go the other way then turn to 823.

371

After a gruelling battle, you wear down the lich and the undead fiend disintegrates into a pile of bones and leathery skin. His earthly remains - consisting of the wavy-bladed longswords he was just trying to slice you open with, an ivory wand possessed of dark magics, his golden crown and his dressing robes, weighed down by the two cool-looking glowing green lanterns that hang from the drawstring - clatter heavily to the floor. You can take any or all of the Bathrobe, the Ivory Wand, the Gold Crown and the Twin Swords of Corruption - make the appropriate adjustments to your Adventure Scroll.

As you emerge victorious from the lich's chambers you're a little concerned to see a bunch of skeletons and shamblers lurching around near the entrance to the crypt. According to the Bestiary (the indispensable guide to the world of the Bastard Elf, available in at least one or two places where it should be in stock) shouldn't these undead fall apart when their master does?

Since the undead are still roaming around down here you figure it's time you got a move on before one of them spots you and start demanding your brains or the like. If you'd like to head out through the main entrance then turn to 467. If you'd prefer to explore deeper into the crypt in search of loot and further subterranean adventure then turn to 805.

372

Not far to the south of the city you see a collection of farms on the other side of a small creek. A helpful sign reassures you that Hurensohn's Mushroom Farm lies a mile or so away just over the stream. If you'd like to head over there, in hopes of a lift or whatever you think you can get out of a human peasant then turn to 967. If you'd rather avoid the whole scene then you can strike out south in the probable direction of a route to Bilgeton - turn to 268.

373

After a bit of nursing you get the mug of booze into you and, to your surprise, don't yak it up. The bartender looks impressed.

"Well tie me kangaroo down and stone the crows, I never thought I'd see the day. This swaggie likes the piss! Even the Great Brittle Clan won't touch it."

This news is met with a cheer from the nobolds.

"Hardly no one ever likes the stuff, especially if they're not from around here. Maybe you belong here with us, eh? We've boundless plains to share and more than enough empty houses what with the ants and the priest sacrificing the odd straggler, so whaddya say? You feel like calling Busted Hill home?"

You don't see any plains, boundless or otherwise, and you find the casual reference to the ants and priest somewhat troubling, but no one's ever actually wanted you around before. Would you like to stay in Busted Hill? If so then turn to 403. Otherwise you stammer out an excuse and make a beeline for the exit - turn to 546 (and don't forget to subtract 1 ÉLAN until you next get a chance to rest, as you find yourself a bit wobbly on your feet after that drink).

374

Well, why not, you think. You follow the priest through the palisade entrance, which he shuts and locks behind you, hiding the key back in his cassock. Chlothar leads you through a leafy churchyard full of weird stone markers which he tells you are gravestones, and then into the back of his dingy church. As you pass through his living quarters on the way to the main hall of the church he tells you that it's customary to listen to the sermon of the week before you get down to the Redeeming, whatever that entails. Soon you emerge into the main church hall - a large dingy room packed with pews and dense with smoke from burning censers hanging from the walls, The sole source of light comes from a window high up on the wall above the double doors at the other end of the hall.

"So, will it be the sermon first, or are you keen to get Redeemed as soon as possible?" enquires the cleric.

If you'd like to listen to the sermon then turn to 703. If you want to skip ahead to whatever the hell the Redeeming's about then turn to 908. If, on second thought, you don't want a damn thing to do with this chubby cleric and his human heathenry you can politely tell him where he can cram it by turning to 487.

375

You back away from the horrible apparition but it advances on you, snapping away with the terrible beaks on its rapidly multiplying heads. There seem to be six of them...no....seven, all gripping onto you. Try as you might you can't get free - it seems to anticipate your every move, swirling around you like a yellow hurricane, always one step ahead. Naturally, you panic and make a run for it, pursued by the screeching of the transmogrified warlock as she pursues you...

Unfortunately in your drugged-out state you forget that you're quite high off the ground and in your distress you let the warlock-cum-bird pursue you right out the top floor window. Too late the pixie dust wears off and you sober up in time to find yourself sailing through the air, wrapped in the warlock's yellow dressing robe. The warlock, now naked as the day she was born but otherwise in a similar condition as you, has leaped after you and is sailing through the sky just over your head and a bit to the right.

"YOU'VE GOT TO BE BLOODY SHITTING ME", you hear her scream before you slam into the ground like a bag full of lead shot. Somewhere behind you there's a sickening thud, and then silence.

It's a little while before you feel like you can move. You find that you're badly injured as you try to struggle to your feet: lose 1 ÉLAN. Looking around you see that you came away better than the warlock - she landed head-first and is stone cold dead. Aside from a peaked wizard hat which she must have chucked on during the fight, she's not carrying anything worth having on her person, but you can keep the potentially magical Robe and Wizard Hat if you wish - add this to your Adventure Scroll. Also make a note that you've slain the warlock.

Not feeling like you can take on the tower stairs even for the loot contained within you hobble away from this painful scene. If you agreed to help those elfs from earlier and wish to see them again then turn to 325. If you left them on bad terms or just want to get the hells out of here you instead limp back to the road and continue on your way towards Bilgeton - turn to 294.

376

You follow the wall around for an hour. There's a dusty and overgrown path following alongside the ramparts, though broken clumps of stinging weeds and litter gives the impression that it gets at least a little bit of use. After this boring trek you find the door the Thieves' Guild representative was talking about - a simple wooden door set in a slightly protruding section of the wall. This must be the way in.

You try the door - it's latched shut from the inside. Do you remember the secret knock?

To start with one hard knock turn to 657. To knock twice quickly turn to 1406. To knock three times fast turn to 1250.

377

As you buckle the last of the many belts that you're wearing you ask the witch about the missing kids and their possible connection with the meaty smell emanating from the oven.

"Why, you want to join them?", sneers the witch. "Don't worry, you're too stringy."

You look visibly depressed by this hurtful jab. The witch laughs at the miserable expression on your face.

"I'm not called Aethelcruel for no reason. Now get out of here before I change my mind."

With this the witch points a finger and blasts you with a searingly unpleasant stream of purple lightning. Yelping and convulsing in pain you rush for the door and slam it shut behind you once you're safely on the other side. Singed and humiliated, you slink away from the cottage to the accompaniment of Aethelcruel's mocking laughter. Lose 5 EFFORT and turn to 1581.

378

The goblins are weighed down with their heavy iron armour. Even if they weren't, it's far from certain that they'd be able to move faster than a cowardly half elf fleeing a crime scene with his hands full of stolen goods. Fleeing the Goblin Town you retrace your steps through the Mazyrinth, not stopping until you're clear of the place and the sounds of harsh goblin shouts and clattering armour have receded far away behind you.

Turn to 1277.

379

You hiss at the brownies to shut up and they do, but unfortunately the guards were close enough to hear this exchange. They hail you as you attempt to go by.

"Excuse me, traveller", says one of the guards in a thick provincial accent, "But were you just now telling your bag to shut up?"

If you'd like to answer in the affirmative then turn to 882. If the negative then turn to 1112.

380

Dire wolfs might be cunning as far as dogs go, but they're pretty stupid even by half elf standards. You nimbly leap over a very obvious trap which the dire wolf probably left for you - a deep hole partially covered with a layer of leaves and a heavily-chewed and not very tempting branch laid over the top as bait. The dire wolf, however, gets excited about seeing his old toy again and leaps for it, tumbling head over paws into his own trap with a yelp and a nasty crunching noise.

Well, they're not called dire (or on the verge of extinction) because they're good.

If you want to continue on your journey then turn to 452. If you suddenly can't leave a fellow creature suffering in a pit without going back for a good laugh then turn to 1587.

381

Just as you're fixing to fall on your belly and crawl around on the ground begging for your life, the dwarf finally hits you with her curious weapon. You are struck hard in the shoulder and flung to the ground like a rag doll. You gasp briefly for air before blacking out. Lose 1 ÉLAN.

When you come to you find yourself in the back of the wagon, surrounded by a quartet of very apologetic dwarfs. The lady who shot you (she introduces herself as Chantal as soon as she notices you're awake) is wrapping your wound in thick white bandages while the other three dwarfs look on with a mix of curiosity, concern and undisguised squeamishness. They've done a decent job stitching up the hole they put in your arm, and the pain is more or less manageable. That's not going to stop you whining, moaning and generally making yourself unbearable which is what you proceed to do.

In between apologising and tolerating your endless complaining the dwarfs manage to tell you a little about themselves. It turns out that they're a group of merchants on their way to Bilgeton with a stock of dwarf-made instruments for Reynold's Music Exchange in Bilgeton. Since they mistakenly shot you they feel obligated to at least bring you along while they patched you, unless you're going to be fine anyway and would rather get out and walk on your own. Although they'd clearly welcome you letting them off the hook, you resolutely refuse to do so and instead pretend to go back to sleep.

Turn to 1280.

382

Riding hard at the head of your band of skeletal survivors, you think you've made a clean getaway when ahead of you on the road you see another pair of elfs. One of them is huge - probably a half elf, but way more buff than you and clad from head to toe in shining brass armour. With him is a particularly slimy little toad of an elf. Thoroughly sick of elfs by this point you're about to run right over them when the creepy little fellow extends his hands and says something like a prayer. Suddenly the skeletons in your caravan all turn around backwards as one and the bony horses rear back - they've been Turned! The horrible little elf is a priest!

The caravan grinds to a halt just yards in front of the shining half elf, who speaks:

"You must be the guy who took out my scouts last night, and now you've defeated my warband. I got no idea what's got into Aggie, hiring a goldbrick like you. The arrangement we had was a perfectly good one. She pays us a quarter of the profits - we're not greedy, we don't take the lot - and we let her skeletons get to their jobs in Bilgeton unhassled. But she double-crossed us. Of course, that means the deal's off the table. Now I'm taking everything, and you die."

"Balls to you", you reply with every ounce of your cutting wit. You draw your weapon (hopefully you have a weapon, if not you clench your fist) as the half elf charges, swinging his hand-and-a-half sword with frightening speed and control. As the skeletons jitter back around to join the battle, his slimy companion creeps off into your peripheral vision and out of sight.

🔪**ELF BASTARD: DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

The guards rush to your aid! For every GUARD you have reduce his difficulty by 1 to a minimum of 8. As a half elf, the ELF BASTARD is not susceptible to items that only affect elfs. If you lose a round turn to 759 if you have any guards left and 831 if not.

🔪**SLIMY ELF: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1**

The slimy elf is trying to stab you in the back while you fight the ELF BASTARD. If you don't have Skeleton Friend then this fight counts as a Multiple Hassle as long as he lives, even if you still have GUARDs. If you have Skeleton Friend then luckily the Turn spell made him face backwards, which is the direction the greasy priest is coming at you from. You may ignore this slimebag completely but you don't get Skeleton Friend's special ability (he's busy). Unlike the ELF BASTARD, he's a full elf so anti-elf weapons work just fine on him.

If you win turn to 922.

If you don't think you stand a chance and want to seize this opportunity to grovel for mercy then turn to 165.

383

Hulagu reluctantly agrees, probably thinking your half elf nature will make you useful on whatever mission he's given his men. One of the caravan drivers detaches another bird from the harnesses for you to ride. You've never ridden a giant bird (or anything else) before, but after a couple of embarrassing pratfalls a pair of drivers shove you up onto the bird's back where you teeter precariously, gripping onto the harness for dear life.

As soon as you're up in the saddle the scouting team is away down the road to Bilgeton, the birds racing along at a startling speed now that they're free of the wagons. You have no idea of how to control this thing, but the bird knows what to do. You just need to cling on.

After a few minutes the road curves around to follow the edge of the forest and you see before you four elfs crouched in the middle of the road. They're all stooped over a spot where the dirt path changes into a proper cobbled highway which continues far to the south. These must be whimsyflickers conducting one of their mystical roadway benedictions! As soon as your cavalry squad rounds the corner the elfs all look up in horror and you see their faces : it's Biff and his gang of no-name cronies, a bunch of bullies who contributed to ruining your life almost as much as Jeff did. Realising the trouble they're in, the gang gets up to flee as the human guards lower their short spears and charge in for the kill.

If you'd like to join the charge then turn to 406. If, despite your boiling hatred of Biff and all he stands for, you can't allow this to happen to a fellow townself then turn to 1565. On the other hand there's nothing stopping you from just nicking off with the bird while everyone's distracted. To do this, turn to 1302.

384

Nilde is too worried about being bitten by the undead monster to notice you lowering yourself from the cart and slinking off into the bushes. Leaving your wife to her fate you creep through the undergrowth alongside but a couple of dozen yards from the road in the general direction of Bilgeton. Remove Nilde and the Clapped-Out Old Nag from your Adventure Scroll.

Night falls and you're considering returning to the road when you stumble across a badly overgrown path cutting through the woods to the north, probably rejoining the road to Bilgeton somewhere to the south. If you're worried enough about running into Nilde on the road you can head north along this path - turn to 1007. If you'd rather take your chances somewhere not quite so damn spooky you decide to head south towards the main road - turn to 984.

385

You wave your weapon in the padre's face. He laughs cruelly at your incomprehension of nobold mores and thrusts his knife closer to your throat. To your chagrin, you realise you've been weighed in the balance and been found wanting. In any case this cultural test exchange rapidly turns into a robbery - the padre comes around your side of the table and, still waving the knife in your face, relieves you of your purse and chucks it into a collection plate at the base of a statue which sits leering at you unpleasantly from a dark corner.

You're pretty drunk, confused and demoralised by your loss at the traditional nobold knife comparison game, but you don't have to take this lying down (or slumped over on a pew). You can instead try to best the priest at a game that you've probably got some experience in : violence. Turn to 598. Otherwise you burst into tears and run for it : turn to 1029, making sure to remove any cash you're carrying from your Adventure Scroll.

386

The short remainder of the night passes uneventfully and you wake early the next morning at the crack of 10am ready to carry on with your adventure. Restore up to 5 EFFORT.

The forest is slightly less treacherous during the day and you make decent time through the trackless and slimy woodlands. After maybe an hour of hiking you catch a peek of something interesting through the trees and go in for a closer look. After shoving your way through some particularly tangled trees you burst out into a clearing which contains a small elfish village - Aelfsburg, according to the big white letters affixed to the trees on the other side. There are ten short towers, roughly as poorly-built as the ones back home, and made of cobblestones as well. Just like in Elfsdale Downs there's a large tree in the middle of the clearing which presumably houses the semi-famous Aelfsburg School of Lorewardening, hateful old Jeff's alma mater.

The village is eerily still. No one seems to be around, though you're not sure if that's because no one's actually around or because it's before noon and they're all asleep. As a half elf you were always a bit of an early riser despite Jeff's constant claims that you were a layabout. You used the extra time to desecrate his toothbrush when the mood struck you.

If you'd like to investigate the town then turn to 884. If you've got better things to do than hang around this dump then turn to 332 to continue on your journey.

387

Two possible paths present themselves to you: will you head for the Alp directly over the tundra (turn to 1297) or will you take the more scenic route along the shore of a glittering lake (turn to 1790)?

388

There's no way you're walking to Bilgeton, godsdamnit. If he won't give you a ride then you'll just have to take it. Hurensohn's loading his cart so you bravely wait until the farmer's got his hands full of mushroom and his back turned to you before launching your attack.

🔪**HURENSOHN: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

This tough old man has DIFFICULTY 5 in the first round only because his back's turned. If you're soaking wet this doesn't apply - he hears you squelching while you're sneaking up on him.

If you lose then the farmer kicks your arse pretty thoroughly before running you off his property - lose 5 EFFORT and turn to 268. If you win the guy collapses to the ground unconscious and probably pretty badly hurt. You set to looting quickly and retrieve a bag of Peculiar Mushrooms and one solitary Bilgeton Guilder: add these to your Adventure Scroll.

You must now decide - are you going to get out of here before anyone notices what you've done (turn to 1482) or, are you worried about leaving any witnesses to your crime? Turn to 188.

389

If you in fact achieved this feat then please write down your picks for next week's lotto numbers and send them to:

Herman S. Skull
1 Cliffside Hovel
Skullthucke-Upon-Woad
England
SK2 3PP

Given your luck and probable gambling wealth the rest of this adventure is a bit of a wash. You defeat the Phalloknight and get the girl I guess, jolly well done.

On the off-chance that you're not being entirely on the level then please turn back to the page from which you came but make a note in INK on the Indelible Words of Power section of your Adventure Scroll that Herman Skull is very disappointed in you.

390

You creep up on the coffin-bearing wagon from behind. It's a very small hearse, just a narrow open wagon pulled by a single horse. Waiting for the driver to dismount to take a leak you climb up onto the back of the wagon and crack open the coffin, where you find a very dead old man grimacing up at you! His fingers are adorned with rings and he's clad in a pretty nice outfit...

If you'd like to loot the corpse then turn to 103. If you're not going to be distracted by easy plunder then turn to 635.

391

The Malrog, looking increasingly unsteady on its feet as the fight goes on, falls backward, lands flat on its back and starts screaming wildly, While your last attack was pretty good it shouldn't have been enough to seriously wound the living tower made of rock, lava and hate, so you're somewhat taken aback by this behaviour.

You have no way of knowing this but the Malrog inhaled enough of the evaporated potion to experience some of its nastier hallucinogenic effects. Your constant squealing in the face of near-certain death along with the noises of whatever tool you were using to bash at the Malrog triggered some traumatic memories. The Malrog, now roaring pitifully, is trapped in its own head, reliving the torturous noise of the goblins and their skeleton workforce delving deeper and deeper into the earth, hammering and shouting and drilling and smashing all day and all night for months and months on end...

Living through the experience of a goblin mine extension once was enough for this demon - this second time is too much to bear. The Malrog, its roar now a pathetic hiss and its lava cooling and solidifying into hard pumice, crawls over to the side of the abyss and rolls right over the edge, falling rapidly out of sight and presumably to its death.

Turn to 402.

392

The cyclops refuses your surrender! The cyclops throws his boulder at Bastard's head.

A hit to the head! Bastard is dead!

393

You carefully emerge from the room and take a peek around the interior of the tower. It's ...dead. The skeletons seem to have gone home for the night and the only sound is the snoring warlock.

You head down the stairs and emerge from the tower. If you'd like to go seek out those elfs for whatever reason then turn to 879. If you'd rather not deal with those guys again you head back to the road, giving their last location a wide berth, and are soon on the way onwards to Bilgeton. Turn to 294.

394

You dislike humans but you dislike waiting around in a bush for them to leave even more, so you decide to make a go of talking to this one. The dumpy man in the unflattering outfit stops what he's doing as soon as he spots you coming towards him. He drops his bag and raises a hand in greetings.

"Hail, bro! Good morrow to you, traveller. I'm Brother Chlothar at your service. Have you heard the week's good news about The K-NG yet, bro?"

The priest sees the look of wild confusion on your face.

"You mean... you haven't been Redeemed yet? That's great, I'm only one soul short of my quarterly targets - and of course it's great for you too, what with the escaping the eternal Damnation and all that. Why don't you come to the church and I'll tell you all about it? It's right this way."

He withdraws a large iron key from somewhere within his cassock and approaches the wall. After looking for a minute he finds what he's looking for and inserts the key into a keyhole, turning it with a clunk. A semi-hidden entrance through the palisade swings open.

If you'd like to follow him turn to 374.
If you're not going to be lured some weird human trap you can attempt to find another entrance to the town by following the palisade along - turn to 915.

395

Leaving the guard shack behind you, you proceed along the dried creek bed. You begin to hear strange sounds reverberating through the mountains - echoing booms and the repeated sounds of something shattering, at first muffled by distance but growing louder and louder as you pick your way through the loose gravel of the shallow channel.

After a few hours of trudging along the winding creek bed you notice that it's becoming increasingly filled with stone shards which look like bits of broken pottery. Soon you're clambering over mounds of the stuff. It's no wonder the creek's dried up - these heaps of pulverised stone are stopping the water getting through. They also smell like the vicious alcohol used to brew potions and the fumes are giving you a nasty headache.

If you're wondering where these heaps are coming from you soon find out. You hear a reverberating boom from nearby and look up to see a large stone bottle sailing through the air from the flat top of a butte just ahead of you. It slams into the heap of stone just as you're climbing over it, showering you with shards and the smell of paint stripper. This is followed by a salvo of several more of the bottles which fortunately land wide, slamming into other nearby heaps and the rock walls of the mountainside behind you.

It's not safe to stay here - if you want to clamber up the butte and confront whatever's there then turn to 256. If you'd rather pass on by without causing a scene you can continue along the creek bed by turn to 1075.

396

They guard gives you the once over and decides that, yes, you are indeed a skeleton. Skeleton workers are fairly common in the city where they are prized as workers because of their work ethic and lack of need for toilet breaks.

"Well, everything seems to be in order", says the guard. "Welcome to Bilgeton. If you stop by the union office I'm sure they'll have some work for you. Just stay out of trouble and don't wander around with weapons. And don't let me catch you sleeping in any barrels, even if you get decroded".

With that the guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink: you are now permitted to enter the city through the Trader's Gate in future adventures. With that done the guard escorts you out of the office and through to the other side of the gatehouse. You step through the exit and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

397

Not really feeling the fiddle, you tap the Prince of Shards on the shoulder to see if you can get him to exchange it for something good. The demon doesn't stop what it's doing or even look at you -while continuing its incantation it kicks one of its razor-sharp glass feet back, slashing you from chest to belly and freeing all your organs from your abdomen. You see it reopen the portal, step through and close it again before finally succumb to your critical lack of internal organs.

Your adventure ends here.

398

You're going to monetise the hells out of your new-found fame! Soon you're putting your name to quality products such as the Bastard Grill, a miraculous box which can cook almost anything to perfection while draining the fat away, as well as a foul-smelling cologne and a series of boxing game cartridges for the Azari PCS, released to horrible reviews. The proceeds allow you to buy a nice house in Bilgeton's merchant district where you while away the days sitting on the stoop, boasting about your boxing prowess and trash talking anyone who walks by.

After your stunning victory, do you hold all four of Nonce's Championship Belts? If so turn to 1767. If not, turn to 836.

399

Whether it's because you hate priests, loathe Hell priests in particular, have a job to do or are just feeling feisty, you attack the nobold priest. The priest stands, extends his neck frill menacingly and smashes a bottle of sacramental booze on the table. He lunges at you with the broken half in hand.

🔪**PADRE : DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

This priest knows some kind of spell of smiting - any time he rolls 6 on a FIST die lose 5 EFFORT as you're bowled backwards over the pews. If he rolls 6 on both dice lose 10 EFFORT.

If you win then you cut the priest down - turn to 1788. If you lose then turn to 1029.

400

With nowhere to be and nothing to do you roam the streets of Bilgeton until dawn. Just as you're about to give up and find a gutter to lie down and expire in, you stumble across an old building among a cluster of shops in the Drudgers' Quarter. A short man with dark skin - a half dwarf by the looks - is opening up one of the shops. You stare at him for a little while - there's something awfully familiar about this guy, though you've never seen him before in your life: despite his clearly dwarfen ancestry he's got your trademark smirk, sleazy eyebrows and luxurious thick hair. As he unfolds the sandwich board which he's lugging outside the shop he looks up at you and you see that he recognises you too, somehow. And then the penny drops when you see what's written on the board - "Bastards Anonymous". He smiles - more of a greasy sneer than anything else - and beckons you inside.

As it turns out the fellow, named Tallebot, is the product of a union between the wandering milkman and a dwarfen woman. Kicked out of home by his dwarfish stepfather (who he will NEVER call 'Dad') he came to Bilgeton to find his real father. Also attending the group is Spitbucket (a heavily armoured half goblin), Olbrecht (a rare double human with a human mother AND the human milkman for a father), Spatula (a "zombie", which is apparently the offspring of a union between a skeleton worker and a human milkman) and numerous others, all with their own functionally identical story to tell. All of you came to Bilgeton to find your father, failed, and wound up at Bastards Anonymous.

While you never found the Wandering Milkman, you did find something even more precious - a circle of people willing to tolerate your endless carping about how unhappy your parents have made you. You subsist on the stale pastries and lousy coffee served up at the meetings and you even find a place to crash - when you're not couch surfing in your various half-siblings' homes you simply break into the Bastards Anonymous building and sleep in a broom closet. All in all you're willing to chalk this one up as a win.

401

The wolf flees yelping into the mountains, leaving you free to aid your bony buddy against the Spectre. In for a hargroat in for a Guilder, as the humans say. You bravely creep up behind the hard-pressed crimefighter and clobber him over the back of the head with a large rock, putting an end to The Man Who Cannot Die with a sickening crunch. Turn to 1779.

402

You are now a mighty hero of the realm! Your boasts will terrify your enemies and tales of your adventures will be sung from household to household, spreading like wildfire across the human realms of Palaver and beyond. Add 1 FIST and make a note of this in your Adventure Scroll!

With the Malrog out of the way there's nothing stopping you from getting some looting in. Unfortunately elemental beings of hate and fire don't have much need of stuff so there's not a lot to take. The huge steel sheets it was holding are far too heavy for you to move, but you may take his Crystal Spectacles which were knocked off in the kerfuffle - add these if you want.

With the miserably slim pickings picked, you decide to exit the cavern. Crossing the rope-bridge spanning the abyss, you depart the chamber through the tunnel on the far side. Turn to 1347.

BAST S ANON
#1 TROLL
#1 HUMAN
#1 ZOM
JEFF WUZ 'ELE

403

Did you kill a bunch of nobolds back in the tunnels? If so, turn to 980. Otherwise read on:

Since you're getting along so swimmingly here you decide to stick around and live among the nobolds. You spend the rest of your days as a miner in Busted Hill, doing hard but rewarding work and passing your spare hours with your mates in this idyllic subterranean pit.

Unfortunately not all dreams work out. You never quite get a handle on the nobold language and find interacting with them just as annoying as you did when you first met them. For their part it doesn't take the nobolds long to realise that you're a goldbrick who has no intention of pulling anything like his own weight. In short you get on each other's nerves and before long you come to a mutual decision where you decide to leave before they hang you.

Your time among the nobolds wasn't entirely wasted - you never quite develop a taste for their beer but the amount you needed to drink to be considered a "true blue nobold" was prodigious. You're now far more able to handle your liquor - in fact, after laying a few drinking lizards flat in the regular tavern fights that make up the nobold social calendar you find that you fight and think better with a bit of a buzz on. From now on whenever you're drunk, whether from alcohol or potions, you may add 1 to any FIST rolls you make. You may note this on your Adventure Scroll in ink - mysteriously this skill will carry over to any further adventures.

Your hosts are keen to see you gone so they show you a secret - behind the tavern bar there's a trapdoor leading down to an underground stream which the nobolds inform you is called "Shit Creek". This is where the town's drinking water comes from, and it's also the fastest way on to Gobholme where you might find a lift on to Bilgeton or wherever else you may wish to wind up in life. Apparently it's the second exit you want - the first one's not safe and the third exit goes gods know where. Loading you and your possessions into a little wooden punt (it bears the painted inscription "Drop Kick" in a nobold attempt at humour), they untie the rope holding it to shore and give you a shove off.

Turn to 153.

404

You grab onto the horse's harness to see if you can find a way to pull yourself up onto its back, but then you realise that you've made a terrible mistake. Not only do you not know how to climb up onto a horse, this one doesn't even have a saddle. Also you see too late that it has a muscular human's torso, arms and legs sticking out behind it just under the tail. This is no horse, it's a taurcent!

With a terrifying whinny the horse rears all the way back up onto its human legs and totters forward awkwardly but quickly, kicking with all four hooves and slashing at you with a knotted whip grasped in one of its human fists. You must fight:

🔪**TAURCENT SLAVER: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

The whip is a nasty weapon which seems to strike randomly, inflicting long and painful welts even when you defend yourself. You will fight this battle with one less FIST, down to a minimum of 1 FIST.

If it's all too much, you give up and surrender to this thing: turn to 1765.

Otherwise the taurcent is no match for you and collapses to the ground in an ungainly heap. You give the awkward monstrosity a final hard kick and carry on around the corner to the east. You may add its Humanhide Whip and the Weighted Net to your Adventure Scroll if you want before you move on. Turn to 1715.

405

Instead of drawing a weapon, you haul a testicle the size of a warhorse's hindquarters out of a grimy burlap sack. This visibly disturbs your assailants - their charge falters. When you fix your steely gaze on the little elf and take a huge bite out of the top of the thing, they stagger to a halt. Their weapons go slack in their hands when you lift the testicle and start chugging its contents. They are still staring, slack-jawed, when the skeletons rally and surround them. The half elf drops his sword and falls to his knees, muttering, "W...what kind of man....". His companion, the blood drained from his face in horror , is still standing when the skeletons reach him. They cut him down and he dies without a sound. The last thing he sees is your eyes locked on his as you messily gulp down the revolting sludge inside the huge ball.

You suddenly feel queasy as the testicle kicks in, its effects multiplying in response to your victory in battle. Apply the effects listed on the loot card and discard it. You begin to feel... manly. Virile. Hirsute. Your chest, arms, face, back and balls itch as hair follicles multiply and explode out in a crazy profusion of mane, thatch, beard and moustache. Remove the Big Rock Goblin Mountain Oyster from your Adventure Scroll and add the Manly Hairs. Gain 1 maximum and current ÉLAN. You can see that your erstwhile opponent has been stripped of the will to fight as he stares at you with blank incomprehension. You must now decide - if you wish to do the honourable thing and spare your defeated enemy, turn to 27. If you'd prefer to kick him while he's down, turn instead to 537.

406

Bearing down on your old nemesis you cut quite the imposing figure, despite the fact that you're completely unarmoured, barely armed at best and are clearly hard pressed to stay up on the bird's back. Although his buddies flee, Biff seems to think he's got at least some chance of unhorsing you and he stands his ground, flinging rock after rock at you as you charge in for the kill.

🔪**BIFF : DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1**

If you win turn to 1226. If you give up then turn to 869.

407

Who's going to say no to a dragon, especially one offering a cooked meal? You decide to stay for dinner. The dragon retreats to a room at the back and you hear some mumbling, perhaps an incantation of some kind, then re-emerges and tries to engage you in a bit of light pre-dinner conversation as you sit waiting at an immensely expensive and ornately-carved table made from a single piece of ebony wood.

It turns out that Bhad (its Palavan name, as its true name is a powerful word of fire and death unpronounceable and unbearable to smaller, less fire-based beings) has been living alone in this mountain since before the dawn of human civilisation, before the elfs arrived, all the way back to when the dwarfs were nothing more than war-loving barbarians hitting each other with stone axes in the villages that would one day become the Dwarfen Kingdoms to the east.

You can barely contain your boredom at all this exposition so you're grateful when the dragon perks its head up and says, "Dinner's here". Seconds later a harpy comes fluttering into the cave holding a couple of large, flat boxes. Bhad retrieves a Guilder from his treasure hoard, hands it over and takes the boxes off the half-bird, half-hideous crone delivery being, which issues a piercing screech and flaps away back out of the cave. The dragon returns to the table and plonks the boxes down in front of you. Opening one of them up tentatively you find out that they contain a flat, circular bread-like product covered in red sauce and cheese and sprinkled with various meats, vegetables and fungi. It's cut into slices.

"Oh, I keep forgetting you Palavan philistines have never savoured the delicacies of the Far Lands", roars Bhad softly. "This is called 'pizza'. Try a slice".

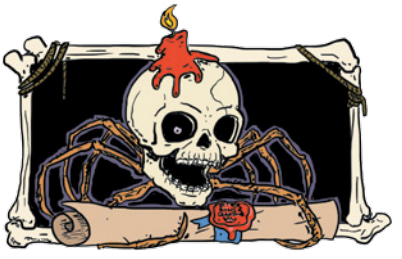
You try some - it's pretty good! The dragon brings out a bottle of something called "wine" from his stash and you down it with your meal - a true feast after days on the road and decades of mostly eating leaves before that! Restore 10 EFFORT but lose 1 ÉLAN from the effects of the fermented grape drink.

As you eat and get hammered the dragon continues to prattle. You could swear it's winking at you. Some of its conversation is pretty racy - you get the impression that it's not always alone here, and it enjoys the company of many different kinds of beings. Occasionally you feel its tail brushing softly against your legs. Is it coming on to you?

As you both reach across the table for the last slice of pizza your hand touches the dragon's claw. It leers at you toothily, "So, are you interested in some freundschaftsbezeigungen?".

That must be one of the dragon words because just hearing it makes your mortal head hurt. Still, the dragon seems to expect a response.

If you want to reply in the positive then turn to 1562. If negative then turn to 1143.



408

The lords and ladies all scoff and guffaw at your poor dress and clumsy dancing. "What a delightful impersonation of a pauper", chuckles a nearby baroness.

Sadly, the household guards aren't fooled by your "disguise" and soon come to throw you out. You find yourself outside once again, your dreams of marrying way, way up completely dashed.

Turn to 13.

409

You're pretty sure you've got this right. You give the door three more taps and are soon rewarded by the sound of movement inside and the noise of the latch lifting. The door creaks open and standing before you in the dark, cramped space that has just opened up before you is the horrifying sight of an armoured town guard accompanied by a noxious cloud smelling like raw sewage.

"Oy! Can't a hard-working guard take a twenty-minute dump in peace?" he roars. "How many times do I have to tell you yokels, the latrine's for city employees only. Go take a crap in a bush, it should come natural to you".

With that the guard emerges and turns to lock the door behind him. Could this be the Thieves' Guild testing your mettle?

If you want to pickpocket the keys from this guard to gain access to the secret Thieves' Guild headquarters then turn to 1001. If you'd rather just head back to the gates then turn to 1531.

410

You're still prying at floorboards looking for stuff to steal when the roof caves in, crushing the life out of you. In the end you don't find somewhere to crash - somewhere crashes on you!

Your adventure ends here.

411

The gnome's small stature is deceptive - he's mean as hells and his fists are like rocks. After working your soft belly for a few minutes he sinks a right hook into your kidney and you go down instantly.

"Now get out of here" says the gnome, pointing back into the forest. You begin to crawl but it's evidently not fast enough for the gnome, who gives you a spirited kick up the arse to get you back on your feet. Groaning and holding your sides you limp away back into the dark, slime-soaked forest. You'll be pissing blood for a week.

Lose 5 EFFORT. If you survive turn to 1804.

412

You bash, slash and/or hack your way through the shamblers, returning them to the truly dead once again. Since they're just zombies they don't have anything of value on them but you can extract some Zombie Teeth if you're feeling brave and not too squeamish- add 50 Zombie Teeth to the cash section of your Adventure Scroll if you want.

With that concluded you move on and soon arrive at your destination - the Graveyard of Kings. The moon hangs balefully in the sky, illuminating the desolate site - a low stone wall surrounding a small field littered with fallen headstones, broken stele and black pits which you're nearly certain are excavated graves. Worryingly, there are way more holes than could possibly have been occupied than just those two shamblers. Most importantly the moon reflects off a tall stone mound in the middle of the cemetery. It appears to be the only unspoiled site here so if you had to guess this would be where the Lich would be located. A black hole in the front of the heap provides access to the barrow, should you be brave or bored enough to try your luck in there.

Despite your growing dread you've walked and fought too hard to simply turn back now. If you want to investigate that barrow then you enter the forbidding hole and descend via a narrow staircase into the heart of the crypt: turn to 471. If you'd prefer to occupy yourself by fossicking around in the graves which are at least nearer to the surface then turn to 1376.

413

The ants can't see in the dark any better than you can, so the repulsive ant goo you're carting around convinces this Them! into thinking that it's dealing with another of its kind. Warbling out an apology it turns back and scuttles away.

Putting two and two together you figure out that the Them! aren't going to hurt you while you're holding onto this slime. Your journey through the tunnels becomes a lot easier, if somewhat monotonous. Still, after a few twists and turns and a little backtracking you think you've found your way out: a long tunnel which leads gently upwards for a great distance before ending in a small, rectangular chamber with a glowing square set in the ceiling. Your eyes, used to the complete absence of light in the tunnels, easily make out the details of this room as though it was bright daylight - it's a brick cellar full of what looks like human skeletons which you immediately set to investigating. The glowing rectangle is a trap door at the top of a small staircase - the glow must mean it's daytime outside. That can wait - there's looting to be done. You turn your attention to the skeletons.

Judging by the thick layer of dust that coats everything they've been here for a long time and have little of value, but you do find a Regular Shortsword in reasonable condition. Add this to your Adventure Scroll if you like. Pausing only to mash the horrible little fairies against the trap door with the flat of your new blade (or your fist, if you didn't take it) you fling the door open and climb out into the blinding light. Turn to 739.

414

You're about to give up the sword for lost when the hand re-emerges from the lake - and not just the hand - it keeps rising and reveals itself to be attached to a beautiful woman clad in flowing robes who comes to be standing atop the water, glowing slightly. She brandishes Excalibur above her head - or a sword like Excalibur, since this one isn't slightly bent or chipped or pockmarked with rust. The lady speaks.

"I am the Woman of the Waterhole and you have returned my sword to me. Brave adventurer, your generosity has not gone unheeded - I sense that you are on an epic quest and have as much need of my assistance as the brave king who first took this sword from me many years ago".

Noticing that you're getting bored she hurries the presentation along a little.

"This sword of kings, rusted and neglected and ruined, was no longer fit to rid the world of evil. Hence it was named Excalibur. I have restored it to its factory condition - it is no longer an Excalibur but is once again Calibur, the sword of the once and future king".

She throws the sword towards you - you must catch it! Roll 2 dice and add the totals together - if the sum is equal to or less than your ÉLAN then you've caught it safely. If not, then you fumble the catch and receive a nasty slice - lose 5 EFFORT. Either way you eventually get the sword in your hand and hold it aloft, marvelling at its sharpness and lightness. Add Calibur to your Adventure Scroll.

Calibur is the sword of once and future kings and its destiny is now linked with yours. From now on you may choose to start the game with Calibur instead of one of your three item picks - make a note of this in ink on your Adventure Scroll.

The lady continues to speak of destiny and kings and queens but you find her language too flowery and dull and she won't let you get a pick up line in edgeways between her thees and thous. Bored, you rudely walk off while she's still talking.

Turn to 1632.

415

Before you can make whatever surely salient point you were planning on making, Biff flicks a cobblestone at you which catches you right between the eyes. The whole world explodes in flashes of brilliant white light before going dark.

You wake up some time after dark with a terrible headache. You touch your face - it's covered in dried blood but everything seems to be intact. Still, you're sporting a painful lump on your forehead. Lose 10 EFFORT. You sit up and take stock of the situation: you've been dragged into a ditch by the side of the road and robbed. Biff and the others are gone and you've been relieved of all of your cash and any loot you're carrying (remove these from your Adventure Scroll), though you still have your rations so long as you haven't eaten them yet. Food is the last thing on your mind right now though - you're nauseous from the concussion. The cart looks to have been torn to pieces as the elfs searched for valuables to take away. It's now nothing more than splinters of wood and iron scattered all over the road. You won't find anything of value in there.

You lurch to your feet and wobble violently as the stars wheel crazily overhead. You manage to begin staggering south onto the cobbled road towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 25.

416

You're either unwilling or unable to pay the fee, and you really want to get through, so that leaves you just one option - violence! You launch a risky attack on the guard in a bid to get through to the gate. Fettwanst seems to be used to his kind of behaviour and lumbers forward to tackle you with a huge grin on his ugly face:

🔪**FETTWANST: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 3**

If you defeat this obnoxiously dogged goaltender then you slide under one of his wild swings and find yourself with a clear run to the gate. The oaf, too slow and fat to keep up, has no choice but to let you go. You make good your escape, disappearing through the gate and away from Brunnenfeld into the mountain passes. Turn to 1698.

On the other hand, should you lose then turn to 733.

417

You ask what the deal with The K-NG is. Chlothar looks a bit taken aback, as if you should already know all this stuff (as you would, had you picked up the Bestiary, the indispensable guide to the land of Nonce and beyond, available in all good book stores right now). You explain the complicated religious beliefs of your hometown as best you understand them (which isn't much: like so many other facets of elfen life, their religion was always beyond you as a half human).

"Well", explains Chlothar as soon as you've finished rambling, "Instead of asking twigs and various clouds for favours we believe in The K-NG, the supreme maker and ruler of all things. To put it simply enough for a child to understand, we believe in one God, the High K-NG, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one king, the anointed of The K-NG, begotten of The K-NG - the ever-only-begotten; that is, of the essence of The K-NG, God of God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with The K-NG and yet separate, by whom all things were made in heaven and right here in Palaver; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was and is incarnate and was and is made man; who suffers on the throne - sometimes from gout or indigestion, sometimes from neck pain from the weight of the jewels in his crown, at other times from a knife between the shoulder blades or a poison-tipped dart or some other calumny, but in any case he suffers, and dies, and rises again and ascends into heaven and begets another king; and on earth he judges the quick and in heaven the dead, and also the holy essence is involved".

You nod.

"So, now you understand what we're all about, do you still want to hear the sermon or are you ready to skip right ahead to getting Redeemed?" says Chlothar, rather hopefully.

If you're interested in the sermon then turn to 703. If you want to be Redeemed despite the ominous capitalisation of the word then turn to 908. If none of this is for you and you just want to leave then turn to 487.

418

You stride into the brothel - a cheap-looking weatherboard dive marked only by a red lamp hanging over the entrance. Well, you came to Bilgeton for a happy ending, so...

If Nilde's with you then turn to 84. Otherwise turn to 1782 to proposition the attractive rock troll leaning up against the rear wall in the lobby.

419

One of the halberdiers approaches your hiding space and prods you out with his polearm. You squeal and leap out of the bush.

"You can't treat me this way!" you shout as you rub the sore spot where the business end of the halberd met your tender flesh, "I'm a noble of the realm!"

The guard looks sceptical but he calls one of his companions over.

"Adelard, look in the book and see if we have this guy".

Another armoured guard, probably the one who answers to Adelard, approaches bearing a heavy tome titled "The Almanac of Palavan and Surrounding Realms Sovereign and Noble Houses, Anno MCMLXXXIII". The guard cracks the covers open and leaves swiftly through the pages which are dog-eared and well-thumbed despite the recent publication of the book. You guess this kind of thing happens a lot. After a couple of nerve-wracking minutes Adelard stops searching and jabs his index finger into a page.

"Here he is - he's one of Brunnenfeld's Armigers. Definitely a noble - that's an etching of him right there".

The guard's look turns from one of cynical scepticism to servile deference.

"Please accept my apologies, my lord. We.. I did not recognise you. We have been placed on high alert - aside from the regular crooks and elfs there's now a bunch of shamblers on the loose, and news has reached us of some lunatic roaming the county ruining everything in his path. Not knowing your lordship's identity, we feared you were he".

Seizing the moment, you snort.

"How did you not recognise my noble bearing? Never mind, you were just doing your job. But the lunatic you seek is none other than one Jeff of Elfsdale Downs, and most certainly not I!"

Hopefully that'll throw them off the scent. In any case the guards present you with no further hassles and instead open the gates wide for you to enter. Puffing out your chest you stride into Bilgeton.

If you're accompanied by a skeleton caravan then turn to 717. Otherwise turn to 1364.

420

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR, HERMAN S. SKULL

Dear child or childish adult who is playing this gamebook: despite your choice of hobby your life is probably not so bad. Sure, you're stuck inside rolling dice at a book about an elf instead of being outside, possibly in the sun if you don't live in England, or having a happy marriage or working a lucrative second or third job. But that doesn't mean you need to give up the last desperate hopes of a normal, worthwhile life by turning to the paragraph bearing the drug number. Sure, you think, Herman S. Skull is some weird, deranged old coot. He's not with it. He's not down. And you're right! I'm not "with it". I'm not "down". But I know all the lingo! I know all the paragraphs you think it might be funny to turn to! And I know the "hippest" word of all : "no". Just say no to drugs! And when you're feeling down, instead of turning to a paragraph about drugs or maybe your "pusher", consider turning to paragraph 1 of the greatest choose your own adventure story of all: The Sword of the Bastard Elf. And if you get bored of that try turning to paragraph 1 of your own life I guess.

421

You scatter the corpses of the nobold second shift in front of the tavern. Since you've depopulated about a third of the town in a spectacularly violent fashion, there aren't too many of the little nobolds left who have the stones to battle you. They lock themselves in their little holes in the hillside and wait for you to go away.

If you want to go away then turn to 591. If this rampage has only just begun then turn to 1450.

422

You start hollering up a storm, yelling about thieves and calamity! The guard, startled by your outburst, swings around and jogs towards you, stopping only when he's close enough to whisper to you. He does so through gritted teeth:

"What the hell do you think you're doing, idiot? Keep your nose out of this, you're going to ruin everything..."

It's too late though - your hollering has roused the camp. Several more guards in various states of dress, but all wielding their weapons steadily enough, come running from where they've been sleeping. A very sleepy-looking Count and suspiciously awake Countess emerge from their tent.

"What's this all about?" yawns the Count. You start to relay your story about a thief in the tent and the countess begins to look very uncomfortable. Suddenly the guard grabs you hard by the collar and shouts over you:

"My lord, I caught this scoundrel sneaking around your royal tent and raised the alarm. He's clearly no noble but rather a common thief!"

The count looks disappointed, "Oh, how horrid. To think I shared a carriage with him. I won't sully my hands further: the Bilgeton magistrate can have him. Take him away", he continues. Amelie smirks at you unpleasantly and the pair return to their tent as you are dragged away by the guards. Before you can really work out what they hells just happened you're treated to a comprehensive kicking, clapped in irons and stripped of all your possessions. You're hurled bodily into the back of an iron-barred prison wagon which has been parked up nearby.

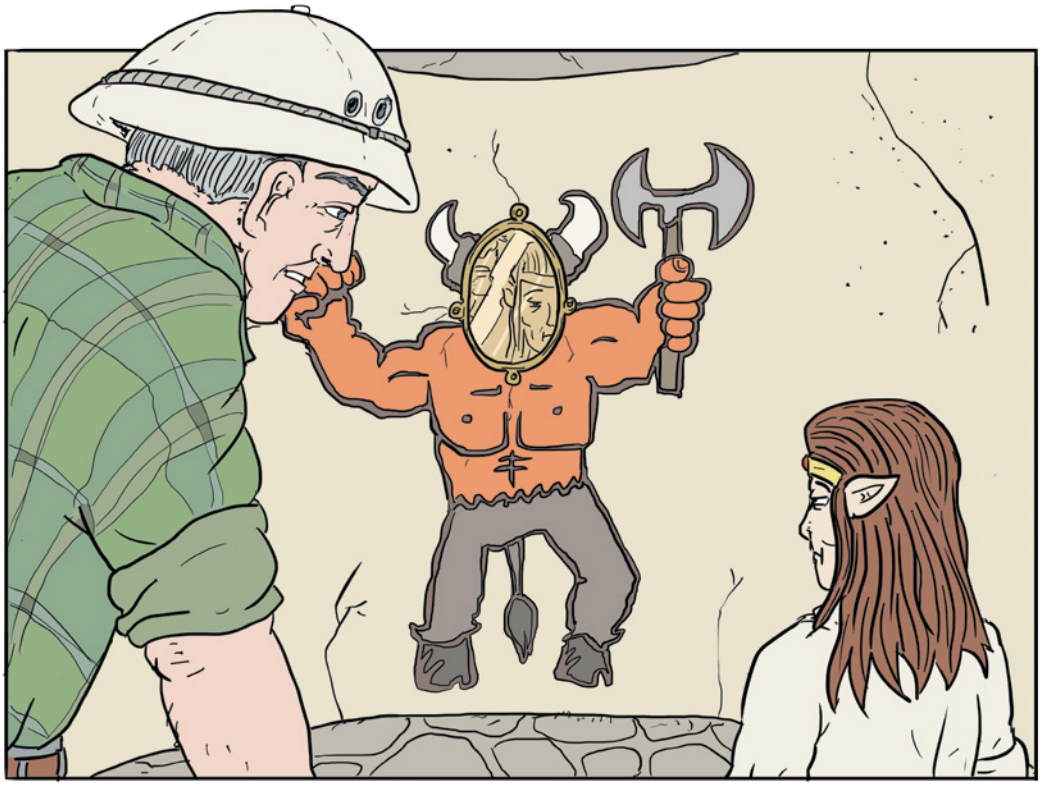
Turn to 227.

423

You attempt to leave.

If you're wearing any of the Dapper Garb, the Magnificent Outfit, the Imposing Attire, the Resplendent Regalia, the Foppish Hat or Debaucherous Hat, or if you've got the Noble Steed, or if you have the Heirloom Sword equipped then turn to 1679. Otherwise Sigbot and his men grumble about your rudeness but can see by your outfit that you're hardly worth their time. Turn to 897 to keep trudging towards Bilgeton.

424



You tense up for the fight of your life and stride around the corner, where you are annoyed to come face to face with - instead of a dread guardian of the labyrinth or a treasure chest or even a door- a dead end with a minotaur crudely painted on it. Even more annoyingly, it has an oval piece of bronze for a face, polished until you can see your reflection in it.

“W końcu okazuje się, że jedynym potworem w sercu labiryntu jest człowiek”, gibbers the 10-Foot Pole sagely. You don’t understand a word but you’re pretty sure the heavy handedness of this tourist trap isn’t lost on him either.

While Karol investigates the mirror and the painting your reflect on your experiences. If you didn’t learn a damn thing, turn to 602. But if you’ve come to realise that the true meaning of the labyrinth is that, by persevering through life’s winding course, we find that we ourselves are the source of our fears - the self is the true monster at the heart of the labyrinth - then turn to 131.

425

The Spectre must stop for a slash eventually, and he does at a particularly scenic point high up in the range. While he’s off watering the side of some mountain you wriggle free and fall from the back of the horse, landing heavily on the trail with a painful thud. Luckily for you, sharp rocks are liberally scattered all over the mountain passes and you’re able to sever the ropes binding your wrists and quickly untie your ankles.

You quickly unsling your pack from the horse - the Spectre was going to turn it in as evidence - but the items you were equipped with are held separately, kept in the various saddlebags and saddles weighing down the great horse. For each of these items you wish to recover you must roll a dice. On a roll of 1 or 2 the Spectre has returned! Turn to 258. Note that if you had the Confessor’s Shovel then you must try to recover it first.

Once you’re done rummaging through the horse you leg it, hoping against hope the Spectre doesn’t see you leaving. You don’t stop running until you’re absolutely certain you’ve left any possible pursuit behind - your breakneck lunge across pass and ravine should be a pretty hard act to follow for a horse with a passenger. It’s only then that that you put your pack on properly, equip your gear and carry on, clambering further and further into the mountains. Remove any items you left with the Spectre’s horse and turn to 955.

426

You head south, leaving the devastated Glade of the Pixies behind. You find yourself trekking through the same swamp you passed through last night, though in the light of day the passage is far less treacherous even if it’s every bit as disgusting. Very soon the road to Bilgeton can be glimpsed through the trees - like most fay folk pixies prefer to build their dens near human infrastructure. There’s still a fair bit of marsh and thick woodland between you and it and you spend the rest of the early morning clawing your way through the thick foliage and muddy terrain. After a thoroughly exhausting slog you finally stumble out of the woods and back onto the cobbled Count’s Road to Bilgeton. Your filthy, bedraggled appearance and wild eyes belie the fact that you’ve only been on your quest for less than a day. Next time, you promise yourself, you’ll just take the road in the first place.

Turn to 1446.

427

Those skirmishers at the head of the raiding party are still taking pot-shots at the lead wagon. You resolve to put a stop to them. Since you're coming from an unexpected direction they don't turn their bows on you until you've crashed through the undergrowth mere yards from where they're standing. These elfs are more like the ones you knew from back home and they seem to have little stomach for a real fight - one of the elfs flees and is trampled by your mount before the others realise that they're not going to be able to run away from this one and reluctantly draw their clubs.

🔪**WEEDY ELF: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1**
🔪**SICKLY ELF: DIFFICULTY 4 - FISTS 1**

So long as you have any GUARDS left you don't need to treat this as a Multiple Hassle. If you lose a round then you lose 1 GUARD.

If you win you drive these elfs off - turn to 1754. Should you lose one of the elfs gets a lucky hit in and drags you down off your steed. As you're struggling to get up, reinforcements arrive, having pursued you from the rear wagons. Since you're on the ground already you decide that crawling on your belly and begging for mercy isn't such a stretch. Turn to 816.

428

The force holding this living skeleton together dissipates and the fiend collapses to the ground with a merry tinkling sound.

If you want, you can finally help yourself to this bony battler's possessions by turning to 1468. Otherwise if you'd rather not stick around after this hair-raising encounter then you can get the hells out of this churchyard - turn to 1236 to continue up the lane and put all this behind you. Or you can go investigate the church by turning to 738.

429

Casting a furtive look around to make sure you're not being observed, you slowly rise to your feet and creep over to the unattended corpses. Disappointingly there are only a couple of them: most of them seem to have gotten away during the fighting. You begin by relieving the fallen elfs of their coin pouches, though as usual you can't tell if you've picked up some currency or a ration. Roll a die: on 1-3 you gain an Elfen Ration, on 4-6 you gain 100 Leaves in currency.

If that's enough for you then you can scarper (turn to 1424), otherwise you decide to dig a bit deeper in case these guys have anything more useful on their persons. Do you have the Lore-wardening Key equipped? If so, turn to 436. If not, turn to 593.

430

Count Hugues "The Mark" of Bilgeton prides himself on his common touch and so is a notoriously soft target for Bilgeton's itinerant army of grifters, scam artists, beggars and thieves (hence the nickname, not derived from his indifferent mastery of archery as he assumes). Your plan of just going up to him and probably eventually attempting to rip him off therefore wasn't completely foolish. It's just that the execution lacks polish.

Armed, armoured and hauling a bizarre medley of barely identifiable, putrefying and dripping body parts and organs, you resemble less a friendly traveller of the road than you do a shambling nightmare. The Count, the Countess, their retinue and even their guards immediately turn and flee headlong into the woods upon sighting your terrifying visage.

With the camp evacuated you pretty much have the run of the place. Probably the guards, of which you counted at least half a dozen, will soon pull themselves together and come back to deal with you but in the meantime there's a lot of nice stuff lying around with no one protecting it. Your attention is particularly drawn to the royal tent where the Count and his wife feast and recline to recuperate from the exertions involved in vacationing on the road. Also nearby in the open sunlight is a delightful picnic laid out for the nobles, featuring a huge, exquisitely decorated and delicious-looking cake on some exquisite crockery. A royal coach is parked up near to the picnic and there are several horses ambling about nibbling on hay and oblivious to the weird behaviour of the humans.

If you respect the sovereign property of the ruling classes too much to sully it with your filthy peasant claws you can use the time to slink away: turn to 1695. If you respect the sovereign property of the ruling classes too much to leave any of it at the mercy of any old vagrant that could come along, you could investigate the royal tent: turn to 920. Finally if your concern for the safety of the Count's royal luncheon and vehicle is paramount then you could go look at that instead: turn to 1104.

431

You regain your composure and manage to find somewhere marginally less slippery and much less alive to put your feet.

After hours of extremely slow progress the sun begins to set, bathing the already dark forest in the colours of evening. The sound of the rushing river begins to be replaced by a cacophony of hooting, roaring and screeching as the no-doubt dangerous crepuscular woodland animals begin to rouse from their daytime slumbers all around you. Still, the riverbank is a far less dangerous way to cross the Schleimwald than any of the other paths you could have chosen: most of the wildlife prefer not to inhale the fumes of the river. Nestling against a matted clump of roots you get a relatively comfortable night's sleep though you awake with a headache and stinging eyes for some reason. Restore 10 EFFORT.

When morning comes you continue your slow trek, eventually emerging unscathed from the forest near a small human settlement which squats over the river. A road runs right through the centre of town where a stone bridge has been built to allow people to go from one side to the other without getting wet. Judging by a nearby watchtower it's probably a toll bridge. You have no idea how they'll react to visitors coming from any direction other than the road. Beyond the town, still hours of travelling away, you can see the great stone walls of Bilgeton shrouded in its haze of pollution.

After what's been a long journey outside you're dying for a bite to eat and somewhere non-slimy to sit down. If you'd like to risk approaching the human town then turn to 1726.

If you'd prefer to give it a wide berth and just head on to Bilgeton then turn to 1476.

432

The Goblin's Bugbear is a popular stop for traders lugging goods in and out of Brunnenfeld. Since the peasantry aren't allowed in, everyone here has coin to spend and they mostly spend it on getting hammered while the town's labourers load and unload the carts. To you it's like nothing you've ever seen - at least since the collapse of the makeshift drinking tower the elfs of Elfsdale Downs do nearly all their drinking outside under trees or in bushes, not in torchlit stone-walled establishments that sell both mead and ale from huge casks behind a bar. Maybe two dozen humans are here - most of them are drinking and yelling at each other at the tables dotting the room, though some of them are knocking the snot out of each other with their fists in the corner, a bartender is serving up drinks and a lady is weeping near the fireplace while everyone does their best to ignore her.

If you'd like to approach the bartender then turn to 1152. If you'd prefer to see what the woman's problem is then turn to 1703. If you'd like to get a slice of the fighting action then turn to 186.

433

They'll change their minds once they realise you're gone once and for all. You intend to walk out of sight then wait in some bushes for a while. Mom and even Jeff - that worthless homewrecker - will no doubt regret their decision and, overcome with worry, will come out looking for you. You'll make them wait, of course, before making your reappearance and you'll demand the master bedroom as your price to return and set their consciences at ease.

In the time it takes you to formulate this master plan you hear a thud as the tower door slams shut and the click of a latch. A quick glance over the shoulder ascertains that your parent and step-parent have already finished seeing you off and returned home, shutting the door firmly behind them.

Disappointed somehow, you turn back towards your hometown. You could attempt to return home immediately, as pathetic as that seems even to yourself (a past master in the art of being pathetic, if nothing else) - turn to 918. Otherwise you could kill some time while they reconsider by roaming around the old place - turn to 172.

434

Knowing a promising idea when you see one, you quickly leap down from the wagon and land clumsily, stumbling as you hit the ground before winding up face down in the dust. As the guard disappears into the undergrowth the elfs turn their attention to your miserable attempt to flee: by now you're up and stumbling across the clearing weeping openly about the unfairness of the universe and how Jeff made you this way. Reaching the forest verge unmolested you trip into the brambles and tear the seat of your pants as you struggle free. The elfs are laughing so uproariously at your pratfalls that they quite forget to press their attack and you manage to make good your escape. Turn to 785.

435

After a brief pause you give the door a couple more hammer blows. You think you hear something stirring inside but maybe it's just the hinges rattling.

Will you give the door three more hard blows (turn to 1577), rap three times quickly (turn to 409) or pound it hard eight more times (turn to 5)?

436

Using the cunningly-designed elfish tool you're able to easily sever the numerous unnecessary belts, straps and cinches on the nearest elf's outfit. It's an elf so it's not carrying much of worth, but you still find a couple of potentially useful items. Roll another die - on a roll of 1-3 you find a Cut Purse and some Extra Buckles on your corpse, otherwise on 4-6 you find a Medical Diploma and a Healthy Poultice. Add these items to your Adventure Scroll if you want to bring them along.

Having robbed one elf, you can move on to the next - turn to 593 - or if your greed is satiated you can instead sneak away to somewhere safer by turning to 1424.

437

Karol looks very uncomfortable.

"Freundschaftsbezeigungen oznacza "demonstrację przyjaźni". Myślę, że ten smok pożąda twojego tyłka", he whispers to you. The dragon laughs, letting out a little jet of flame that sets one of the pizza boxes on fire.

"Co z tym nie tak? Jesteś następny, jeśli chcesz!" he roars cheerfully. The Pole looks taken aback.

"Mówisz po polsku?" he asks, incredulously.

"Troszeczkę. Byłem w Polsce dawno temu. Ładne jedzenie i ludzie są bardzo piękne!" replies the dragon.

They begin gibbering at each other in Karol's weird tongue and soon seem lost in conversation. You could either rudely tell Karol to shut up and inform the dragon that you're all about that Freundschaftsbezeigungen - turn to 1562 - or you could take the opportunity to get some looting in while no one's paying any attention to you - turn to 78.

438

The chamber below the chasm is completely filled with these mounds of white stuff, some of which are taller than you are. You rummage around in the nearest one and in doing so accidentally get some of the substance in your mouth. It's sweet! You've found a huge cache of sugar. If you'd like you can stuff some into your pack - add the Sugar Sack to your Adventure Scroll.

Your rummaging comes to an end when you touch something hard and, on closer inspection, find it to be a human or elf-sized skull. Striking another spark again you can see several of them scattered around the room along with a healthy assortment of bones, all partially obscured by the sugar heaps. Could these be all that's left of the victims of the Malrog? But if so, why aren't the bones charred? Did something else bring them here?

These chilling thoughts put an end to your explorations in this chamber. Will you attempt to climb back up the way you came - turn to 1081 - or will you press on deeper into the tunnels, keeping a weather eye open for danger? If you proceed remove Enough Rope from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1272.

439

You're not a great fighter but all elfs have some natural slipperiness which thankfully you managed to at least partially inherit. As the Phalloknight thrusts out his phallic lance you deftly spring to the side in preparation for a sneaky attack on its rear.

Unhappily, Phalloknights are superb fighters. As soon as you tense your muscles for the dodge, he's predicted your next move. As you leap aside from the blow he releases his lance and draws his greatsword in a single smooth movement. Swinging the blade in a wide horizontal arc as he passes by, you are sliced neatly in two at the waistline.

440

The impact of the chamber pot staggers you and you slip on the puddle of ordure that now coats the front porch of what was your tower. You land heavily and strangely, several your bones emitting a loud snapping noise as you slam into the ground. Lose 1 ÉLAN and 5 EFFORT from the damage and chagrin.

When you eventually heave yourself to your feet you find the door firmly locked and no further entreaties will get anyone to appear. But at least you've scored a free chamber pot out of this debacle! Add the Chamber Pot to your Adventure Scroll.

With your will to return home broken you're faced with the same choice you faced when you set out - are you going to head out towards Bilgeton along the Count's Road (turn to 643) or, having had enough, are you going to calmly and rationally freak out and flee headlong into the woods (turn to 785)?

441

The Viscountess seems to have come down from the pixie and is having second thoughts about you despite your obvious bravery and charming suit.

"You know, you're not in the book. Now that I look at you I think I can do better" she says, coldly. "You know where the door is".

Well, when she's right she's right. You show yourself out the front door and back into the streets. Judging by the number of kicked in front doors you see as you make your way out of the Noble District it looks as though the town militia has been busy tonight. Isentrud's place is the only one of any size that you can see that was spared! Making sure that you avoid any patrols you cross the bridge back over the Bilge to the relative safety of the poorer part of town. Since you've got nothing else to do and nowhere to stay, you figure you might as well finish this quest off. You finally go in search of your father and that place to crash of his. Turn to 1793.

442

Thinking unusually fast you rub the poultice over your exposed skin before the manticore venom does any lasting damage. It costs you a Healthy Poultice (remove it from your Adventure Scroll) but saves you from an agonizing death.

After a short rest you resume looking around for loot, though you've learned your lesson about messing with things that have been pumped full of manticore venom. If you haven't already you go around the treasure room and pick out a few items that you can carry away with you. Add any or all of the following to your Adventure Scroll : treasures worth 20 Guilders (which you may add to the Cash section), a Full Harness of Steel Plate and a Palavan Army Knife.

With that accomplished and a lesson well learned, will you investigate the cave further - turn to 1683 - or will you get out with your arms full of loot while you're still alive? Turn to 1235.

443

The market, set up around the town's central well, services the goblin community and as such most has goblin-specific items for sale - suits of heavy goblin plate which the goblins seem to enjoy wearing at all times for some reason, bowls of grubs (considered a delicacy here), various smelting agents and catalysts and so on. Not much of this crap is of interest to you but you poke around the stalls disconsolately in case there's something worth anything to you here.

You can buy a Pot of Grubs, a Peach or a Potion for a steep Guilder each, a Healthy Poultice for an outrageous 2 Guilders or an exceedingly ill-fitting Full Harness of Goblin Plate for 10 Guilders. Haggling will get you nowhere with these shrewd merchants: if you're willing to pay these prices then make whatever adjustments are required to your Adventure Scroll.

Whether you're sick of being ripped off by goblin traders or your coin purse is now empty your business in the markets is now complete. In the process of poking around the goblins' stuff you found out that a trade caravan is about to set out for Bilgeton - if you'd like to get aboard that then turn to 734. If you're wary of the strings that will definitely be attached to that offer you decide to walk. You head back through the Mazyrinth the way you came. Turn to 1277.

444

Before you can stop it the cursed implement rings out a full litany of your crimes, misdemeanours and naughtier thoughts, sparing no detail no matter how incriminating, trivial or embarrassing.

The guard shakes his head.

"Why did you even bother bringing that thing in here? Luckily for you, cursed tools can't testify in court but they can be used to reject a residency scroll application". With that he stamps the piece of vellum he was writing on with a big red "REJECTED" mark.

"Out you get, you're not wanted here" says the guard, pointing back out the door. It seems your quest to find a place to crash has come to a crashing end.

If you know where you're not wanted,especially after being explicitly told that by a guard, then turn to 493. If you're not going to give up so close to the end then turn to 698.

445

"Is... is this a robbery?" asks Emilie unsteadily. You reassure her that it isn't, but she should empty the till anyway. She looks a bit unhappy as she hands over a sack of change from the register. You double check the till and it looks like that's all she had in there - business must be awful. Still, it should get you a thing or two from the market at least.

Add the Pouch Full of Shrapnel to your Adventure Scroll. Bidding the scared-looking young lady farewell, you stride back out into the market square.

Turn to 1475.

446

You snooze for a while until you're awakened by a sharp pain in your wrists and a feeling like you're being dragged across the ground. Groggily opening your eyes you see that you've been taken prisoner - you've been tied by your wrists at the back of the line of caravan guards who are all similarly tied. The taurcents are roaming up and down the queue whipping the prisoners to get them to move, and as they trudge you're being pulled along with them. You stumble to your feet just before a taurcent reaches you and narrowly avoid tasting his whip across your back.

Your miserable conga line of captives trudges west for days over the dusty plains before reaching your destination - a large collection of filthy, barn-sized yurts where even more of the horrible taurcents are gathered. Among them are some humans bedecked in rich silks, some yellow-skinned "high elfs" (you hate those guys, always putting on airs) and various greasy representatives of the less-reputable peoples living in this part of the world. This is the taurcents' village, a mobile town that the nomadic manhorses bring with them wherever they go. Since the horrid beings are slavers it also functions as a door-to-door slave market and business is apparently booming. You and your compatriots are dragged up on a raised platform in the middle of the village where the well-to-do foreigners you spotted gather round to bid on the latest haul.

Half the guards are snapped up instantly, leaving you and the rest of the weedier specimens unsold. No one seems particularly interested in bidding on any of you dregs. You begin to feel small and worthless. Was Jeff right about you all along? Does no one in this world want you?

If you'd like to prove that Jeff is wrong about you, you can puff yourself up to present a more buyer-friendly image: turn to 1140. If you'd prefer to just go on slumping then turn to 1357.

447

You ask Karol what he makes of all this. He rubs his chin thoughtfully for a second.

"Myślę, że zapomina o coś. Tych, którzy mówią: 'był kiedyś czas kiedy go nie było' lub 'zanim się narodził nie był' lub 'stał się z niczego' lub pochodzi z innej hipostazy, lub z innej substancji (niż The K-NG), lub, że Król jest zmienny i przeobrażalny, tych wszystkich Kościół wyłącza".

You somehow doubt that this information would be useful to you even if you could understand a word the lanky man says. The churchman, looks at you expectantly.

"So, what'll it be? Sermon first or skip right to the Redeeming?"

If you'd like to listen to the sermon then turn to 703. If you'd like to get Redeemed then turn to 908. If all this noise is enough for you already you can rudely turn around and walk out of here by turning to 487.

448

You bravely throw yourself off the back of the moving wagon rather than risk getting mixed up with whatever this problem is. You land awkwardly, tumbling a couple of times. To the extent the caravan guards notice your departure they reasonably assume you just fell off while trying to do something stupid. In any case they've got bigger fish to fry than recovering a runaway half elf of questionable martial value, so you take advantage of their distraction to crawl into the tree line and conceal yourself under a bush until all the fighting's over.

You must have managed to fall asleep in the shrubbery because the next thing you know the sun's gone, replaced with a nearly full moon in an otherwise dark sky. You make your way back to the road as stealthily as you can in case the fight's still going on, but it must have wrapped up while you were snoozing. You guess the taurcents prevailed because as you fruitlessly scour the battle site for anything good to pocket you notice tracks from the wagons gouging their way across the plains to the west. Well, not your problem now. Your problem, you reflect, is that you're stuck walking to Bilgeton unless you can snag another ride. You begin the long trudge towards Bilgeton, following the road as it curves around the outside of the forest. Several hours pass as you wander down the road at night, reflecting on your miserable circumstances.

Turn to 1715.

449

You stride in through the front door. A skeleton receptionist sitting behind a desk chitters at you questioningly. You ask him or her to go get Aggie's agent for you. This must have been the information that the skeleton was looking for because it gets up and disappears, returning a minute later with the agent, a short, bald man dressed in a brown robe. His pallid skin, sunken eyes, creepy thin blue lips and his sweet staff with a skull on the end of it marks him as a necromancer. The skeleton receptionist points you out and he approaches briskly, wheezing unhealthily as he walks your way.

"Yes? What is it? I'm a busy man", he says unpleasantly by way of introduction.

Did you fail Aggie's mission? If so turn to 1503. If you let someone else take the credit and want to let this guy know who he should be thanking (and paying) then turn to 1093. If you've somehow gotten to this page without having anything to do with Aggie's mission you can stutter an apology and show yourself out again - turn to 244 to return to the market.

450

Predictably, you decide to cheat. You pull the sack of rancid pixie parts from your inventory and hurl them hard onto the stage. All this time in your backpack hasn't lessened their potency and pretty much everyone on stage and in the mosh pit gets a big, deep whiff of the psychedelic pixie gas from these decaying chunks of the bog-dwelling crooks. You don't escape taking in a lungful.

You've effectively imbibed a potion - Lose 1 ÉLAN and roll on the Potion Effects table, deducting 1 from the roll owing to the advanced state of decay of the pixie bits. Resolve the outcome immediately before reading on.

If survived, Seed Drille and the audience are also suffering from the effects of the pixie. Those who haven't already escape and aren't dead or screaming as they battle with some psychic abomination crawling up their legs are standing around in a complete daze. You seize this opportunity to announce that Queynte has won the Battle of the Bards and, since no one is in any state to contradict you, it is so! You collect your trophy and scarper before anyone else can realise what's happened.

Now to turn this stunning victory into cold hard cash. Turn to 1061.

451

Maybe if you heroically rid the city of this menacing rukh the guards will have to let you in! You spring into action: standing up tall, you're immediately blown over by the hurricane-force gusts from the beating of the rukh's wings. You rise again but have to throw yourself to the ground and take cover once more as the guards atop the walls loose a volley of crossbow bolts at the bird. Most of the projectiles ricochet off its ridiculously thick plumage and rain down over the whole area. Several bolts landing perilously close to your head. This is not a safe place to be.

While you're cowering in the face of certain death you notice that the rukh has managed to free four of the birds of burden from their harnesses. Instead of fleeing from the rukh they're crowding around its legs. Could they be baby rukhs? (Again, if you read the Bestiary you'd know

that they are). Perhaps if you could release the harnesses for the mama rukh it would take its enormous chicks and go away, and then you'd be hailed as a hero and probably given cash prizes. Buoyed on by the thought of these useful rewards you rise one more time and rush to the nearest mostly intact wagon. The rukh is currently occupied with screeching at the halberdiers who have come out in formation to menace it, but that won't last long. You'll need to work fast!

UNHITCHING HEROICS: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you succeed then turn to 809. If you fail then you're too slow - the guards are driven back in panic while you're still fumbling with the harnesses. The rukh notices you are messing around entirely too close to its young and cranes its head down, snapping you up in its beak and gulping you down in a single precise movement. Your short adventure ends as an unsatisfying snack for the world's biggest bird.

452

You continue through the woods and, after an interminable slog uphill, you start to notice the ground getting rockier and scrabblier and the trees thinning out. You finally emerge from the forest and find yourself halfway up a long and winding mountain trail. The silvery moonlight overhead lights the way but even you aren't stupid enough to expose yourself to the dangers of night-time mountaineering, and plus you're exhausted and monumentally lazy. However your options here aren't all that pleasant - your only choice of bedding up in this unforgiving mountain range is the loose gravel in the middle of the pass or the firmer but sharp shale nearer to the rockface.

If you'd like to bed down in the comparably soft gravel then turn to 1076. If you'd prefer to sleep on something that won't slide away down the mountain pass if you roll over during your regular bouts of night terrors then turn to 1764.

453

You strike off in the direction of the town. It's an easy, pleasant stroll through the woods as the sunlight filters gently through the leafy canopy, and soon you emerge from the forest, following a stream along as it meanders east through an open plain in front of the walled human town.

The front gates are open and you watch as a couple of carts trundle up a dirt track leading south from the town before rolling inside through the palisade gate. You've never seen carts arriving at Elfsdale Downs in anything close to one piece so you wander over to the road and hassle a passing driver about it.

"It's market day", the driver says suspiciously, as if this obscure human custom was common knowledge. Seeing that you're still dumbfounded he assumes that you're touched in the head and urges his horse on. It trots along, pulling the driver and wagon in through the town gates.

If only there was some human who you could rely on who might know something about all this! In the absence of such an authority on human affairs, you can attempt to walk through the open gate by turning to 1217. Alternatively, if you don't trust these humans or their "market", you can turn away from the town and stride out vaguely southwards across the fields by turning to 372.

454

While you ponder the mysteries of the labyrinth, Karol takes a more direct approach. Using a small pick he starts tapping away at the wall around the minotaur painting. Although he was originally trying to remove the bronze plate he soon notices something more exciting.

"Ta ściana jest pusta!" he yells. Shaken from your reverie you come over to see what the hells he wants. Although you don't understand him you notice that the wall makes a hollow sound when he strikes it with the hammer. Karol retrieves a bigger pick from his pack and gets to work, slamming through the wall and creating a narrow entrance to another room beyond the wall. Following Karol in as the huge Pole squeezes through the gap you find yourself in a perfectly tubular tunnel made of densely packed earth, exactly eight feet in diameter. The air is thick and musty as though it has been here undisturbed for a very long time. It is far from certain that this tunnel was dug by human hands. You're not sure you'd want to meet the being responsible for this!

Karol is eager to press on but you're not so sure. If you want to do what the Pole says then you head on deeper into these tunnels - turn to 65. Otherwise you overrule his wishes and, to his evident disappointment, order him back through the labyrinth. Turn to 602.

455

As you've spent most of your life in or near your room, you don't have much time for horses, but even to you this one somehow seems a bit off. You round the corner and continue east towards Bilgeton, not daring to look behind you in case the thing is following you. Apparently you're of no more interest to the horse than it is to you and you manage to leave the creepy animal behind.

Turn to 1715.

456

You start to head south but are interrupted by the concerning sound of flapping wings coming right your way. The light cast off from the fire you set in the forest behind you has attracted the attention of a Giant Moon Moth. Although they're not usually active in the evening, these horse-sized forest critters are almost romantically drawn to bright lights such as those cast by serious arson and the sudden appearance of your silhouette between it and the object of its desire drives it into a mix of panic and rage. It flies at you, trying to batter you into submission:

🔪**GIANT MOON MOTH: DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you reduce its TOUGHNESS to 1 then it will also lose a FIST as the fight begins to go out of this normally gentle creature.

If you win turn to 926. If you can't defeat this forest fiend or can't bring yourself to hurt such a majestic monster then turn to 248.

457

You've got a long way to go and you're going to need a snack for the road. This bird has been domesticated so it isn't particularly frightened of you. You're able to get close enough to attack:

🔪**BABY RUKH: DIFFICULTY 11**

If you overcome the huge gentle animal then turn to 497. If your heart's not really in it or you're not able to win then turn to 1078.

458

You step in through the saloon doors of the "Deadset Doovalacky" in search of answers or at least some aelfwine. Since it's the main social hub of the town it's a large structure, roughly the size of a human's barn and littered with tables and chairs in a chaotic arrangement. It's mostly empty right now: most of the nobolds are at work. A few off-duty miners in their filthy working frills sit gathered around a small table, slamming down their tinnies of Westerned Draught as they shout at one another excitedly. You briefly wonder what activity they're engaged in that's got them so agitated but then you realise you don't really care about anything that would interest a lizard. You approach the bar instead. On the other side of the bar another nobold is cleaning a tankard with one of the ridiculously huge frills protruding from the sleeves of his doublet. He sees you coming and grins, an unpleasant expression indeed on a lizard man.

"G'day mate. What can I do ya for? Tinny of West Enderer?"

Avoiding the question of the drink you ask about what's to do around town, and how to get out of here.

"We're always flat out like a lizard drinking round here, mate. We got hard yakka and hitting the piss, and if that's not enough for ya, ya can always take a punt".

None of that made a lot of sense but you doubt yakka, piss or punts are really your bag. Noticing the expression of disgust that your face has screwed itself up into, the bartender adds another activity.

"Or if none of that pleases yer lordship ya can rack off".

You shrug. Time to make a choice, you guess.

If you want to have a go at the yakka then turn to 538. If you want to try the piss then turn to 975. If you want to try punting then turn to 1118. If you want to ask about a room turn to 87. If you want to rack off then turn to 677.

459

Hurensohn seems disappointed as he puts the mushroom back in his pouch.

"Bilgeton's a long way off and I'm not making the trip with some uptight guy", he says. "Sorry friend, it's not worth the hassle. Now git, I got work to do".

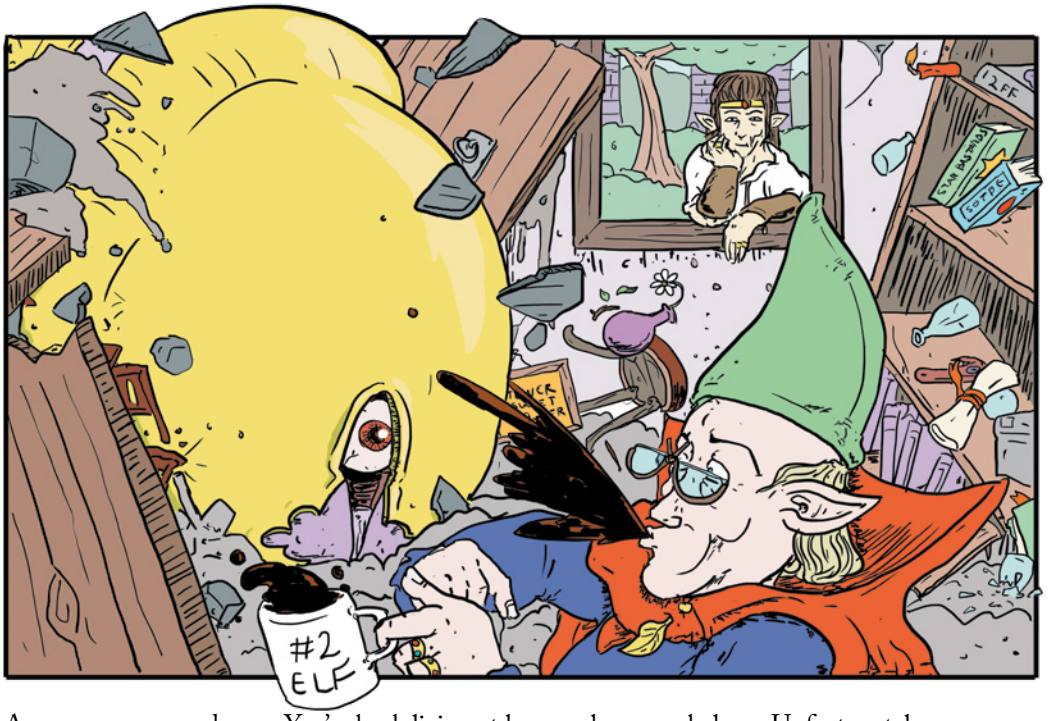
Well, you blew it. No amount of begging, bribing or whining convinces the farmer to change his mind and he carries on loading the mushrooms onto his cart, ignoring your entreaties. If you decide to move on without causing any more of a scene then turn to 268. If you really, really wanted that lift then turn to 388.

460

The Phalloknight roars his defiance as you edge closer and swings his greatsword back and forth, cutting arcs through the sky but nothing else. The effort of five or six swings along with severe blood loss takes most of the fight out of him and he reluctantly lowers his blade. Raising your hands to show you mean no further harm, you are able to approach without being hacked at.

The Phalloknight, now bested and severely injured, is utterly at your dubious mercy, which you don't usually extend to anyone but yourself. You make an exception this time - a Phalloknight would be a great thing to have in your pocket.

Days pass as you nurse your charge back to health. You bind his wounds, gather his food and re-attach his armour to the best of your ability. In return, the Phalloknight swears his sword to your service. This is when you tell him about Jeff. Very shortly afterwards, Jeff receives a visit from the Sword of the Bastard Elf.



A season comes and goes. You're back living at home where you belong. Unfortunately your new friend has taken Jeff's place at the head of the household, and he expects you to do your chores. While the rest of the village groans under his iron-phallused rule, you spend your days ensconced in the smithy forging and repairing the armour and weapons your new not-dad uses in his regular rampages. You are no longer the village bastard - now everyone knows you as the village cocksmith. But hey - the world needs cocksmiths too. You never do find your real father and your new not-dad can be kind of a dick, but he's not as bad as that asshole Jeff and you've got your home back. All in all, not a bad outcome from a day's worth of adventuring.

461

You have a pretty wretched hand but the Count seems to literally have no idea of how to play. He somehow has a "Rules for Playing Stud Poker" card high so your pair of tens does the trick. The Count feigns disappointment and idly throws a purse containing the 20 Guilders he now owes you onto the rug. You go to collect this princely sum - a skilled Bilgeton worker wouldn't see that much in three months of hard toil, and you're neither skilled nor a hard worker - but the Count puts out his hand to stop you.

"How about double or nothing?" he says. "I know, let's make it really interesting. I'll throw in my sword - it's worth at least twenty Guilders, and one of my finest steeds". He's already unbuckling his sword belt, and the weapon within looks exquisite - a true nobleman's sword. Though it's not as insanely baroque as an elfen blade it looks like it's designed not to shatter on every third swing, and the workmanship is beyond compare. But you wonder - is this guy a shark? No one bets that much on a hand of cards and insists on playing on unless they're running a con.

If you refuse and take your winnings, turn to 697. To play another hand turn to 1505.

462

You're too tired to deal with any more today. There's no way you're going to walk through that swamp in the dark and you figure if the pixies come back looking for another piece of you then you'll be able to handle them. If anyone else stumbles across this crime scene you'll claim it's self-defence. It's a bunch of dead pixies: no one will care.

Consoled with such thoughts you find a relatively dry bit of ground and get some shuteye. You only get a few hours rest though - while the pixies are way too terrified of the carnage you've wrought to come back for a second serve, other creatures are very, very interested in a course of slumbering half elf. You are jolted awake just before dawn by a wet, heavy weight on your foot followed by a horrible stinging pain. Your eyes flick open and behold the terrible peril you're in: you are being digested alive by a COLOSSAL FOREST SNAIL!

🔪**COLOSSAL FOREST SNAIL: DIFFICULTY 10 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Until you win your first round of combat and can extract your foot from this thing's maw you suffer -2 ÉLAN.

If you overcome the snail turn to 1621. If you're unable to defeat this creeping horror then turn to 1521.

463

Oh what a terrible sight! One hell of a fight!

Sidney is defeated but the bar is left in ruins from the wild brawl. The bartender, rediscovering his courage now that Sid's out of the way, loudly demands you pay for the damage to his establishment and the lost proceeds from the boxing tournament that the pair of you ruined - 50 Guilders! You can hear the boots of a guard patrol approaching from outside, drawn by the sounds of destruction.

Not wanting to pay the outrageous fee you leg it, sliding under the grasping arms of the rock troll bouncer (who's finally sober enough to do make a pretence of doing his job) and back out into the streets. The guards spot you and give chase, but you're able to lose them - and yourself - in the dockside back alleys. Once you're sure you're safe you stop and ponder your next move.

Turn to 827.

464

The trolls are surprised to see you crawling back over the edge of the plateau, but instead of the expected hostility you're met with a rousing cheer from circle of statues (or at least the ones that are still standing: several of them seem to have met nearly the same fate as you and are lying on their sides and groaning).

"He returns!" shouts Kaspars, "And here we were thinking you were just another lightweight meat creature. You've got the heart and liver of a rock troll under all that flesh!"

Your heart and liver feel like they've taken a severe pounding but you put on what you hope is a brave face.

"We'll shout you another round if you're up for it", Kaspars continues. Your brave face turns green.

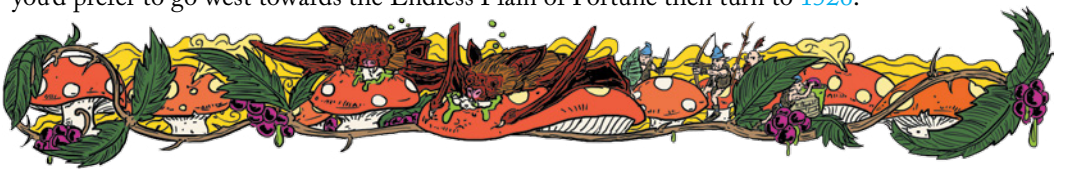
If you'd like, at this juncture, to completely flip out, turn to 574 to start screaming epithets and waving your puny fists at these monstrous rock creatures. If you're on a mission from Witold and want to complete it while you're still capable of walking then turn to 1248. If you're down for another drink then turn to 1760.

465

You unfold the map. Although it's mostly concerned with the Feewald (the forest that contains your hometown) and its immediate surrounds it clearly shows that the road south leads to Bilgeton and to the west it leads out to an uncharted expanse called The Endless Plain of Fortune. Judging by this map not only are they uncharted, they're very dangerous. But then again danger is your middle name or at least it might be if you could remember it.

Interestingly the map has some markings which you recognise from your pitiful attempts to comprehend the elfish arts at the schools back home. Just to the south of here on the road is an area marked as a good site for the rites of whimsyflickery. Since you've never been initiated into the mysteries of that elfish tradition you have no idea what they get up to, though now is probably as good a time as any to learn.

Armed with this knowledge if you'd like to head south towards Bilgeton then turn to 209. If you'd prefer to go west towards the Endless Plain of Fortune then turn to 1526.



466

Radabastard gives you a weird look.

"Well, which one. man?" he inquires.

If you'd like to reply that you are looking for a high score then turn to 601.
If you want to let him know that you enjoy digging in the scenery then turn to 1437.

467

You're in no mood to chance whatever's deeper in the catacomb so you sneak out the way you came. The few guards that are loitering around near the main entrance aren't exactly the sharpest tools in the shed and you have no difficulty slinking past them and up the stairs out of the barrow.

You leave the graveyard without incident but you're not so lucky with the shamblers infesting the dirt path back to the main road. They spot you coming in the wan moonlight and a trio lurch out of the dead trees lining the weed-choked thoroughfare, moaning in hunger for your living flesh. You must battle your way through. Treat this as a Multiple Hassle:

🔪**BITEY SHAMBLER: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**GRABBY SHAMBLER: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**DECREPIT SHAMBLER: DIFFICULTY 7**

Shamblers might be slow but they can easily back a panicking opponent into a corner - each time you lose a round against any of these three lose 1 ÉLAN for the remainder of this page (for instance if you lose to all three you lose 3 ÉLAN).

If you're defeated or you split then roll two dice and add them together- if the total's lower than your current ÉLAN (including losses incurred in the fight) then turn to 1576. If it's equal or higher then turn to 1047. If you win then you bust your way through and resume making your way to the main road to Bilgeton. At last the path rejoins the paved Count's Road and you turn east, ready to resume the long hike towards the big smoke. Turn to 1802.

468

You wisely decide to go back to her place. There's a line of taxi coaches waiting for passengers outside - you pick one, jump aboard and off you go!

The Viscountess lives in an only moderately huge but very well-appointed townhouse nearby in the Noble District, close enough to the ball that there was no real reason to take a coach (but who are you to question the customs of rich folk?). The ride is surprisingly short in any case and you hop out of the cab, rush in through the front gates, across the garden, into the marble-floored lobby, up the wide, curved staircase and into the master bedroom. The lady flings you onto her huge bed and gets to work undoing the various straps and laces that holds your regalia together. Realising that you're pretty much nothing under the outfit you stop her with some difficulty and get to work on her straps and such.

It takes some doing but just as you've finally figured out how to loosen her girdle you hear a loud hammering at the door downstairs. Although you haven't had much dealing with the police, it sounds exactly like the way a cop knocks on the door.

"This is the Bilgeton militia!" a cop-like voice calls from outside. "Is anyone in there?"

Isentrud freezes in panic.

"Damn it, where's the doorman? I snorted some pixie dust at the ball. There's no way I can deal with the militia right now. Can you go out there and talk to them?" she asks, her eyes wide in terror. Shouldn't this place be crawling with hired help? Something's very wrong here.

Nonetheless it's time for you to rise to the occasion. You tell her you'll deal with the guards and stride out to answer the front door.

DEALING WITH THE POLICE: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then turn to 1692. Should you fail turn to 123.

469

You slip the horrible skull in through the window and for once it comes in handy. It skitters and screeches up a storm - in fact, it makes it quite impossible for the guard to play the gripping adventure game in which he was absorbed, involving as it does the need to manage an adventurer, a co-pilot and a spaceship, each with their own statistics and inventory. Carefully placing his copy of Star Bastards down on the table in the guardhouse he abandons his post, flinging the guardhouse door open and fleeing right past you and down the street, the screaming skull skittering after him on its awful little spider legs and snapping at the hapless security guard's ankles.

The skull has found a new master, and you'll miss it. Almost. Wipe a tear from your eye and remove the Screaming Skull on Spider Legs from your inventory at last (it will not return to plague you on subsequent adventures unless you pick up a new one) but add Star Bastards to your Adventure Scroll.

If you have the Signet Ring then turn to 1777. If you do not then turn to 789.

470

You back out and manage to step on a rubber club which must have fallen on the floor. It rolls away underfoot and you topple heavily to the ground. Cursing, you rise to your feet again. If you like you can take the Rubber Club with you as you get up.

With that done you exit the cave, not wanting to spend even another minute here. Soon you're back outside in the fresh air of the frozen tundra you just spent all day crossing. You decide to head off to the south towards Bilgeton.

Were you sent here on a mission from the Goblin King? If so turn to 114. If you came here of your own free will then turn to 889.

471

The crypt under the barrow consists of a wide hallway with stone walls and a stone floor. Some lanterns hang by chains from the ceiling, emitting more smoke than light. It's a stereotypical dungeon.

You wander down the hallway slowly, letting your eyes adjust to the darkness. The hall is lined with heavy oak doors, but any thoughts of looting are lost as you can hear the moans of the shambling dead, the tinkle of skeletons and the sounds of jaws crunching on bones coming from behind each one. One door in particular has a strong green light glowing from beneath it, and although it fills you with dread it also draws you nearer.

As you approach the heavy wooden door you see a note pinned to it - "Come on in", with a little love heart where the dot of the "i" should be. You hear the sloshing of water beyond and a door creaking open somewhere inside the room. Despite the apparently friendly note you are overcome with terror when you consider entering, though you can't tell if the origins of the terror are supernatural or just your normal everyday cowardice.

If you'd like to follow the note's suggestion and enter the room then turn to 675.
If you'd rather not get involved in whatever's going on here then you make your way further into the crypt in search of loot and adventure - turn to 805.

472

You want nothing to do with whatever crime has happened here - what if whoever destroyed this wagon is still lurking around? It's a big, scary world that Jeff's thrown you into, after all.

You pointedly avert your gaze and stride past, making a big deal of minding your own business. Soon the dirt section of the road ends and is replaced once more with cobblestones. You pick up the pace and soon leave this giant mess well behind you, making good time in the general direction of Bilgeton.

Turn to 614.

473

You roar (or rather, squeal) your defiance and attack the dragon. As it doesn't expect you to do that it rears back in surprise and its soft underbelly is temporarily exposed.

Well, "soft". The relatively flimsy scales protecting the dragon's vitals are several times thicker than steel plate. You'd better have a hells of a weapon if this is going to work...

If you have a missile weapon of some kind then turn to 559. If you've got a halberd then turn to 1472. If you've got the magical sword Excalibur turn to 1299, and turn to 1484 if you have Calibur. If you're packing a Manticore's Tail then turn to 1211. In a pinch you could also try throwing a potion or some Pixie Bits - turn to 260 to try this. If you're attacking with a weapon other than one of the items listed above or with no weapon at all then turn to 1813.

474

The bartender recommends the Feewald Susswasser Hand-Reaped Hop-Goblin Bugbear Best-In-House Ale. You can't be bothered saying any of those words individually, let alone in combination, so you order the mead. Evidently repulsed by how murderously unhip you are about specialty brews he pours a horn full of fermented honey from the keg and slides it over to you.

"Enjoy", he says in a tone which conveys the exact opposite sentiment. Despite this, you do enjoy it - a lot! The only alcohol Elfs drink is something called aelfwine, a bubbly, watery froth which had no effect on you. This stuff, however, instantly gets you buzzed. You gulp the whole horn of mead down and order another.

An hour and half a dozen horns later you're drunk to the point where you can't see straight. You've fallen off your stool, ripped a hunting trophy off the wall while steadying yourself against it and mistaken a barrel of the Feewald Susswasser Hand-Reaped Hop-Goblin Bugbear Best-In-House Ale for the privy. In short, you've had too much (Subtract 1 ÉLAN until tomorrow morning from the drunkenness) and you've run up a fearsome tab.

"That'll be a Guilder." says the bartender.

If you've got at least one Guilder then you can pay up - turn to 758. If you're a bit short on human currency or don't want to pay then turn to 781.

475

Summoning precisely the amount of courage it takes to kick someone into an oven while they're not looking at you, you do that. The witch screams as she plummets into the stone furnace and catches fire. Her black robes, being made of cheap, flammable material and probably soaked with alchemical reagents, instantly burst into flames and as she writhes in agony she knocks a potion off a nearby shelf. It hits the ground, spraying a foul-smelling liquid everywhere.

The kids are screaming to be let out - if you'd like to unlatch the cages and make a getaway then turn to 1465. Otherwise you can take some time to loot this place first - turn to 1341.

476

You hand three Guilders to the bouncer. He looks down at the three tiny coins sitting in his open palm. You ask him if your ID checks out. The bouncer responds by closing his palm, clenching his hand into a fist.

"No idea what you're talking about, mate. Now piss off before it gets ugly". He steps aside to allow a very well-dressed couple in, bowing obsequiously as they pass through the door, before moving back into place to resolutely block your entry.

Remove the 3 Guilders from your Adventure Scroll. You're not getting in this way - not without a fight! If you're done taking guff from this intensely threatening doorman then turn to 1186. Otherwise you can wander over to a tavern which might conceivably tolerate you by turning to 1497, or else you can give up on your plans of getting day drunk and move on with your life by turning to 827.

477

You can't wriggle free of this scarecrow's iron grip - weird, because you would have thought a scarecrow's grip would be easy to break, being merely a straw grip. Maybe this scarecrow is really a tin man?

As you're puzzling this out one of the scarecrow's demonic accomplices walks up behinds you, wrenches your arms behind your back and claps you in irons.

"You have the right to...well, you don't have any rights. So never mind" the demon says. Suddenly the mushroom wears off and you understand the gravity of your situation. You find yourself being frogmarched into the back of a prison wagon - a carriage fitted with sturdy iron bars, used to transport captives and slaves from place to place. The guards attach the vehicle to a team of horses and whip them onwards. You watch the depressingly normal-looking town of Bilgeford - for that is where this bizarre, psychotic episode in fact took place - roll on by through the bars in the cart as the prison wagon picks up speed along the road. At least you held onto the pouch - it turns out that it contained 5 Guilders, which you can keep (at least temporarily). Add the cash to your Adventure Scroll) and turn to 227.

478

You're not desperate enough to start taking advice from a skeleton, especially one cosplaying as a half elf. You set off to the north in the direction of the Alp.

The skeleton can't believe you'd listen to his advice and just dismiss it out of hand. It leaps to its feet, chitters menacingly and draws its ridiculous floppy sword.

"You're just like Jeff! He doesn't listen to me either! Nobody listens to me!" it chitters.

You could swear the thing is sobbing though it doesn't have tear ducts, but before you can make fun of it the skeleton lunges at you with the point of the sword. You must fight!

🔪**ENRAGED SKELETON: DIFFICULTY * - FISTS ****
*This skeleton has the same DIFFICULTY as you have ÉLAN and the same number of FISTS as you.

If you defeat the skeleton then turn to 290. If you lose then turn to 1477.

479

The nobolds seem to have a sixth sense when it comes to people messing with their refreshments. Although they're scattered throughout the tunnel and engaged in some seriously noisy chipping away at the rock face, Stevo hears you removing some of the VB tinnies from the esky so you can carry it. No sooner has the first armful of metal tins touched the cavern floor than the lizard man shouts,

"Fair go, mate! Oi, Bruce! Sheila! Boys! The bitzer is flogging our coldies! I'm as mad as a cut snake I am!"

With that the rest of the nobolds stop what they're doing and advance on you, taking turns to swing at you with their unwieldy mining tools:

🔪**STEVO - DIFFICULTY 10**
🔪**BRUCE - DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1**
🔪**SHEILA - DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**BAZZA - DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1**
🔪**BLUEY - DIFFICULTY 8- TOUGHNESS 2**

The clumsy pick axes they're trying to use to clobber you with are a bit heavy for them to swing properly with their spindly forearms. They will therefore only attack you one at a time.
If you win, turn to 772. If you lose then turn to 899.

480

Giving up on a life of exploration and adventure you turn back and trudge along the road in the direction of Bilgeton. The wagons slow down a bit to go over the dirt track once the cobblestone section ends but the bird-pulled vehicles are still way faster than you. They vanish out of site as the road curves around the outside of the forest and you are left choking on their dust.

Although it seemed to take a long time to get all this way out into the plains going back is a lot faster now that you're accustomed to walking a little further than the distance between your room and the kitchen. You return past where you entered this road and continue south, following the dirty path again along the forest until it kinks around a copse of trees. What you see on the other side shocks you: one of the wagons from Hulagu's caravan is lying on its side, motionless in the middle of the road. The sides of the vehicle have been dashed in with cobblestones and the side has been daubed with the cruel words "BASTARD SUCKS" in what you hope is brown paint. As hard as it is for you to believe this is clearly the work of your fellow elfs, since they're the only people who know you well enough to realise that you do indeed suck.

If you'd like to approach and search the wreckage for loot then turn to 596. If you'd rather not risk hanging around this grim scene then turn to 472.

481

The rogue looks the closest, and least likely to chop you in half immediately. He's an elf in a flowing green hooded cloak, wearing more buckles than you ever thought possible and dressed in perfectly-fitted and clearly very expensive leather armour. He's retreated into a house where he keeps the goblins at bay, darting out of the door, slicing away with his short blade and ducking back in before his heavily-armoured opponents can move to defend themselves. Fortunately for you, he's preoccupied with the goblins and doesn't notice you climbing into a window behind him, but just as you're about to crack him over the head he spins around and gives you a nasty slash across the hand (lose 5 EFFORT from this injury).

If you're not put out of action by this blow you must fight:

🔪**LEGLESS THE ROGUE: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2**

If you defeat the thief then turn to 202. If you can't win against this adversary then turn to 182.

482

The road turns back into a dirt track as the caravan returns you the way you so painstakingly travelled only minutes ago. It's a bit bumpy and space inside the carriage is tight what with it being occupied by a caravan hand and heavily laden with chests full of trade goods and all, but it's still definitely way less effort than doing any walking yourself. You're grateful for an easy ride all the way to Bilgeton.

Maybe a quarter of an hour passes before you're standing on a sideboard of the wagon, haranguing the driver about road conditions and the lack of space in your compartment. You don't think he speaks standard Humanese so you repeat everything your litany of complaints, just slower and louder. You think the driver might have it in for you somehow because as the road turns to follow the verge of the forest the driver jerks the reins hard, causing the birds to squawk, flutter and decelerate rapidly. The sudden deceleration almost throws you clear of the sideboard: you only just manage to cling on.

As you're dangling off the side you think you might have seen something odd out there in the woods along the road.

Roll 2 dice and add the results together - if the total is lower than your ÉLAN then turn to 1056. If it's equal or higher then turn to 1626.

483

"Jest to dzień targowy", the lanky Pole says unhelpfully. At least he doesn't seem all that concerned.

If you'd like to check out this dzień targowy then you walk in through the gates: turn to 1217. If you'd prefer to give whatever that is a wide berth you instead head away from the city to the south: turn to 372.

484

You chivalrously offer to help, depending on how much she's offering to pay.

"You'll help?", she squeals, "Oh thank you, thank you, thank you. They're called Harman and Giselle. I'll be ruined if you can't find them. Please...tell them Eilika is looking for them... or better still, bring them home to me. I'll make it worth your while..."

Is she hitting on you? Just in case she is you decide to set out in search of the lost little ones immediately. Leaving the bar, you bid farewell to Brunnenfeld and stride out through the main gates, ready to scour the countryside for little Haman and Giselle.

Turn to 372.

485

Having failed to solve Brunnenfeld's problems you sit down glumly next to Kaspars, who in contrast is annoyingly flush with his victory. He hands you another bottle of trollbräu to help you drown your sorrows and treats you to a hearty slap on the back which was no doubt intended to cheer you up but succeeds only in rattling most of your teeth loose.

You're already pretty hammered - another drink will probably make you extremely sick - or worse. Even so if you'd like to drink your worries and cares away then turn to 1760.

As you know from perusing the Bestiary, refusal often offends rock troll, and offending a rock troll can be fatal. Instead of getting hammered you could really stretch that drink out - turn to 1595. On the other hand if you're not feeling all that tactful you could just hit the road : turn to 1421.

486

You decide to go through with it. Realising that you're reluctant to give the coin back, the demon sighs with a sound like a shattering plate glass window.

"Think me so petty? Very well, mortal - you flip and I'll call it in the air".

Left with no other option you flip the coin. Unbeknownst to you, the demon can perceive everything that is reflected in any one of its million facets and is a pretty dab hand at guessing the outcome of coin tosses, having spent countless boring ages flipping this exact coin in its empty throne room back in the Hell of Introspection. As the spinning coin is reflected in its visage it makes a few quick mental calculations.

"Tails", calls the demon. Seconds later the coin thuds into the marshy ground, torturey devil side up. Before you can open your mouth to contest the outcome or whine or demand best out of three, the demon stabs you through the heart with a glass dagger which emerges from one of its jagged hands. True to its word it captures your soul and drag you to the Daemonic Planes where you will spend all eternity suffering at the glassy hands of your new liege. Your adventure ends here.

487

The priest seems a bit miffed when you turn around and make a bee-line for the door.

"Wait, my bro. You're clearly not from around here and you came all this way to visit my church. Why not stay a little longer for the sermon and maybe get Redeemed?"

You reply quite rudely to this suggestion, insinuating that his and probably all religion is made up guff for idiots and serves primarily to extend human hegemony over the social practices of other species and to formalise obedience and the transfer of money from the people to the priestly class and the aristocracy. You also kick over a candle stand on the way to the door.

The priest is suitably offended and mutters a furious psalm under his breath. Suddenly you feel as though someone or something is staring at you from afar with a gaze as bright as the Sun.

You've angered The K-NG! From now on whenever you roll a 6 on any of your FIST dice it will cost you 1 EFFORT (two sixes will cost 2 EFFORT and so on). Make a note of this while you're slamming the church doors shut behind you and spitting on the porch. With your unsuccessful visit to the church concluded, you continue up the road. Turn to 1236.

488

With few other options available to you, you take a deep breath and a long run up and leap into the filthy, polluted Bilge. Although its seeing-eye flies are half-blinded by the stinging fumes the monster has come too far to simply let you get away, so it lumbers in after you with a huge splash. You swim as though your life depends on it for the downstream gates on the other side of the river docks. Although these would ordinarily be guarded by the soldiers of the adjacent barracks you hope that they'll be more on the lookout for your shambolic friend than they are for you. This turns out to be the case - you are able to swim out of the city while the demon is pelted with crossbow bolts from the garrison. Unhappily, these hardly slow it down and it pursues you out of the city unhindered. You swim as best you can and allow the current to bear you along as the monster thrashes along steadily in your wake.

This is the last anyone ever hears of you - none know whether the demon caught up with you or if you somehow escaped into one of the other counties downstream or if the demon pursues you still, but all remember you as a minor hero who bravely sacrificed his own life to save Bilgeton. Well, not all. The mayor of Bilgeton unveils a small plaque dedicated to you on some out of the way side-street, which stands for several months until some enterprising scumbag takes it down to sell for scrap.

Your adventure ends here.

489

You ponder the hobbling dwarf's words as you scrutinise the wall in front of you - perhaps you have been taking too much for granite? The wall looks solid enough, and yet there's something a bit... off about it. You knock on it and it emits a hollow sound - it's another hidden door, just painted up and covered in a bit of slime to make it look like the rest of the maze! You give it a good kick and it swings open, leading into the next section of the Mazyrinth.

Just as you're about to step through the breach a little head pokes out of the wall next to the doorway you've discovered. It belongs to some tiny caterpillar thing which gives you a shock by addressing you:

"Allo! Now before you ask, I don't know anything about the Mazyrinth. Just a caterpillar y'know. Why don't you come inside, meet the missus?"

If you'd like to go inside, whatever the critter means by that, then turn to 1215. If you're in a hurry you can refuse by turning to 1775.

490

You describe your encounter with and your subsequent stunning victory over the demon. The guard looks less than completely impressed with your tale of cunning and heroism.

“It seems to me”, he says, “that you solved a problem that you yourself caused”.

It looks like your demon hunting exploits aren’t going to get you into Bilgeton! You’re going to have to either pony up the 20 Guilders, assuming you have the cash - turn to 808 - or admit that you’ve got nothing- turn to 201.

491

You flick the card across the table to Karol, who picks it up and smiles.

“Ten stary pies. Byłem w tym miejscu wcześniej, ale to nie jest dom, to grób. Wiem, że nie jest martwy. Prawdopodobnie to jedno z jego oszustw: założę się, że próbuje uniknąć wszystkich swoich drani”, he explains. “Gdybym był tobą, poszłabym pod adres i poczekam na Wandering Q. Milkman. Bądź cierpliwy. Z pewnością pojawi się, jeśli zostaniesz wystarczająco długo”.

With that he circles the location that the card mentions on your tourist map. You guess he was trying to tell you something about your father at least. Since you now have a clue as to your father’s whereabouts in hand you’re about to get up but Karol stops you.

“Nie sądzę, że będzie chciał cię zobaczyć. Dlaczego nie zostaniemy tutaj i się zalany w pestkę?” he asks, making a tipping motion with his empty flagon. You can never tell what the hells he wants but he doesn’t seem to be in a hurry to go anywhere.

If you want to go straight after your father (and skip a bit of end game content!) turn to 226. If you’d rather stick around then you could go hit on some of those dwarf ladies - turn to 1751 , get up on stage and tell a joke - turn to 1052 - or just keep pounding the liquor by turning to 692.

492

You brush the pixie aside and stumble through the streets to the inn. Since you’re hallucinating fairly wildly you’re not all that steady on your feet and you manage to trip over and fall into a couple of the small houses along the way. This doesn’t endear you to the population of the Glade and before you can reach the inn you find yourself under attack by a mass of enraged townspixies who attack you with whatever weapons come to hand:

🔪**FURIOUS PIXIES : DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**ANGRY PIXIES : DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
Treat this as a Multiple Hassle.

If you defeat the pixies turn to 1305. If you’re overwhelmed then turn to 366.

493

Utterly defeated, you turn away from the walls of Bilgeton and trudge away into the wilderness. From this day forth you will roam the earth endlessly and pointlessly, a hollow shell of half a man. No stories are told of where you roam and your grave will be unmarked. Though there are many grey and miserable days that you must yet endure, your adventure ends here.

494

You must have them! You approach the orbs and they spread out around you, surrounding you in a cold, slimy, burning embrace. Only as you feel the skin on the front of your body sizzle do you realise what you've done - you've made out with a Colossal Forest Snail.

These godawful, horse-sized creatures usually slowly hunt for carrion around swamps but every so often someone imbibes a little too much potion and stumbles right into one, with horrible effect. The burning kiss of the snail is actually the beginning of its dinner routine - it has coated you with a corrosive slime which will aid in its digestion. This at least brings you back to reality and you stumble backwards and away from the monstrosity before it can roll over you, but not before it's taken several layers of skin off the entirety of the front of your entire body and reduced your clothes to rags. Lose 1 ÉLAN due to the agonising injury, make a note that you're naked and remove any clothing or armour items from your Adventure Scroll. You come away with a generous dollop of Snail Slime which you can add to your Adventure Scroll if you like.

The searing pain motivating you to get the hells out of this swamp, you make your way as quickly as possible through the woods towards the road. Turn to 1331.

495

The Synod's a huge stone church with a domed roof which is visible even from outside the walls of Bilgeton. This great shrine is dedicated to the worship of The K-NG, the human god whose name is never spelled out completely to avoid confusion with the temporal king. Even so, since "K-NG" and "king" are pronounced the same no one really knows what's going on, and there's a lot of tension between the church and state as each do their best to capitalise on the ambiguity about who's in charge. None of this is your problem however so you stride in through the enormous church doors into the nave of the Synod.

You are almost blinded by all the gold coating nearly every surface on the inside of the Synod - it seems that business is booming for The K-NG! Intricate tapestries depicting the deeds of the human god - mostly making people with crowns knuckle down under His tyranny - line the length walls of the church. The air is thick with incense smoke and the smell of baptismal whisky. While the place is by no means packed each of the many rows of pews bears at least a couple of people, here to attend to their spiritual needs no doubt but also performing the unwelcome secondary role of witnesses: you doubt you'll get away with pinching anything from this place.

Up ahead of you is the altar, bathed in a stream of light shining down from the tower in the centre of the church. Behind the altar, bent almost double under the weight of the improbably huge heap of robes and gold chains is the Synod's resident holy man. He adjusts his enormous ceremonial crown and tries to stand up straight as he sees you coming.

"I'm Bishop Bedüdelt", he says by way of introduction, giving you an unsteady look as he leans heavily on the altar. Is he drunk? "How can I be of service, my brother?"

If you're here with Nilde then turn at once to 1383. Otherwise, were you sent here on a holy pilgrimage from Chlothar of Brunnenfeld? If so turn to 942 to conclude that side quest. If you've been cursed, plagued or bit by a shambler and want a cure then turn to 662. If none of those things apply then turn to 683.

496

You puff out your chest and boast about your grasswatching skills in extremely broad strokes, somehow impressing the elfs without actually saying anything about the profession. You're welcomed into the lorewardening expedition with a clink of delicate elfen drinking glasses and a sip of watery aelfwine. Since you failed to grasp any aspect of elfish culture in your 60 years in Elfsdale Downs you have no idea what any of this involves, but you hang around until last drinks are called at which point you join pretty much everyone in the village in setting off on their long, ambling stroll off to the south-west.

The walk takes a couple of days since the elfs don't seem to be in any real hurry to get anywhere. Although you can't really stomach their rations, endure their conversation or comprehend their jokes (you could never tell if elfish humour was incredibly subtle or just plain not funny) the easy pace of the group is far less taxing on you than your voyages so far, and no creature would dare to attack so many people even if they're only elfs. Restore your EFFORT to its maximum level. If you're suffering from the side effects of booze or potions remove these now.

Relatively early one morning you're all strolling through some thick woods when you encounter another group of elfs led by a huge half elf in shining brass armour. The rest of these elfs are far rougher and tougher than anyone from Elfsdale Downs and even the Aelfsburg lorewardens seem to be in awe of them. The armoured half elf speaks, and as he does you can't help but think there's something familiar about him.

"Well met, Aelfsburg! Glad you could make it : you're just in time. The Warlock has gone back on the deal and is shipping their undead to Bilgeton without paying our cut, so we'll take everything instead. We'll split it all fair and even with you like normal". All the elfs murmur their assent and the half elf continues:

"A caravan is leaving the Warlock's tower soon, just over there", he says, pointing to the pointed roof of a tower you can just see poking out above the trees perhaps a half-mile distant, "We need a volunteer to bring the wagons to a halt and then we'll rob them blind".

If you'd like to step forward then turn to 1415. If volunteering isn't your speed then turn to 96.

497

You slay the bird and hack off a delicious Giant Drumstick for later consumption. Add this item to your Adventure Scroll. Unable to cart away much more bird than this you leave the rest of the carcass to rot next to the road and head south along the paved highway towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 614.

498

Using the power of the ring, you suggest to the huge marsupial that it drop off. Even though it's a big, mean and dangerous animal it's still just a beast and is as susceptible to the ring's power as any other critter. Accordingly it lets go of the bough and, having nothing beneath it to drop on to, bounces off the springy, swampy ground and lands heavily in a bush. The Greater Drop Bear bellows in rage and thrashes around, trying to right itself in preparation for climbing back up the tree to tear you apart. Just then you realise that the bush it's landed in is no ordinary bush - it's some kind of hellish carnivorous plant (a Bloodthorn, for those of you who haven't studied their Bestiary). The terrifying bush wraps the marsupial in a net of thorny vines and tears the bellowing animal asunder with alarming speed.

Since you're not going to fight that bush for whatever loot a drop bear might carry, you lie back on the branch and get as comfortable as possible. Soon you're sleeping the kind of sleep that only comes to someone who has just seen the carnivore that was about to eat them get eaten itself. Restore 20 EFFORT.

You wake sometime in the morning and climb down the tree, making sure to steer clear of the carnivorous bush. Now that you can see where you're going the journey through the woods is a bit easier and in just a few hours you emerge from the forest out onto a half-paved, half-dirt highway. The great city of Bilgeton, its walls looming large, lies just a few miles down the road to the south east. You strike out towards the end of your quest!

Turn to 1732.

499

Although you find the band utterly obnoxious, Herman (who somehow got past the bouncer as well) is utterly taken by them.

"We have so much to learn from the dwarfen songsmiths. That courante - exquisite! So much heart and soul! I simply must jam with these artists and learn their techniques!" he says. An annoying sequence of events follows - Herman introduces himself at length, clambers up onto the band's platform, opens his instrument case and assembles his cornamuse. After a lengthy session of tuning the horrid little instrument you're forced to endure him tootling along with the band for what seems like hours of atonal agony. Lose 5 EFFORT.

You're just about to leave this annoying elf to his fate when at last Herman declares himself satisfied, packs up and comes down to speak with you.

"Have you ever heard anything so grave and majestic, and at the same time so heartfelt, so longing and so gratifying? Such a serious rhythm, and yet one that you can...nay, must, dance to?" he gushes.

You tell him you have and also to shut up but so starstruck is he that he barely notices your words. While this is all very annoying he's learning a lot by listening to this band: should you be called on to play in a musical battle with Herman at your side you may add 1 further ÉLAN thanks to his newfound inspiration.

Finally done with this place you drag the elf out through the exit. Turn to 827.

500

Taking a dwarf ear in each hand and twisting sharply you pull the two troublemakers along behind you, kicking and screaming all the way back to Brunnenfeld. You haul them back in through the gates without further incident and shove them through the doors of The Goblin's Bugbear where Eilika is still sobbing. She wipes away her tears and thanks you profusely for your help. The dwarfs look utterly miserable, but after their exertions are in no shape to wriggle free of your grip so just pout sullenly.

"Thank you so much for bringing little ones back! My star performers here haven't earned me so much as a groat in weeks, but just as I finally got a show lined up for them in the Goblin Kingdom they disappeared on me".

This elicits a groan from the dwarfs so you give their ears another twist and smarmily ask her how she intends to make this worth your while.

"Oh! I just remembered... I had to dismiss the guards I'd hired to escort us to Gobholme - I couldn't afford to pay them to stand around while I waited for these two to come home", she says, expertly evading your advances. "You're so good with Harman and Giselle... perhaps could you escort us through the mountains instead? I could pay you... on the way. With interest", she adds sultrily. At this, Harman and Giselle roll their eyes to which you respond by nearly twisting their ears off.

If you're prepared to put up with a hike through the mountains to collect on your ... payment, then turn to 1337. If you're not going that way then you demand to be paid now : turn to 1342.

501

You go for a stroll along Church Lane. This is where most of the well-to-do people of Brunnenfeld live. The houses are packed closely together as seems to be the human style, but these are particularly large and well-maintained dwellings. You guess that if you couldn't live in a draughty, unpainted stone tower in the middle of a gods-forsaken forest (and you can't, because of Jeff's tyranny - even though he's not your real dad he still pushes you around!) then you could probably make yourself comfortable in one of these places. Well, you could, if the response to your walking past any of these dwellings wasn't the sound of bolts being dragged across doors and window panes slamming shut. Compared to the market square it's very quiet here and the few passers-by you encounter give you an extremely wide berth, crossing the street to avoid the possibility of having to talk to you.

About halfway up the lane you come to the main feature attraction: a large stone church with a tall, pointed spire topped with some human religious symbol. Out the front is a small notice board identifying it as the "Three Boulders Redemptist Church". The religious building is surrounded by a small plot which is mostly filled with small steles carved with the same symbol plus names and dates of death. This must be where the humans bury their dead.

If you'd like to investigate the church then turn to 140. If you're more interested in furthering your academic understanding of the fascinating death rituals of the humans in this part of the world then you might want to visit the churchyard instead - turn to 45. If the whole idea of religion fails to interest you then you can bypass the church altogether and carry on up to the top of the town: turn to 1236.

502

You call the barman over and tell him you're done getting blotto. He responds by asking you to settle your tab.

If you have at least one Guilder and want to pay up then turn to 105. If you have no Guilders at all (regrettably this human won't accept non-human currency or trade items) then turn to 1688 to try to explain your way out of this mess. If you want to do a runner then turn to 32.

If on second thought you'd rather just keep drinking and worry about this "tab" business later then turn to 1230 to order another round, and another, and probably another after that.

503

The Malrog sighs, a sound a bit like a waterfall of lava. Embers fly everywhere.

"THAT TIRED AND SIMPLISTIC CONCEPTION, REPEATED VERBATIM ACROSS THE KINGDOMS LIKE CLOCKWORK, IS WHAT I AM ATTEMPTING TO OVERCOME WITH MY WORK. IT IS CLEAR THAT YOUR DOGMATIC ADHERENCE TO THE THEORY OF ROYAL PREROGATIVE IS NOT ACCESSIBLE TO REASON, THEREFORE I WILL BEAT YOU TO DEATH FOR WASTING MY TIME."

Welp, you're screwed.

Turn to 242.

504

You raise the Sword of the Bastard Elf to strike Jeff down!

🔪**JEFF: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1**

If you win turn to 1615. If you're defeated or just can't do it then turn to 1045.

505

A few more twists and turns and you find the mountains are steadily becoming less vertiginous. Your tough mountain hike becomes more like a steady downhill stroll. The roads widen and become well-developed highways and the infrequent river fords become well-built bridges complete with barriers to stop you plummeting to your death. You start to see signposts indicating that Gobholme is just a few miles ahead, and you even see groups of goblins making their way to and from their mines which seem to be just about everywhere in this part of the mountains. None of them seem to particularly want to talk to a trail-worn traveller and you don't really want to be hassled a bunch of semi-magical mountain sprites either. You let them be.

Finally you're more or less clear of the mountains - rounding one last bend you see the way ahead of you becomes hilly with a wide river winding its way through the foothills of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains. And just one bridge crossing away is Gobholme - the famous Goblin Town at the heart of the Mazyrinth. True to its legend it's a tall castle, surrounded by a town, surrounded by a massive maze which is in turn surrounded by a huge stone wall. Only the goblins possess the mix of industriousness, paranoia and magic required to build such a thing.

Since you're in the neighbourhood you could stop by - turn to 204 to visit Gobholme. If you're in a hurry or would prefer not to encounter large numbers of goblins for whatever reason you can press on - turn to 1379 to continue through the foothills towards Bilgeton.

506

Nilde has been steadily losing patience with you. First you drag her to a bar instead of heading straight to the Synod to solemnise your marriage, and now this! She slaps a couple of copper coins on the bar to cover the bill and then grips you horribly painfully by the ear, much to the amusement of the hen party and the patrons. Furious, she drags you squealing and screaming out through the door with the mirthful laughter of the whole Dribbling Wand ringing in your ears!

Lose 5 EFFORT from the chagrin. Once you're back outside she releases you and demands that you take her at once to the Synod!

If you do as she asks you head for the huge building further along the river to the west- turn to 495. If you'd prefer to give this demanding lady the slip then turn to 100.

507

You're in luck - beneath the trapdoor is a ladder leading a long way down to an underground stream: "Shit Creek" as a sign on a rickety little pier informs you. This must be where the town's drinking water comes from. A little punt is tied to the pier where it bobs up and down on the fast-running waters. You notice that it bears the painted inscription "Drop Kick", probably an attempt at humour on the nobolds' part.

As you're considering whether it's worth risking your life riding a lizard-made boat into the impenetrable darkness of an underground stream you hear a huge boom - the fire has spread to the tavern's prodigious alcohol stocks and the roof has caved in, burying the trap-door. You are showered with chunks of wood, stone and embers. Smoke begins pouring in from above.

Since it's no longer safe to hang around here, you leap aboard the punt, unhook it from the pier and cast off into the darkness of Shit Creek.

Turn to 153.

508

You run from the cave as the dragon roars and screams after you.

"YES! RUN! RUN ALL THE WAY BACK TO THAT STUPID MILKMAN! RUN ALL THE WAY TO BILGETON! SEE IF I CARE!"

You make your way out the exit as fast as possible. In the background you can hear the dragon mumbling sadly to itself once again: "See if I care..."

Putting the sound of the sobbing dragon behind you, you run from the lonesome Alp and across the frozen plains in the general direction of Bilgeton, far away to the south. Turn to 889.

509

You pick through the bones warily, watching for any signs of the thing coming back to life or perhaps a deathly curse or something along those lines. Nothing bad happens but you don't find any cash, treasure or anything worth a damn either. After digging for a while the only thing of interest you see is a jawbone with a cute little skull logo debossed on it, but even by your standards that's a worthless piece of garbage and you decide to leave it where you found it. While this perhaps might join a couple of minor dots together in future playthroughs for now this is all useless information. You decide to give up on this bone heap and trek on further into the mountains.

Turn to 521.

510

The shovel is as wonderful a weapon as it is a hole digger, and with one particularly good swing you manage to cleave the skeleton from scapula to sacrum with the heavy iron head. You're rewarded with a puff of bone dust and the panicked chittering of teeth as the skeleton collapses to the ground. There's a moment of worry as the fiend tries to reassemble, but you've dealt it so much damage that it's impossible - the bones just kind of pathetically rattle around on the ground.

If you'd like to get the hells out of here while the getting's good then turn to 1236 to run out of the churchyard and up the lane. On the other hand that skeleton seems to have some pretty neat stuff on it - the ring and its pouch seem particularly profitable. If you'd like to fleece your fallen opponent first then you find 2 Bilgeton Guilders, the SWU Card and the Class Ring on what you could euphemistically call its body: add these to your Adventure Scroll if you like and turn to 1619.

511

Rouge-Gorge looks doubtful but there's something about you that tells him that you're speaking the truth. Probably the fact that you're covered in soot and ashes and smell like a roast. You decide to ham it up a bit and exaggerate your exploits, and in the end the fop swallows a rambling and implausible lie which culminates in you besting the witch in single combat and your tearing out her heart and eating it.

"Well! Quite the monster slayer! It seems you've done our job for us!", blurts Rouge-Gorge. The men murmur unpleasantly at the lost possibility of divvying up the witch's stuff. They probably assume you're carrying all of it, based on the flinty looks you're getting.

"Never mind lads, never mind", says the flamboyant leader, addressing his ruffians, "Plenty more monsters in the realm. There's a lich nearby, probably not much more dangerous than the witch. We'll destroy him and plunder his lair until our packs heave with gold. And you, my young friend", he says, talking to you once again, "Will get a double share, as we will have use of your expert consultancy. Come along now!"

Turn to 356.

512

You start belligerently yelling about how sore your feet are, how much of a dump you bet Bilgeton is and about how ugly and boring your fellow queuers are. Your nasally, whiny voice and obnoxious commentary is incredibly annoying to the human ear and made doubly so by the heat of the sun beating down, so you raise more than a few hackles.

How many title belts do you hold? If none then turn to 1791. If one or two then turn to 1041. If three then turn to 216.

513

"Who? Me?" you bleat stupidly, "I was just...uh...admiring the landscape. Sorry",

You sidle aside and the caravan rolls past, the drivers and guards eyeing you suspiciously as the wagons drive on by. Soon you're alone on the road once more.

If you'd like to double back and follow the road in the direction of Bilgeton then turn to 480. If you'd like to press on then turn to 939.

514

You somehow lose to the worst gambler in the kingdom. The guards can't believe their eyes. You're about to pay up, either with cash or by attempting to pawn your possessions, when the guard who dragged you over interjects.

"Excuse me my liege, but it's uh, a Aulde Git tradition for their nobility not to carry coin on their persons. We will escort the Marquis back to his caravan where one of his servants will hand us the money he owes your highness".

The count accedes to this scheme and the guards escort you from his presence, gently at first but quite roughly as you move into the tree line and out of sight. They surround you up on the road and become quite aggressive.

"What the hells was that?" snarls the guard who first spoke to you. "How did you lose to The Mark? You've got to be kidding me. Well, we're getting paid either way. Hand over our 10 Guilders!"

If you have 10 Guilders then you can part with them. Remove them from your Adventure Scroll. Otherwise they start shaking you down - they take all the Guilders you have (assuming you have any) and the Feewald Map if you have it in your possession. If you have nothing at all they want - no Guilder and no map - they give you a beating instead. Lose 5 EFFORT.

Make any necessary adjustments on your Adventure Scroll. With this humiliating and unprofitable encounter completed, there's nothing for you to do but continue trudging towards Bilgeton - turn to 1445.

515

While you'd like to run, even you can't trample an innocent elf and leave her for dead. Cursing your clumsy half-human trotters you lean down to see if she's ok. Suddenly she lurches back into life, sitting bolt upright and punching you hard right on the nose with a single smooth motion. Lose 5 EFFORT from the pain and shock. The trauma to your nose causes your eyes to flood with tears, making it difficult to see. As you stumble back and try to straighten up she nimbly leaps to her feet and she reaches behind her back to draw a mean-looking (if over-embellished) elf dagger.

🔪**BRENDA THE ELF: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Fight with -1 ÉLAN for the duration of this battle thanks to your smarting schnozz.

If you succeed in putting her back down then turn to 1402.
If you're too shocked, sorry or scared to fight back then turn to 1697 to throw in the towel.

516

You've got too much on your plate right now, and while wiping out a bunch of relatively defenceless brownies is one thing, taking on anything called a Big Rock Goblin is probably out of your pay scale. You let the knight and the butler know that you're not having any of it.

You've never been kicked out of a place so fast in your life. One second you're in front of the mansion and the next you're on the other side of the firmly-closed estate gates.

With your welcome thoroughly worn out, will you head out through the nearby northern gates at the end of this lane (turn to 963) or will you double back and head out through the southern gates (turn to 338)?

517

Needless to say, the beast is stunned. Stroking his beard and snorting pathetically he simpers out, "Be ye an angel?".

"Nay, I am but man. Elf. Both".

The demon disappears in a blinding flash of white light. You have vanquished the Shiny Demon! Cross it out from your Adventure Scroll and should you ever need to roll on the Demonic Apparitions Table again you may simply choose the demon you wish to encounter instead of rolling (make a note of this in ink). You may also add 1 FIST to account for the unbelievably boastful airs you will be adopting from here on out. Pity no one witnessed your victory, and you're already beginning to forget how the song you played went. Soon it will vanish from your mind entirely.

With the demon out of the way everything goes back to normal. You sling your instrument across your back and get back to business.

If this bardic battle was held in a forest glade then turn to 331.
If this lyrical loggerheads unfolded on the road then turn to 316.
If this strumming showdown took place in a church, you recommence rummaging around the shrine: turn to 587.

518

As you point at your selection Bruce, for the first time, notices your grotesque skeleton hand.

"Tie me kangaroo down! He's one of the lich's offsiders!", he shouts. The others leap to their feet in fright. Puffing out their neck frills in a threatening display of belligerence, the entire work team sets upon you:

🔪**BRUCE - DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1**
🔪**STEVO - DIFFICULTY 9**
🔪**SHEILA - DIFFICULTY 4 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**BAZZA - DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1**
🔪**BLUEY - DIFFICULTY 7 - TOUGHNESS 2**

They're more than a bit drunk and have trouble getting at you with their clumsy mining tools, so fight them one at a time - this battle doesn't count as a Multiple Hassle.

If you win you can loot the corpses - turn to 772 - or if your bloodlust isn't slaked you can head deeper into the tunnels to look for more nobolds to annihilate by turning to 811.

If you can't defeat these lizardmen then turn to 558.

519

Screaming, crying and cursing Jeff for the injustice he committed in putting you out in the kind of world where you'd get an arse kicking just for being a coward, you make a break for freedom. In your weakened physical and emotional state this amounts to a pathetic tantrum which sees you crawling between the taurcents' legs and along the road away from your captors. The taurcents, already dubious about your sale price in the slave markets even before this miserable outburst, decide to just let you go. Whinnying scornfully at your shameful behaviour they wobble back over to finish securing their prisoners.

The taurcents, dragging their more useful captives away, are soon out of sight. You stand up and brush the road dust off your clothes before carrying on along the road, following it around to the east. You're tired, sore and seriously unhappy with your treatment today but at least you're back on the right track and not being hauled away by bizarre horse creatures for sale to gods know what terrible masters.

The sun sets as you trudge along, plunging the road and the forest alongside into a deep gloom. Hoping to get somewhere safe to rest soon you carry on. Turn to 1715.

520

You set off towards the road to Bilgeton via the Glade of Pixies. A chill of foreboding sweeps over you - Pixies are the most deceitful, underhanded and mean-spirited creatures in the whole Bestiary, yourself included. Then again, that Bestiary was written by a dwarf, and they're a pretty racist bunch on the whole.

It's a long trek and it gets dark early this deep in the forest. As the sun goes down and total darkness sets in you notice the air is beginning to smell rancid, like a wet fart. The ground is becoming soft and squelchy underfoot. You also have a feeling that you're being watched, as if dozens of pairs of eyes are following your every move. It's probably just the numerous varieties of fist-sized poisonous and stinging insects that infest the swamp at night and feast on the flesh of half elfs, but it could easily be something much worse. In short, the forest has become a swamp, and you're getting paranoid.

Turn to 180.

521

The path rises higher and higher into the mountain range. It's a merciless uphill slog and you wonder if the writers of those fantasy novels you like to read may have been underselling the amount of miserable walking involved in going on a quest. You hope they weren't lying about all the bodice-ripping and loot as well.

You're wandering along the side of a mountain peak when the unreasonably cinematic and inconvenient path crests and you find yourself looking out over what seems to be the entire world unfurled before you like a map. From here, nearly at the highest point of the range you can see in the far distance to the south-east the smoggy outline of what must be the walls of Bilgeton, still at least two long days' walk away from here. Equally far away to the north-east, over the yawning emptiness of the Mist Steppes, you can make out the the huge Skytrap Mountains. Wreathed in clouds of freezing mist, these mountains loom threateningly over the land like a great jaw full of jagged teeth. A ways before them juts a lonely tall spire, a black finger pointing like an accusation at the heavens. Everything's a dreadfully long way away from here, but at least it'll mostly be down hill from now on.

More immediately the path splits up over the crest. The fork heading northwest winds towards a short mountain shaped suspiciously like a skull right on the edge of the range where it descends into the fog of the Mist Steppes. The path going southwest through the centre of the range leads to a tall and narrow spire, the top of which is even higher up than you are. Although it's a fair hike away you can see what look like birds circling the top. They must be huge. Beyond that, further into the range, you can see a plateau in the middle of the mountains feature a large circular marking on top - you think it's some kind of stone circle though you can't be sure at this great a distance.

If you'd like to head for the skull-shaped mountain on the north edge of the mountain range then turn to 1300. If you'd rather go right down the middle towards Bilgeton you head along the path leading towards the spire- turn to 892.

522

While you want to look cool in front of all the elfs your cowardice is shrieking at you, and eventually gets the upper hand. There's a loud groan from the elfs hiding in the bushes on both sides of the road as you leap up and flee before the stamping hooves of the skeletal horses, pursued by the incredulous, hollow-eyed stares of the undead carriage drivers. Fortunately your chickening out means the elfs have to spring their ambush early and are too occupied with trying to stop the wagons to bother with you. You're able to put this failure behind you without attracting much more than a few negative observations about the quality of teaching at the Grasswatching Academy. Done with the forests and bad lands of this horrible part of the world, at least for the time being, you stick to the road which according to frequent milestones is heading east towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 294.

523

It appears to be a perfectly normal human skull of the type you usually see decorating the houses of wizards, warlocks and psychopaths, but as soon as you pick it up you realise something's off. It's heavier than it should be, and something is rattling around in there. Suddenly a bunch of large spider legs shoot out the bottom and the skull makes a noise like it's inhaling a lungful of air...

Do you have a Screaming Skull on Spider Legs with you? If so then turn to 1389. Otherwise turn to 1651.

524

You find yourself in the company of a group of five diminutive lizard folk - at three feet tall they're gigantic for lizards but little for folk. Even putting aside the fact that they're standing on their hind legs and talking, they're the weirdest lizards you've ever seen - each of them has a huge frill of skin extending form their throats and over their backs and shoulders like a short cape. Accenting this curious feature, the lizards' workmanlike clothes bear frilly cuffs at the wrists, throat and feet, all filthy from the difficult and dirty job of mining which these creatures (like every other subterranean and most surface species on this planet) seem to be engaged in. The tunnel you find yourself in is clearly man- (or lizard-) made, with beams supporting the walls and numerous smaller cuttings made into the quartz seams lining the walls. Though a bit wider than the tunnels you've been crawling through all day it's still awfully cramped. Mercifully, it's well-lit by lanterns hanging from hooks set in the walls so you finally put your flint away. The area has been kept neat: aside from a large pile of shining, translucent stones the floors have been swept clean of debris. Mining tools are carefully stacked against the tunnel walls near to the cuttings.

As you look around the lizard who spoke to you earlier tries to engage you again in its bestial tongue: "G'day cobber, Name's Bruce, and this's Sheila, Stevo, Bazza and Bluey", he says, indicating a group of four functionally identical red-skinned lizards. You don't comprehend the accent or most of the words but you guess it's an introduction. You politely sneer out a hello, despite not particularly wanting to become acquainted with these little monsters.

"We've been doing some hard yakka down here but these walls are harder to pick than a broken nose. This shaft is a duffer, full of hungry quartz", he says, indicating the heap of shimmering stones nearby, "And to top it off we've been getting aggro from a bunch of bony ratbags. Know anything about those yobs?"

You give him an uncomprehending stare.

"Well, you're from the back of beyond, what would you know about it, eh? Gonna pack it in soon I reckon. Not worth the hassle. Reckon you haven't seen our like before: we're nobolds from Busted Hill and I'm guessing you're a human or elf. Few kangaroos loose in the top paddock too by the looks. Well don't stand around there like a stunned mullet, we're about to take a smoko. Hit the piss with us: we got some tinnies in the esky",

With that incomprehensible nonsense the nobolds down tools and gather around a curious white box. Your head is still spinning - you haven't understood a word the guy said.

If you want to ask if they speak Palavan then turn to 1478. If you'd rather just go along with whatever's happening you can sit down with them round the strangely-named "esky" - turn to 672 - or if you feel threatened by whatever's happening you can just attack by turning to 326.

525

If there's anything you hate more than being picked on by elfs, it's being picked on by wee folk. The gutless cowards never seem to have the balls to fight out in the open against a being roughly 35 times their size. Driven into an insane rage by this and other similar insights you charge into the woods, roaring a bone-chilling war cry.

You are immediately met with a storm of tiny arrows, slightly-less tiny pebbles and reasonably large darts, apparently fired from fairy-sized siege engines based on the twanging sounds that reverberate through the woods. You stumble backward with your arms covering your face, murderous impulses forgotten as you scramble away back out of the woods. You arrive back where you started, scuffed but miraculously not badly hurt. However, you did manage to lose an item as you made your getaway: you must discard one item of your choice from your Adventure Scroll if any are available. As soon as you exit the woods the barrage ceases aside from the odd stinging arrow, though you could swear you hear high-pitched laughter and obscenities directed at you from the bushes along the edge of the forest.

Impressed now by the sheer firepower of your woodland enemies, you may decide to leave as much space between you and the forest but heading off to the north (turn to 1024), or if you'd rather resume your trek eastwards along the edge of the woods turn to 932.

526

Your attempts to flog your wares are not appreciated. It turns out that merchants come to the market to sell their stock, and if they require more supplies they'll get them from an approved dealer rather than some shifty half elf with bloodshot eyes trying to pawn a backpack full of garbage of questionable quality and legality. You give up after propositioning most of the stalls that are selling the same kinds of things that you're carrying.

If you want to cut out the middle man then you can set up a stall yourself by turning to 1253. If you've had enough of this noise you can try to buy something (if you have at least one Guilder and haven't already attempted to do so) by turning to 1352, or you can get the hells out of here and wrap up this quest by turning to 827.

527

Luckily the moon is nearly full so it's possible to pick your way through the forest without tripping over or gouging yourself on branches, so long as you move carefully. Still, it's hard and slow going through dense foliage and you keep getting turned around as you dodge trees and boulders strewn throughout the woods.

Hours pass and you're beginning to wonder if you're getting anyplace when you hear an obvious padding sound coming from behind you and to the left. You turn and in the bright moonlight you see something horrible - you're being loudly stalked by a dire wolf the size of a pony. These gigantic wild dogs are annoyingly intelligent and equipped with gigantic flesh-ripping jaws and a bottomless appetite for meat. This one looks bony, which means it hasn't eaten in a while: you're almost certainly tonight's special on its menu.

If you'd like to hurry on in the hopes you can ditch this monster, turn to 1166.

If you want to turn and confront it then turn to 878.

528

You don't really want to be drawn into whatever a guy who's on a first name basis with foxes might want from you, so you make an exaggerated show of inspecting the livestock. You enquire about the price of the huge hardbacked snapper you happen to be standing near.

"200 Guilders", says the lady, squinting at the reptile through her spectacles. You can't help but look shocked at the insane price. "It's a rare Zondian Star Tortoise. They only live on a single island in the Narcolept Sea", she explains in a tone that implies you should already know this. "There are only two in Palaver and we have them both. This one's the display model but we keep the other one in the back room".

You pretend that this is all perfectly normal and enquire about the disturbing simulacrum. It rattles about and slams its arms together ominously as you ask about it, filling the shop with an unholy clanging sound.

"That's an artefact from the Daemonic Planes called the Cymbal-Banging Monkey. We have no idea what the foul denizens of the Unmagickal Plane see in these things but its scarcity makes it something of a collectors item. 666 Guilders."

Suddenly, a cunning plan comes to mind - with a bit of luck you can get your paws on that monstrously expensive monkey! If you want to rob this place blind then turn to 1117. If you're ready to find out what the shopkeepers want from you then turn to 600. If you think you've stuck around long enough to be polite you can leave by turning to 1504.

529

Picking your way through a dark tunnel, you eventually arrive at a junction. For a second it feels like the tunnel walls are vibrating and a little rain of stone dust falls from the ceiling. Best be moving on.

Turn to 1634 to take the northern path, 295 to go north-east or 1778 to head westwards.

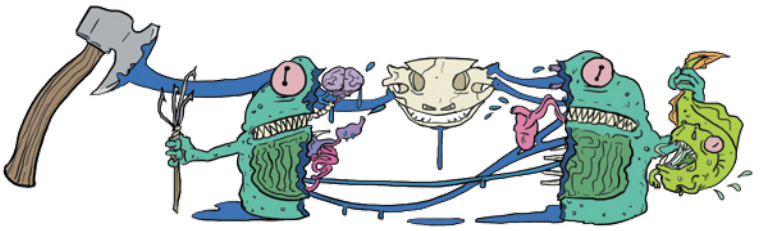
530

Are you under the influence of hallucinogens? If so, turn immediately to 1349.

Otherwise, you survey the damage and notice that if you move this pixie to here and position that pixie's arm like so, it'll look like they got into a deadly brawl over the contents of the potion bottle. No one will care enough about a few pixies to investigate any more closely. Roll 1 die and subtract the result from your EFFORT score to reflect the work involved.

While you're repositioning the corpses you manage to pocket 5 generic fantasy-setting gold coins which are in fact Bilgeton Guilders - a surprisingly large number of them for a bunch of forest fairies. You wonder how they came by them. Record this haul in the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll.

With your tracks suitably covered and a few coins jingling in your purse, you begin to breathe a bit easier. If you want to find a suitable place to have a rest, turn to 462.
If you'd rather press on as quickly as possible to Bilgeton then turn to 711.



531

Either you're unusually honest for a half elf or you're terrified of the consequences for not completing a quest given to you by the Goblin King. Either way you decide to take the achingly beautiful codpiece back to Gobholme. It's a long and dull trek, but eventually you arrive on the north wall, walk all the way around to the main entrance to the Mazyrinth, navigate the treacherous maze again, battle your way through the goblin town and make your way up to the castle. After making you wait a while you're granted an audience with the Goblin King and the guards let you in to the throne room where you see the monarch draped insouciantly across his throne.

"Oh, that will never do", says the Goblin King, pointing to his crotch. "See, this is an extra-large and that's just a large. It won't fit. And it's been used: there's a little scuff in the lining. Such a pity".

You look crestfallen.

"Never mind, you did your best. Bhad's been getting a bit sloppy lately anyway. I've been thinking of taking my business over to the Dwarfen Kingdoms. They're just up the road, you know? Probably would have been easier than sending you to that dragon. Oh well. Say, you wouldn't mind taking my order over to Fremin le Forgeron in Monteton? No?"

The Goblin King is still talking to your back as you angrily storm out, codpiece in hand. You force your way back through the bustling goblin town and out into the Mazyrinth.

Turn to 1277.

532

"Well, fuck right off then. Don't let the ploughing door hit your candy arse on the way out you stupid fucking timewasting prick".

Not wanting to earn any more of this foul-mouthed warlock's ire you retreat down the stairs and out into the night. You're pretty sure the skeletons are staring at you as you slink past but you can't tell because they don't have any eyes in their sockets. Ignoring their potentially judgemental glances you make your way back to the road and continue towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 294.

533

Try as you might, you simply can't shoot far enough to hit the eagles as they circle around the top of the spire. Unfortunately, you were shooting straight upwards in an attempt to hit those birds, and what goes up must come down. If you made at least one attempt at overcoming the HASSLE a returning or ricocheting arrow strikes you as part of the barrage lands right where you're standing - lose your choice of 5 EFFORT, 1 ÉLAN or an item from your Adventure Scroll as you get thoroughly arrowed. If you have an item equipped which negates damage (for instance a shield or armour) you can use it as normal here.

In addition to this rain of arrows the birds let down a rain of their own, a far more accurate salvo than yours which leaves your upper torso completely covered in foul-smelling eagle guano. It's disgusting, but luckily they don't seem inclined to press their attack.

Are you going to take this from these rotten birds? If you're half elf enough to stick up for yourself then you decide to climb the spire and give them what for - turn to 1769. Otherwise you slink off, humiliated as usual. Turn to 190.

534

You rush after the old fellow but he's ludicrously spry and has a head start on you. You scramble along up the mountainside behind him but as he nears the top he rounds the peak and disappears out of sight. By the time you're up there he's long gone - there's no sign of him.

You look down behind you with the intention of returning the ravine for some post-battle looting but you're improbably high up and you get a wicked case of vertigo. You're not even sure how you got up here - there doesn't seem to be a safe way down. There's nothing for it but to try to find a relatively safe way onwards. The far side of the mountain doesn't seem so sheer and there are a number of crevices and ledges to walk along and lower yourself from, so you begin going that way.

Turn to 259.

535

The guard smiles tersely.

"Ah. I'm sure you gave it a good crack but those liches are tricky. You didn't smash all the phylacteries, which means Hardmod has probably pulled himself back together already and is back to building his army of the undead. Never mind, better adventurers than you have done a lot worse, but I still can't let you into the city on the basis of almost, but not actually, helping us out".

You try to argue but the guard cuts you off.

"Now, do you have the Guilders I asked for or will you be seeing yourself out?"

If you have the 20 Guilders and are willing to pay then turn to 808. Otherwise you've got nothing - you'll have to beg to get your way. Turn to 201.

536

You hear the rowdy sounds of rock trolls partying as you ascend the plateau. As soon as they see you they let out a "Wa-hey!" of recognition. You observe that, true to their word, they've stopped clogging up the river and instead have built great, tottering pyramids out of their used stoneware. This is the last thing you observe - they wave you over for a drink, one thing leads to another and ....*

Two days pass before you're finally able to stagger away again without offending their hospitality. This round of punishing drinking takes a permanent toll on your mind and body - lose 1 current and maximum ÉLAN - but from now on you will no longer lose ÉLAN if you drink alcohol or potions, so high has your tolerance become. As a parting gift the trolls present you with a bottle of very potent Trollbräu - add this to your Adventure Scroll.

Slurring out a farewell to your gracious hosts you stagger away deeper into the mountains.

Turn to 955.

537

You're not feeling merciful. You loot the unresisting half elf while you consider what to do with him. You decide to take the Sword of the Elf Bastard and you also find an old Milkman's Calling Card detailing the address of a milkman in Bilgeton, but signed with an "X" instead of a name. You briefly wonder why he'd have something like that as you pocket it. You may also loot one other item from the doomed elf and his greasy companion: pick one from the Full Harness of Shining Brass Plate, Necklace of Elf Ears or Cape Made of Elf Skins. Add whatever you've taken here to your Adventure Scroll.

You've made your mind up about what to do with your hapless adversary. There's probably a bounty for this outlaw in Bilgeton. If you want to take him with you to hand over to the authorities then you tie him up and chuck him over your mount's saddle: add the Elf Bastard to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 937 to get on your way. If you want to rough him up a bit and take him back to Aggie to deal with, turn to 835. If you just want to finish him off and get on with your quest, turn to 1175.

538

The bartender calls out to the drunks in the tavern.

"Oy! This bloke wants a job! Take the derro out when you're done with your butchers won't ya?"

The nobolds murmur in unenthusiastic agreement. You wait and eventually they're done drinking and yelling and head outside. One of them motions you to follow him and you find yourself tracking your way back through the tunnels. For some reason they've given you the job of carrying the obligatory esky - a magical chest full of cold tins of whatever the nobolds are drinking. If you already have one then turn to 1589. Otherwise read on:

The esky is heavy and your incessant whining goads the work crew on, and with them the light. You watch as the nobold disappear down the tunnel, leaving you and your load in the darkness.

If you'd like to get the job done no matter what, turn to 132. Otherwise you chuck the esky on the ground and return to town. If you haven't already done so you can visit the church should you wish by turning to 1539, otherwise it's time to get out of town - turn to 591.

539

It's a jar filled with pink liquid and what appears to be a single pickle. It glows very softly, indicating that it might have some magical properties. It's nestled in among a bunch of other jars, so getting it out might be a hassle. Sweat dripping down your face from the stress, you reach up to the shelf to take the jar as quietly as you possibly can.

RETRIEVAL: DIFFICULTY 7

If you attempt this and fail even once then turn to 1311. If you succeed then you may add the Glowing Jar to your Adventure Scroll. If you didn't attempt it then you gave up without even trying. Restore 5 EFFORT for being true to yourself.

With this resolved one way or the other, the smell in this room is starting to get to you and you could swear that skull moved while you weren't looking at it. It's time to go. Will you sneak out of the tower - turn to 1685 - or will you go up the stairs and confront the warlock (turn to 637)?

540

The skeletons chitter in mirth as the unhealthy little agent gives you a sound thrashing with his staff. Luckily, a life of pondering tomes of dark knowledge has left him even less physically fit than you so he swiftly grows tired. After whaling on you a bit he starts wheezing and goes back inside the office, followed by the remaining skeleton workers. You suffer nothing more than a few bruises and, less importantly, the loss of the last shreds of your pride.

Lose 5 EFFORT. If you're still going the eventually a passing militia patrol notices you sobbing in the gutter and hauls you to your feet. After a strict admonishment about vagrancy they send you on your way. You dry your eyes, rub your bruises and decide to see if there's anything else to do in town. Turn to 1364.

541

You wake to find your head ringing. Someone's dragged you clear of the mosh pit - and relieved you of your purse! After a moment's panic you recall that you wised up to the ways of Bilgeton early on and started keeping your money in your boots - but then you notice that they've also been stolen! However, you're an unusually quick study in the ways of sneakiness and had learned to keep most of your coinage in your breeches. No one was willing to plunder in such perilous terrain - even you wouldn't want to be the first person to open up those leather pantaloons after all this time on the road.

You've lost 5 Guilders - remove this sum from your Adventure Scroll (down to a minimum of 1 Guilder) and remove any boots you may have equipped. Other than that, a quick inventory check confirms that you still have everything, including the concussion.

You haven't been out long - Seed Drille is only up to the bit about increasing the product of the corn fields - so there's plenty of the act to go. You don't dare to brave the mosh pit again, especially as the goblin who knocked you out and almost certainly robbed you seems to have vanished - so you pull up a rock and listen to the remaining two hours of the epic saga and the equally lengthy encore, "A supplement to the essay on horse-hoing husbandry. Containing explanations and additions both in theory and practice. Wherein all the objections against that husbandry, which are come to the author's knowledge are consider'd and answer'd. By Jethro Tull", also played in its entirety. The crowd goes berserk for the entire duration of the song and Seed Drille are declared the winners of the Battle of the Bards when the encore finally reaches its conclusion.

Since the show's over and the guards are starting to arrive to haul the drunks out of the quarry it's time for you to move on. Despite your ringing head and lost stuff you've had a good time - restore 10 EFFORT - but as soon as you reach the top of the rope ladder and haul yourself out of the rock pit you realise that it's late and you'll need to find that place to crash real soon. Turn to 1793 to go in search of your father.

542

You beat the hells out of your childhood bullies with brutal efficiency. Unfortunately, the noise of justice being dispensed has attracted armed guards from the caravan who are approaching the edge of the forest, arrows nocked to their bowstrings. You've heard all the tales about these humans and how they hunger for elf blood, and though you're a half elf they'll probably lump you in with the rest of these troublemakers. As if to confirm your low opinion of the species one of the guards fires an arrow at you which whistles right by your ear. Not wanting to die, you flee into the woods as fast as your legs will carry you.

Turn to 961.

543

"Sure, I'm with you guys", you say without a moment's hesitation, "I'm clearly an elf and have nothing to do with humans other than killing them, which I do all the time. I hate humans like billy-o, I do. Just let me at them and I'll show them what's what".

The knight seems inclined to take this gibberish at face value although he must doubt your martial prowess somewhat given your mediocre performance against his little army. Still, he shouts to his troops,

"This elf is a killer of men and will aid us in our quest".

And then, still shouting so you can hear, he yells, "Come with us. We have much to talk about, you and I".

Well, you made your bed and you might as well lie in it. You follow the brownie troop into the darkening forest and after a couple more hours of trudging in the dark you make it to their encampment - a wretched little slum under a boulder in the middle of a small forest clearing. At least a hundred tiny pairs of eyes watch you as you make your way into the brownie lair.

Turn to 305.

544

Even after your whupping you refuse to pay up, which infuriates Fettwanst beyond belief and way beyond what's healthy for a man in his already critical condition. His eyes bug out of his head which has turned bright purple and then he clutches his heart, wheezes one more time and collapses to the ground, stone dead. You guess they'll have to bury him in his guardhouse since there's not a coffin built that they could cram him into.

Speaking of the guardhouse, you give it and its previous owner a quick once over before you move on. The guard's iron mace is too heavy for you to lift but you find a Bilgeton Guilder and a Dapper Garb about your size, probably extorted from previous passers-by. Add these to your Adventure Scroll.

Whistling a jaunty tune you step over the body of your deceased adversary and let yourself out of Brunnenfeld though the gate. You set out along a rocky trail that winds high into the mountain range looming up ahead of you.

Turn to 1698.

545

You approach the larger of the two wagons. It's a big, heavy cart which contains a very large pile of straw, a valuable resource in any late medieval city. While the guards are occupied with the cart in front of it you clamber up into the straw pile and hide yourself. Peering out through a small gap in the straw you watch as a guard approaches to inspect the wagon.

"I can see you", says the guard, pointing straight at you. "This is literally the oldest trick in the tome. It's on page one in the first chapter under the heading 'ye ancient japes that fooleth none but the verie younge and slowe', with a footnote penned a hundred years later explaining that this trick is now known even to them. Now get out or there'll be trouble".

Terrified of winding up on the wrong side of the law, you leap out of the wagon. The guard glowers at you.

"Wise move. Now bugger off. I've seen your face now, you're not getting in this way", he barks before turning his attention back to the straw heap, leaving you deflated and lost just outside your goal. You guess there's nothing for it but to slink back to Elfsdale Downs and throw yourself on Jeff's mercy... you imagine his mocking face and cheerful grin and recall how he ruined your life by turning your kinsfolk and even your mother against you and how he sent you on this doomed quest in the first place, knowing that there was no chance you'd succeed. You realise that there's no way you can go back to that tower or to that elf. It's Bilgeton or nothing.

If you're determined to get into Bilgeton then turn to 698. If you're prepared to accept nothing then turn to 493.

546

You're outside again. The nobold town isn't any more inspiring or interesting than the last time you saw it. A gust of wind makes its way from the hole in the cavern roof above and causes an empty tin can to roll over in the dust.

If you haven't already will you visit the church (turn to 1539), or if a trip to the First Church of Hells doesn't sound appealing will you start to look for a way out of here? Turn to 591.

547

You finally make your presence known once again, wandering out of the forest just in time to stake a claim on the loot. Biff is less than impressed.

"You're not getting anything because you didn't do anything, Bastard. Now get out of here before I get angry."

If you'd like to point out that you could have gotten you both killed back in the forest but did your bit by not doing that, turn to 415.

If you'd prefer not to make Biff angry you could leave without irritating him by turning to 793.

548

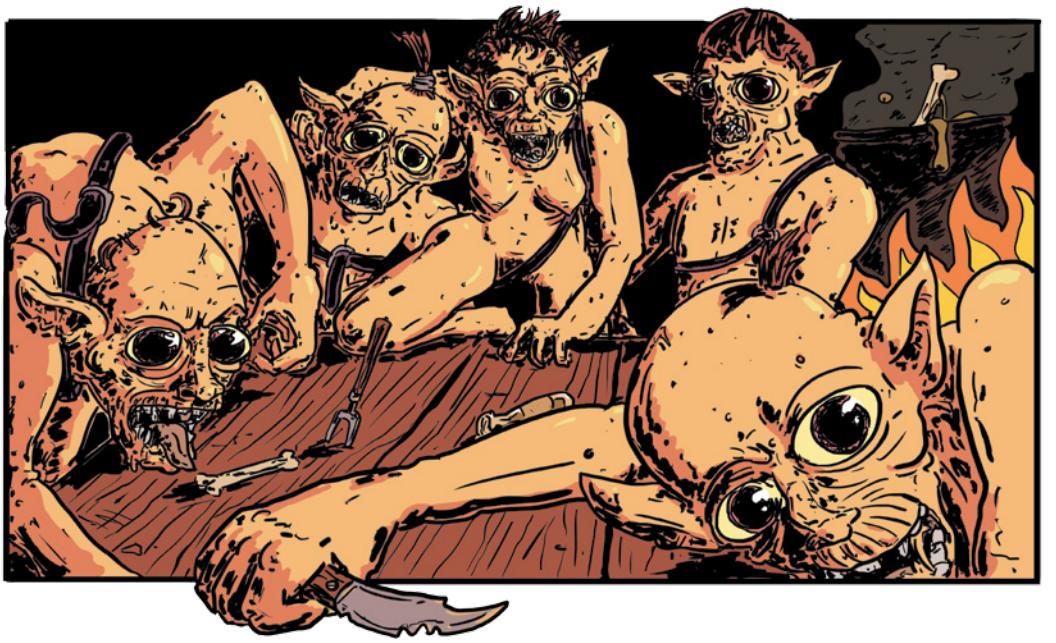
The chemicals produce an unbelievably powerful explosion. Even with a shield, a being less flimsy than you would have been mashed into a paste, but luckily you're still svelte enough to be carried along by the blast. The shield absorbs most of the concussive force but it's still strong enough to fling you free of the rapidly-disintegrating tower and down into the undergrowth. You hear a loud, filthy curse shouted over the racket before a second magical explosion engulfs the tower in a massive fireball which shoots up into the night sky, You barely have time to marvel at this incredible sight before the rain of masonry and assorted debris forces you to hunker down behind your shield again to avoid being struck by a part of the tower. When the fireball has finally dissipated there's nothing left of the building but a massive crater.

Only then do you recover your senses enough to check yourself. In the fall you've hurt your right arm badly enough that you'll never be able to give a convincing handshake ever again. Lose 1 ÉLAN from the damage. Also most of your possessions have been blown clear of your person:

you'll have to spend a little while searching the crater and surrounds for them. For each item on your Adventure Scroll roll a die - on a score of 1 or 2 you are unable to find it again and it must be removed from your Adventure Scroll. Fortunately your coin purse is still intact and safely tucked into your belt. While you're adjusting your Scroll, make a note that you slew the warlock.

If you were venturing into the tower on behalf of that bunch of elfs you may have seen their shocked faces illuminated in the glow as they watched on - turn to 325 if you feel like talking to them (assuming you left their company without hostilities, of course). If you'd rather have nothing to do with the elfs or you had difficulties with them earlier it's time to move on. Turn to 294 to get back to the road heading towards Bilgeton.

549



Good choice. These mines usually get abandoned when the goblins' greed causes them to delve just a little too deep into the earth for their own good. You don't want to encounter whatever caused this place to empty out. Feeling your way along the dimly-lit walls you follow the tunnels that head generally upwards wherever possible.

Unfortunately for you, the upper reaches of these mines have become home to a colony of dark elfs. Poor cousins of the regular type elf, the dark elfs are named for their tendency to live in caves and their attempts to teach themselves the edgiest of dark magicks. Heedless of their presence you've stumbled right into the living quarters of a small dark elf coven. Five of them are sitting around a table, their painfully pale skin and unhealthy yellow eyes glowing in the dim light of a cooking fire atop which a pot of some unimaginably horrible food bubbles. These dark elfs are obviously not happy with some overworlder intruding in their subterranean lair: they hiss and shriek like animals as they rush to the attack! Despite their numbers and viciousness, an underground existence has left them frail even by elf standards: this is not a Multiple Hassle.

🔪**DARK ELFS: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you defeat these troublesome dark elfs then turn to 830. If they're too much for you or you don't want to battle then you surrender: turn to 676.

550

Whether through skill, quick thinking or blind luck you've managed to roll right through the elf ambush without them seeing you coming. The patsy or victim who the elfs laid on the road barely slowed your caravan down and by the time they've recovered from their shock the wagons are mostly past. Still, the wagons aren't all that quick, and a number of the elfs manage to drop what they're doing in time to run up to the side of the wagons. They run alongside, desperately trying to hack and chop and the drivers, their horses and you. You find a red-faced individual puffing along next to you, struggling to keep up as he tries to slice at your legs with an ornate yet flimsy elfen backsword:

🔪**UNFIT ELF: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1**

If you're unable to defeat the elf then turn to 1757. On the other hand, if you win you kick the unfortunate elf in the teeth and he trips over, tumbling along the road behind you in your dust. It remains to be seen how the rest of the caravan goes, similarly hard-pressed by elfs.

For each GUARD roll a die. On 4-6 they defeat their opponent. On a 1-3 their enemy is getting the better of them and you may, if you wish, circle back to defend them. For each GUARD who's losing their fight and you wish to save you must fight:

🔪**RUNNING ELF: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1**

Fight them one at a time: for each elf you defeat you save one threatened GUARD. If you give up you will lose every GUARD that you haven't yet saved, though you are able to ride to safety easily enough.

Regardless of whether each guard despatched its opponent or disintegrated into a disconnected bunch of bones along the highway, their desperate struggle drives the elfs back at least momentarily and allows the wagons to get clear. The drivers whip the horses on and leave the disappointed and bruised elfen raiders in their dust. Make any adjustment needed to the number of GUARDS and turn to 382.

551

You've been carrying this festering sack of pixie bits for quite a while now. Time has, if anything, increased its potency as you soon find when you hurl it as hard as you can into the queue. The bag hits the ground and tears open, disgorging a fine mist of putrefied pixie fluids and a cloud of foul-smelling and very toxic corpse gas. The humans gasp in horror, inadvertently taking in a huge lungful of the stuff, and though you try not to breath it in you can't avoid getting at least some of it on your skin where the rancid stuff soaks in to deliver its hallucinogenic load. Suddenly everything explodes into a shining, hallucinogenic kaleidoscope.

You've effectively taken a very potent dose of potion - subtract 1 ÉLAN until the next time you get a chance to rest and roll on the Potion Effects table, subtracting 1 from the result due to the especially toxic nature of the pixie bits. Resolve this immediately.

If you survive, you snap out of the wild hallucinations to a scene of absolute devastation - the people who were formerly in the queue are ripping up the garden, headbutting the walls,

fighting each other and generally tripping balls in a loud and undignified manner. A couple of lords are assaulting the guards who, despite their skeletal physiology, also seem to be mildly affected by pixie poisoning themselves. Seizing the moment you slip right on through into the ballroom.

Remove the Pixie Bits from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 585.

552

The agent, seeing that you've only brought one wagon with him, lets out an incoherent cry of rage and attacks before you can even blather out an excuse! The skeletons, of course, are no help.

🔪**AGGIE'S AGENT : DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 2**

If you defeat this sad little man then turn to 1814. If you throw in the towel then turn to 540.

553

Your debut into Bilgeton society and subsequent bravery has impressed Isentrud, and once she has proof that you've got money she falls head over heels for you. While unions between nobles and wealthy merchants are unusual, love will find a way whenever enough cash is involved. The very next morning you exchange your vows at the Bilgeton Synod and you attain the styles and title of His Lordship the Viscount of Southdock to go with your hefty moneybags.

Turn to 155.

554

Finally, your travelling companion is about to come in useful! You boot him, her or it into the river and walk away nonchalantly. You hear one splash as your companion plops into the Bilge, followed by a larger one as the demon, fooled by your gambit, follows them in. You look back to see your stunt has worked - since the demon uses its flies to see and didn't have many of the critters around, it can't really tell the two of you apart and is now giving chase to your former travelling buddy. Buzzing along the raised banks at a respectable distance is the obnoxious cloud of flies. You breathe a sigh of relief as it buzzes past you, interested only in the poor bugger screaming and thrashing about in the open sewer that passes for the Bilge River.

Your probably-doomed companion is swimming hard downstream, followed closely by the tireless monstrosity. The demon will probably catch up in the end and come back for you, but maybe by then some brave adventurer or wizard or whatever will have dealt with the problem for you.

As calm descends on Bilgeton and the momentarily terrorized crowds begin to return to the streets you must decide what you're doing next. Remove the unlucky companion from your Adventure Scroll and make your choice. Will you be attending the Grand Ball (turn to 994) or the Battle of the Bards (turn to 1426), or will you track down your human father (turn to 1793)?

555

You manage to get a good portion of eagle piss into Kaspar's bottle while he's not looking and assume an expression of supreme nonchalance as he takes a swig from the now-tainted booze. Finding the taste surprising he spits it out with enough force to spray half of the henge.

You beat a hasty retreat while the troll is still spitting and gagging, and make it all the way to the edge of the plateau before Kaspars recovers enough to start thinking about revenge. It's quite a steep drop from the edge of the butte and you're still pondering on how to lower yourself over the side when you hear an angry bellow. Moments later a stone bottle sails past your ear with alarming speed, followed by another and another. Half the henge is winging empties at you, and your choice boils down to leaping to a probable death or standing here and definitely getting your head caved in by a bottle.

Unable to decide on which death you'd prefer you're about to panic. Suddenly you hear a screech and something grips you roughly by both your shoulders. It's one of the eagles from the nest! With a flap of its gigantic wings you're lifted high into the air and away from your perilous predicament. The barrage of bottles and trollish insults disappears behind you.

"That'll show them!" squawks the bird, "They'll never be able to look us in the eye again. Now, you have our thanks. Now, how can I repay you? Maybe a lift, or a treasure?"

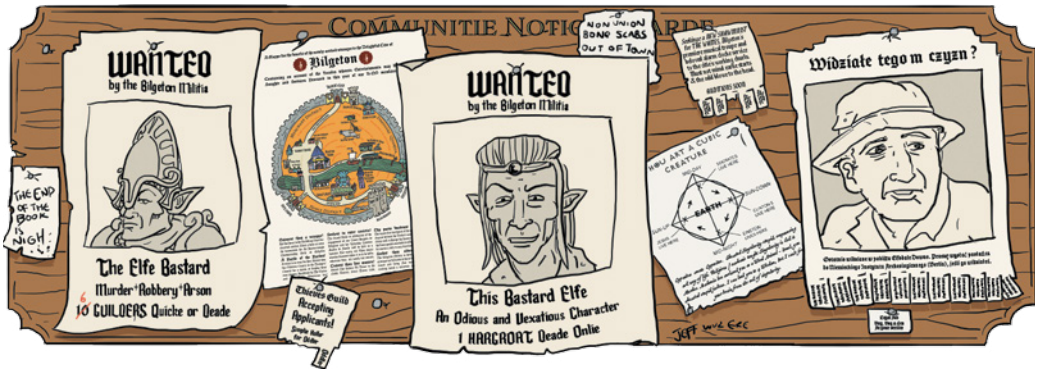
If you'd like a lift then turn to 1401. If you'd like the treasure instead then turn to 928.

556

Since you've got no means of resisting, the timpanist drags you back out behind the stage, hurls you hard into the stony dust and sits on you until The Waits complete their song. Since you don't re-emerge you're disqualified and Seed Drille comes out to make their attempt at the title.

Since you're no longer a threat to The Waits' musical supremacy, the timpanist gets off you and returns to his band to prepare for their next set. You'd love to stick around to see them get thrashed by the legendary Seed Drille but this rough treatment has put you off the Bilgeton music scene more than a little. Cursing and muttering to yourself, you return to the rickety staircase and leave the quarry the same way you came.

It's late out now - probably time you went in search of your father and that place to crash. Turn to 1793.



557

You do your best to wait patiently but the line is moving horribly slowly and, as far as you can tell from the back of the garden, the guards are turning nearly everyone away.

Time feels like it's standing still as you slowly shuffle forward in the queue. You are tormented with a thousand poisonous stings as the bilgebugs work their way into your clothing. Each gossipy word about the Baron of Kotzen's dry-cleaning expenses punches you right in the brain like needles of pure boredom. You can't stay here... or can you?

WAIT YOUR TURN: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 5

If you succeed this endless ordeal then you manage to wait your turn - turn to 1413.

If you fail then you stumble out of the queue, gasping the fresh air of freedom (like all Bilgeton air it smells like an open sewer and is lousy with flying bugs). Now that you're out of line you'll have to cause a scene if you want to get in - turn to 1028- or you can give up on this whole dog and pony show and go off in search of your father and that place to crash - turn to 1793.

558

"Stevo, go get the padre", says Bruce, standing over your prone form. As Stevo runs off, his rear legs flailing in a way that you're sure would be hilarious under any other circumstance, the rest of the nobolds pin you down. Placing the heavy esky between your shoulder blades so you can't get back up, the four each crack open a tinny and wait for whoever the padre is.

The lizards sitt on you and drink for hours before Stevo comes trotting back, the padre right behind him. The so-called padre is another of these frill-neck reptiloids, wearing a black cassock with even more ludicrous lacy frills and ruffs than the workers. It's a cleric.

"G'day fellas, let's have a squiz at this drongo then", he says. "And chuck us a tinny while you're at it, Bazza mate. Four Ecks if you got it". Bazza, sitting on your right leg, reaches into the esky and chucks a metal can at the padre, who catches it, tears the top off and downs it in one smooth motion. Belching, the padre turns his attention to you, scrutinising you for signs of undeadness.

"Just a claw. Righto, this'll be a piece of piss. Stand back, fellas", he says, gibbering the same patois as these other lizardmen. He then extends his palms towards you and mutters a spell or prayer or the like and a wave of force flies out, buffeting you a little but causing your skeletal hand to involuntarily swivel around 180 degrees and snap right off! The magic holding the hand together seems to have been dispelled by this spell of Turn Undead and it now lies as a sad pile of bones at your feet! Remove the Skeleton Hand from your Adventure Scroll, as well as the Screaming Skull on Spider Legs (if you had it) which leaps out of your pack and flees screaming into the tunnel as soon as the spell hits. Don't worry though - it'll be back next adventure!

"There ya go mate", says the padre. "Right as rain. With that curse on you it's no matter you came a gutser, but I reckon you won't be blueing anymore", Reassured by this idiocy the other nobolds get off you. You stare in horror at the stump that was your perfectly good...well, mildly acceptable skeleton hand and then in fury at the priest.

If you want revenge turn to 1592. If you know when you're licked then turn to 292.

559

Immediately regretting your choices, you open fire on the dragon. Your flimsy projectiles ricochet off the dragon's thick skin until you get unbelievably lucky and get an arrow into one of the thing's big yellow eyes! While even the dragon's corneas are more than capable of withstanding your pitiful weapons, that must have stung. The dragon roars in shock and pain and starts clawing at its eyes with its forepaws. You've bought yourself a few seconds!

Will you double down and attack - turn to 964 - or is it time to beat it? If so turn to 1264 and add 1 to any FIST rolls you make on that page to reflect the advantage your marksmanship has bought you.

560

Did you previously throw a sword of any description into the lake? If so then turn to 142.

If not, there's no hope for you. The tentacle beast wraps you in its trunk-like appendages and drags you down into the lake where you'll form part of a balanced diet as one of the monster's five adventurers a day. Your travels end here.

561

Just as you're about to admit that you've got nothing, there's a bright flash of light in the middle of where Seed Drille are standing. The hapless band is completely vaporised and in its place shines the Shiny Demon.

"I want a rematch", he simpers, stroking his goatee. "And this time I'm going to give you some of MY nastiest licks. Best me in this Battle of the Bards or I won't just eat your soul - I'll destroy the entire world!", he cackles, unslinging a huge, oddly-shaped lute which is covered in unidentifiable knobs and dials. As the demon strums his infernal instrument it emits a reverberating wailing sound. Half the audience flees in terror at this strange noise, the rest stand silent and transfixed.

Do you have the Axe of the Bastard Elf equipped? If so turn to 1448. If not then the insane noise made by the demon's lute completely overwhelms any sounds you could possibly make. No amount of pleading or begging helps - once the demon has completed wailing on his axe to his satisfaction he plays a note so low and loud that it shatters the very earth itself. Cackling he returns to his hell dimension as the planet disintegrates into chunks, eliminating the setting of your adventure and so ending it here.

562

You yell that you're coming out and shove the door open. Two guards in the standard guard outfit are waiting for you outside, the spearhead part of their halberds levelled at your chest. The guard you knocked out still lies on the ground, motionless.

"I've know that when you've got to go you've got to go, but this is ridiculous", shouts one of the conscious guards. "You're under arrest for attempted murder and the use of private town guard amenities".

You're dragged back around the wall the way you came and handed over to the guards in the gatehouse, who lead you in through the guardroom. There you are strip searched and all your gear is confiscated. You watch it being secured in a wooden evidence chest at the back of the room (keep it on your Adventure Scroll for now, but none of it's available for you to use). Finally, you're given your Prisoner of the Count starter kit - a couple of filthy sackcloth tunics, a toothbrush with only one bristle left and a pot to piss in (don't bother adding these loathsome items to your Adventure Scroll). Now that you've been formally inducted into the Bilgeton prison system a couple of the surly prison guards march you down a narrow spiral staircase to your new home.

Turn to 49.

563

You're not the kind of half elf that gets up more than once a day. The warmth of the little fire and its hypnotic flickering soon lulls you to sleep.

You are awakened by a polite-sounding cough. Standing nearby, crisp white tunic and hose reflected in the flickering light of your fire, is a tall human with short white hair, a neatly trimmed white moustache and a little wisp of a beard on his chin. He leans slightly on an ornate wooden stick and the light of the fire gleams in the glassy lenses of his spectacles. You have trouble telling how old humans are supposed to be but this one looks decidedly elderly.

"Good evening sah", says the man in a strange accent, "Ah'm sorry to wake you, but I couldn't help seeing your fire burning here and I do believe we have some vital business to discuss. Mercy me, where are my manners? Ah'm The Colonel and ah'm fixing to establish my new eatery franchise round these parts. Business has been so good that I've run out of the cluckers I brought with me from my olde Kentucky home. Ah've been going door to door, hoping for a supply of birds to tide me over until the next shipment comes from the Deep South, but ah've had no luck. Until now that is: ah do declare ah've never seen a bird quite this big".

You wipe the sleep from your eyes as the old man continues.

"Ah can see you need your beauty sleep so let's get right down to brass tacks, sah. Sell me that there fine feathered friend of yours and ah'll leave you to lay down again ten golden Guilders the richer. Do we have a deal?"

Despite his easy smile you get the sense that this softly-spoken gentleman means business. If you'd like to sell your bird then turn to 102. If not then you politely refuse the offer: turn to 293.

564

Forsaking the first wagon for the time being you turn back to deal with the swarm of elfs attacking the rear of the convoy. There's no hope for the wagon that was toppled but the guards, drivers and even the skeleton horses are fighting valiantly to free the other two wagons, which are surrounded by elfs. As you gallop towards them you reflect that you're probably doomed unless you're carrying some very useful gear.

If you've got the Boots of Elfish Stomping equipped then turn to 1012. If you have Pixie Bits and wish to use them then turn to 1233. Otherwise you crash into the back of the mob of elfs surrounding the closest wagon, knocking one down but leaving most of them unharmed. Occupied as they are with battling the skeletons and looting the wagons, not all the elfs have time for you but enough of them do to make you instantly regret your poor decision-making. They turn and attack:

GREASY ELF: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1
LEERING ELF: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1
STURDY ELF : DIFFICULTY 10 - TOUGHNESS 2
VIOLENT ELF: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 2

As long as you have any GUARDS left you don't need to count this as a Multiple Hassle since they're fighting hard to keep some elfs off your back, but each time you lose a round you lose 1 GUARD. If you are reduced to 0 GUARDS this fight becomes a Multiple Hassle.

If you win turn to 1209. If you lose you soon find yourself unhorsed and surrounded by a crowd of very violent enemies. There's nothing for it but to beg for your life - turn to 816.

565

You refuse the quest - you're not here to pick up the Goblin King's unmentionables.

"So, too noble to soil your hands doing my dirty work? Very well, I'll make you a real noble - the Duke of the Swamp of Perpetual Putridity! Well, laugh", he says to the goblins around him, who all cackle raucously on cue.

As it turns out, the Swamp of Perpetual Putridity is only a little more waterlogged and unpleasant than the marshy woodlands of the Feewald from whence you came, and its residents are far more tolerable than the pixies, dire wolfs and other monsters who inhabit your home forest (to say nothing of the elfs). While your noble styles don't seem to entitle you to anything more than a cheap costume crown, there's all the bugs you can eat here and you get your very own slime-covered rotting log to sleep in, Eventually your nose adapts to the perpetual putridity and you come to find the air to be sweet and fragrant.

Speaking of noses, you'd like to go rub Jeff's nose in your success, but you never find a way out of the Swamp. Although you didn't die in a ditch you get the feeling this isn't one of the good endings. What would have happened if you weren't so dismissive of the Goblin King's requests? Probably you would have died trying to carry out whatever task he was going to give you, so I guess this isn't too bad in comparison. But in any case, your adventure ends here.

566

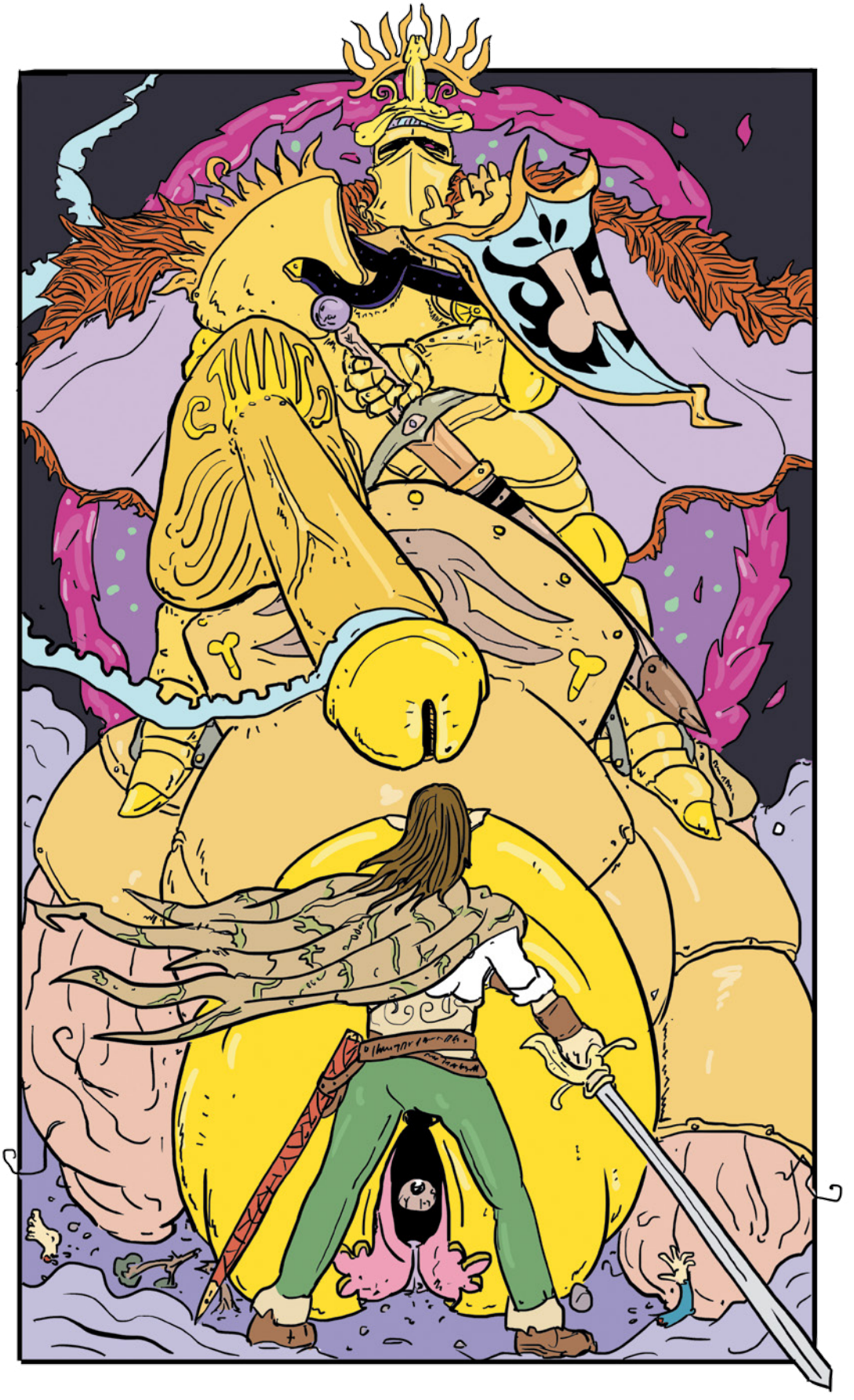
These stupid mazes were always the worst part of adventure games and you'll be damned if you're going to willingly subject yourself to another one. You march right back up the tunnel and through the crypt. A few undead nasties watch your progress with interest but they can tell you're in no mood and they let you pass unhindered. You're still muttering to yourself about terrible game design and hackneyed clichés as you leave the graveyard and storm off through the southern gates, following the directions of a standing stone which helpfully informs you that the road to Bilgeton lies in that direction.

Annoyingly, your roll is slowed somewhat by a couple of shamblers who didn't get the memo. Your annoyance turns to terror as a pair of the rotting undead horrors lurch out of the deadwood lining the overgrown track, arms rigidly outstretched and gurgling for brains. Treat this as a Multiple Hassle:

🔪**OBTUSE SHAMBLER : DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**RUDE SHAMBLER : DIFFICULTY 4 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Shamblers might be slow but they can easily back a panicking opponent into a corner - each time you lose a round against either of these two lose 1 ÉLAN for the remainder of this page (should you lose against both in one round, lose 2 ÉLAN).

If you're defeated then roll two dice and add them together- if the total's lower than your current ÉLAN (including losses incurred in the fight) then turn to 1576. If it's equal or higher then turn to 1047. If you win then you bust your way through and resume making your way to the main road to Bilgeton. At last the path rejoins the paved Count's Road and you turn east, ready to resume the long hike towards the big smoke. Turn to 1802.



567

The earth heaves as a monstrous demon charges towards you. The thing racing towards you, lance couched, is a being known as a Phalloknight. Being barely educated, you know next to nothing about the things, but you're about to receive a very short yet thorough course of personal tuition.

This particular Phalloknight is enormous. Clad from shaft to tip in shining gold armour crafted over decades by multiple generations of master cocksmiths, armed to the pelvic floor with a lance the length of a good-sized house and a greatsword longer than you are tall, his charge has an unstoppable momentum. You are in an unbelievable amount of trouble and nothing you could do is likely to get you out of this mess in one piece.

You draw your sword and prepare to stand your ground against this armoured demonic onslaught.

🔪**PHALLOKNIGHT ERRANT: DIFFICULTY 11 - FISTS 3 - TOUGHNESS 5**

If you lose a round to this enemy, turn to 618. If by some miracle you prevail, turn to 389.

Alternatively, you can take the more prudent (or cowardly) approach and try to find a way to avoid being mashed into a gristly paste:

If you possess something long and thin like the Bastard Sword of the Elf or the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole you may attempt to strike the obvious weak spot in the beast's armour. Turn to 636. Or you can go for the same spot with the bow: turn to 1728.

If you have Pixie Bits in your inventory you could try throwing a bag of hallucinogenic dust into his face to crack his resolve. Turn to 1736. Or if you don't want to waste your hard-earned corpse parts you could try to crack his resolve using your powers of persuasion by turning to 231.

To leap aside from the charge in an attempt to manoeuvre behind the demon for a chance to backstab it, turn to 439.

To bravely turn your tail and flee, turn to 1195.

If instead you would prefer to grovel for mercy, turn to 136.

568

As you gloat and brag to no one in particular about your victory and also about your new manly plumage you fail to notice someone - or something - creeping up on you until it's too late. The first thing you know about it is a jolt of pain between your shoulder blades. You stumble forward, your cries of self-promotion replaced with a shout of pain, and turn only to see a horrible living skeleton standing behind you, its axe raised for a second swing!

You were lucky that skeletons don't have much in the way of musculature and that your pack rat ways mean that your backpack was full of blow-cushioning garbage, but you're not going to get so lucky a second time around. The skeleton chitters menacingly as you make your prayers...

Suddenly you hear a hoarse voice bellowing an impressively vile stream of billingsgate from the open window atop the tower:

"THIGHBONE YOU FUCKING OAF, CAN'T YOU BLOODY SEE HE'S NOT A BLASTED ELF. BRING THE PLOUGHING BASTARD UP HERE IF YOU'VE HAVEN'T MURDERED THE POOR BUGGER ALREADY."

Thighbone looks as embarrassed as is possible for a skeleton. He chitters an apology and lowers his axe. Lose 5 EFFORT from the bruising. Assuming you survived, since you don't have anywhere else to be you could accompany the skeleton into the tower - turn to 1295 - or if you'd rather just beat it you can ignore the bonebag's wishes and get out of here by turning to 1424.

569

Medical science is more advanced among the goblins than other species, but it's still in its infancy. In addition, the doctor you've been seeing isn't exactly up to date on the latest in medical procedures and in any case his tools aren't clean. The doctor healed the injury he was working on but in the process he's given you a horrible case of the plague!

Reduce your Maximum EFFORT by 10 - if your current EFFORT is above this level then lower it to the maximum as well. From now on you will restore 5 less EFFORT from sleep as the disease saps away at your vitality. Hopefully you can reach the end of the book or find a cure before it's too late! Already feeling nauseous you stagger away from the dodgy doctor and back into the streets of Gobholme. Turn to 192.

570

You tell Kaspars that you have to take a slash and get up. As a heavy drinker this seems natural enough a thing to do and it's only a few seconds later when you're safely out of reach that he remembers that you haven't even drunk anything. Filled with rage at your attempted escape from trollish hospitality he and several of his buddies start hurling empties at you. You dodge and weave and pray to whatever you believe in that you can make it to the edge of the plateau before getting your head cracked open by a stone flask.

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE : DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then you escape, relatively unscathed: turn to 605.

If you fail then turn to 574.

571

You carry on the way you were going. For something called a Mazyrinth there aren't really any twists or turns - just a straight path which leads directly towards the tall white castle in the centre of the Mazyrinth. Before long you've bypassed all the horrors and annoying puzzles that supposedly occupy this place and have arrived at the Goblin Town of Gobholme proper.

Turn to 88.

572

Your lanky companion looks furious at your proposal.

“Jak wyglądam? Nie jestem drabiną, jestem tyczka!” he says animatedly. Luckily the guard is too absorbed in his book - some kind of contrivance involving rolling dice and flipping incessantly through the pages - to notice the outburst.

You tell him that you don’t care if he’s a drabiną, a tyczka or a dupek, he can hoist you over the gate or go to the hells.

“Spierdalaj ty skurwielu”, he says, putting up his dukes. You guess that tears it!

🔪**10-FOOT DUNGEONEERING POLE: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2**

If you win turn to 715. If you lose turn to 1160.

573

Unable to resist any longer, you wrench the tome open and begin reading. Dark tendrils of knowledge reach out and penetrate your mind almost instantly. The magical book pulsates horribly as it imparts the unknowable secrets of creation directly into your mind. Add 1 FIST!

Suddenly you find yourself somewhere else. You’re standing on a crate in the middle of a village square, buck naked, screaming about something to a small crowd of merchants and townsfolk as you wave the book around in the air above your head.

“... NOW CAN YOU DISTINGUISH THE HEREDITARY “WORD WORLD” FROM THE NATURAL “REAL WORLD”? BEWARE OF THE CHANGE WHEN YOUR BRAIN IS FREED FROM THE HEREDITARY “WORD WORLD” VASSALAGE - FOR YOU COULD FIND THE NATURAL “REAL WORLD Has been d.....”

With that you trail off, no longer recalling what you were supposed to say next. The crowd murmurs in disappointment at your leaving them hanging and one of the villagers hurls a rotten tomato which splatters harmlessly but disgustingly on your chest. A few armoured guards who were looking on in amusement up until now proceed towards you purposefully, shoving their way through the mob. You’d better think fast!

You’ve lost everything you own, including the clothes you were wearing! The only item in your possession is the Book of Unknowable Secrets - though since you’ve read it will no longer torment you so you no longer lose EFFORT for having it. Remove all other items and cash from your Adventure Scroll including any cursed items that you would not ordinarily be able to drop (and you do not suffer the effects of dropping them). Make a note of your nudity while you’re there.

Having done that you must decide - will you flee from the guards? If so turn to 1770 to flee north towards the town limits or 287 to flee south towards a bridge over a wide river. Otherwise you can throw yourself at the mercy of the law by turning to 958.

574

In retrospect it was probably a mistake to piss off a bunch of creatures that each weigh as much as a fully-laden wagon. One of them hurls a full bottle which dents your skull in and knocks you out cold. Before you can recover, another troll picks you up and hurls you off the steep edge of the plateau. You fail to survive the landing, which should teach you to be more polite next time.

575

You manage to keep Simon and his accomplices at bay for long enough to witness the terrible thing that's happening to Briggins. He's transforming - growing larger, his back extending and his rags tearing further as an extra pair of legs sprouts out the back. Fur bursts out on his exposed hindquarters and all his feet become hooves. Displaying extraordinary strength he rises to his four feet, flinging aside the two hefty lumberjacks that were pinning him down like they weren't there at all. By this time Simon has stopped battling you and turned to deal with the thing you can now clearly see before you - a were-monster of some kind, a grotesque being like a taurcent, but reversed somehow. Briggins has the hindquarters of a horse and the upper body and head of a man. You've never heard of this kind of being before and you wonder what foul curse has befallen this man.

"So you see now", says Simon, no longer seeing the point in trying to drive you off, "what you were not supposed to see. This man is cursed but he is a Free Brother nonetheless. We stick by him, even if it means living out here and occasionally getting kicked in the head by a reverse-taurcent".

Briggins, now free of restraint, is heading towards the work horses, wearing nothing but a tattered shirt and an unpleasant expression on his face. The horses whinny nervously.

"Oh, not the mare, Briggins! Have you no shame, man?" shouts Simon, running from you to join his companions in restraining this beast. Just as he's beginning to tousle with the reverse-taurcent another group of men comes bursting out of the woods. Six rough-looking bandits in cheap sackcloth follow a ridiculous fop into the fray, screaming a vicious war cry as they attack with daggers, short-swords and axes. With the element of surprise on their side they quickly appear to be getting the upper hand against the beleaguered woodcutters. distracted as they are with bringing the monster that was Briggins under control.

The fop, a moustachioed gentleman in a huge floppy hat and wearing fine silk robes over what you assume is padded armour, cuts his opponent down with an exquisitely expensive-looking sword and, looking around for the next enemy, spots you.

"Salut! Whose part do you take, boy - us good and noble sellswords, or these abominable monsters?"

How do you answer? If you wish to help these fellows rid the world of this unsightly monster and its friends then turn to 868. If you'd rather take the side of the lumberjacks despite their recent attempt to beat you senseless then turn to 1466. If you've decided this mess is somebody else's problem then turn to 1403 to get out of there instead.

576

The guard's eyes narrow and he sucks in a sharp breath of air between his teeth.

"Elfs ripping up the road and you can't even bring yourself to pay your share of the repair bill. You're exactly what's wrong with the world today. I don't have time for this so make it 3 Guilders and get out of here".

As you're about to respond to this revised offer the guard takes on a strange expression.

"You know now that I look at you... you're not quite human, are you? Those pointy ears... smug expression... are you one of those road-wrecking elfs? Might need another look through your cargo..."

If you quickly pay out the 3 Guilders then turn to 26. If you're not going to be intimidated by this thug then turn to 1049.

577

Walking through this swampy morass in pitch blackness is inconceivably dangerous. For a while you're able to follow the distant sounds of the adventurers' squelching through the muck but eventually this recedes into the general night time racket of the forest - screeches, screams, horrible slurping noises...which sound like they're coming from right behind you!

One of your most recent footsteps fell right on top of a Schleimwald Leech - a gigantic, unthinking, eyeless tube of slime with sucker ringed with razor-sharp teeth at one end. While it doesn't have thoughts, not having a brain and all, it does have feelings and your casual disregard for its personal space has infuriated it. It attacks:

🔪**SCHLEIMWALD LEECH: DIFFICULTY 10 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you have the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes you find it has no effect on this brainless monstrosity. Each time you lose a round you must roll a dice and subtract that amount of EFFORT, but you pick up an equal number of Leech Fangs which you extract from the wound after the fight (add these to your Adventure Scroll in the Cash section).

Should you defeat this monster then turn to 1464. Otherwise the leech isn't going to pass up a midnight snack and it finishes the job that Jeff started of sucking the life out of you. Your adventure ends here.

578

The elfs have evidently planned this trap for a while. As the first wagon passes the elfs run screaming from the tree line, wielding flimsy but pointy elfen weapons and even wearing light armour (this is quite unusual - elfs are usually a bit skint to buy nicely fitted armour with all the extra buckles they like, and too lazy to maintain it). Behind the first wave of about fifteen elfs a few archers stand on each side of the road with bows drawn. This is no regular group of elfen whimsyflickers - they must have summoned these raiders from all over eastern Nonce!

As you stare transfixed at the pointy-eared doom that is racing towards you one of the wagons crashes into the barrels on the road, tearing its wheel off and flinging the carriage, driver, guard and horses down hard on their side, flinging up a huge cloud of dust and causing bones to rain down all over the caravan. Deduct 1 WAGON and 1 GUARD from your notes. The remaining wagons avoid this terrible fate but have no time to relax - they're beset by elfs on every side and unable to move forward. Only the first wagon, ahead of the others, has any possibility at all of rolling forward without some serious assistance. Even to get that one clear you'd have to take out the group of elfen archers who are raining arrows down on the driver and horses from the tree line. The driver is almost literally going to pieces with terror and has pulled its skull inside its ribcage - if that driver can't pull himself together before he's destroyed that wagon's not going anywhere either.

The situation is undoubtedly grim - if you want to cut your losses and get out of here then turn to 1171. If you want to save at least the lead wagon from the archers then turn to 820. If you think the lead wagon can take care of itself for now and you're ready to attempt something insanely dangerous and heroic you can save the other two carriages first by turning to 564.

579

Shoving your way through a cacophony of birds, bunnies, foxes and other garbage you make your way into the clearing where you behold a strange sight. An unreasonably hairy man, dressed all in brown, is digging around in the dirt in the middle of a toadstool circle. Around him the whole clearing blooms with beautiful and exotic flowers, strange leafy plants and viciously hallucinogenic-looking mushrooms. You notice a bunch of them have been thoroughly chewed on. Animals frolic together in this strange woodland meadow and birds and butterflies fill the air, dappling the forest floor with their dancing shadows as the sun streams into the clearing.

Perhaps alerted by a yip of pain as you brusquely kick a particularly amorous fox away from your leg, the filthy hippy jerkily sits up from whatever he's doing and stares at you with pupils the size of dinner plates. After considering you for a moment and evidently not making you out to be a threat, he speaks,

"Oh hey, man. Are you... cool?"

If you're cool then turn to 1391. If you're willing to admit that you're not cool then turn to 783. if you just want to get away from this weird dude and all his animals then turn to 1623.

580

You're probably about to say something you'd regret when Brenda, your elfish travelling companion, butts in.

"Your composition was simply exquisite, but I found it more interesting still to listen to the notes you didn't play..."

Lost in this flattering conversation with your traveling buddy, the musician doesn't notice when you snake his drink and the tips he'd earned for the night - add 30 elfen leaves and 2 Bilgeton Guilders to the cash section of your Adventure Scroll. You can also keep the hat he was using to collect the tips if you like - add the Fly Hat to the scroll as well, assuming you don't already have one.

You sidle off and drink the tasteless aelfwine while you wait for Brenda to be done with the guy. She comes back a few minutes later with a big smile on her face.

"The whole village is getting ready to go on a lorewardening excursion", she says excitedly. "Let's go talk to the locals and see if we can get in on the action!"

If you'd like to join your fellow elfs in a lorewardening excursion then turn to 1419 to approach the locals. If you'd rather not do whatever that is you can instead disappoint Brenda and head on to the bar - turn to 594.

581

Freaked out by the huge wolf chasing you down, you somehow don't notice the trap that you're being herded towards - a deep pit partially covered with leaves and twigs. You plummet down a long way and land awkwardly on your arm and breaking a bone with a loud crack. Lose 1 ÉLAN.

Dire wolves are smart enough to dig traps but not intelligent enough to know when to stop digging. The pit is so deep that there's no way you could climb out, but at least the monster can't reach you no matter how much he tries to cram his huge head into the hole and snap at the top of your head. He seems to be too worn out to dig so after a while he gives up and sits next to the top of the pit emitting a continuous and pitiful howl while you howl along in pain and misery.

This pathetic display continues until just after dawn when a pair of human guards discover your predicament. They chase off the dire wolf with a barrage of arrows and some shouted threats before turning their attention to you. A helmeted head appears over the edge of the pit.

"Ye there! Be ye elf, or man?"

If ye be elf, turn to 264. If man, turn to 1645. If you're a half elf, neither elf nor man, turn to 92.

582

You introduce yourself to the demon and attempt to explain that you got wasted and accidentally summoned the fiend. It seems unimpressed.

"Very well. Shall we get this over with then? I have serfs to flay back home". The Prince of Shards raises its hand, extending several six-inch glass blades in preparation for the disembowelling. You respond by grovelling in the mud and crying pitifully for mercy, and for once it works. The demon relents, lowering its hand and retracting its dreadful mirrored claws.

"Your suffering is amusing to me. I'd hate to come all this way just to blunt my shards butchering a mere mortal. So, let's make this at least somewhat interesting. You may challenge me to any game. Should you win I shall grant you the traditional prize that you'd usually win when a mortal defeats a demon. In the extremely likely scenario that I win, I shall kill you and drag your soul into the Hell of Introspection where I shall torment you for millennia without end. What say you?"

Since you correctly surmise that you will be summarily disembowelled should you refuse, you readily agree.

"Excellent. Such fun. What challenge have you for me?" he tinkles. You think about what you might be good at and, not thinking of much, settle on one of the following options:

If you wish to engage this demon in a riddle contest then turn to 1630.
If you'd prefer to defeat it at chess then turn to 67.
If you want to trust in your luck you can try to win at a coin toss by turning to 171.

583

Sneering, the guards take your money. Deduct 2 Guilders from your Adventure Scroll.

"Now piss off. Don't let me see you around here again" says the one who's been doing all the yelling up until now. Since they're watching you, halberds at the ready, you sadly pack up your stuff and trudge away from the market square.

Having wasted most of the day on these trifles it's probably time to get on with what you came to Bilgeton to do. If you've still got some errands to run then turn to 1039. Otherwise turn to 827 to figure out how you're going to end this quest.

584

Since Bhad can't see you, you roll your eyes but tell the dragon that you value it and want to hear all about whatever it's talking about. The boring beast continues prattling as he flies. It's almost hypnotically annoying. You feel like you're nodding off.

ACTIVE LISTENING: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you succeed then you convincingly feign an interest in everything the dragon has to say: turn to 50. If you fail turn to 1442.

585

The ballroom is a wide, brilliantly lit space milling with the wealthiest lords and ladies of Bilgeton. The men are all clad in doublets and hose threaded with gold and inlaid with jewels, their heads topped with sugarloaf and mortarboard hats , the women in flowing silk robes and dresses decorated with intricate patterns and topped off with intricate headdresses in a variety of shapes. A more pampered, perfumed mass of walking moneybags you've never seen. As they dance a strange hopping jig called the saltarello, a small horde of servants dressed in immaculate black clothing scuttle about with trays, serving the lords and ladies with delicate pastries and expensive liqueurs. Weirdly, the Count and Countess don't seem to have arrived at their own engagement party yet, but they're expected at any moment.

Ready to make your grand entrance to Bilgeton society as an eligible bachelor, you approach the dance floor. Before stepping out you give your outfit a final check.

What are you wearing?

If you're completely naked or your modesty is preserved only by a barrel or tattered rags or the like then turn to 211.
If you're infested with Moth Eggs turn to 1089.
If you're draped in the Pixie Hide Cloak or some other filthy, uncured skin then turn to 971.
If you have any weapons equipped or are wearing armour of any sort (including shields and helmets) then turn to 1158.
If you're wearing Dapper Garb then turn to 273.
If you're wearing Imposing Attire or Magnificent Outfit then turn to 644.
If you're wearing the Resplendent Regalia then turn to 167.
Finally, if none of these things are true then you're just dressed as you - turn to 408.

586

You decide to scope out the wagons to see if there's some way you can't get in. After a little canvassing you find that none of the crews are inclined to take you on - not that it'd help, as Bilgeton doesn't want any more caravan handlers anyway. You'll have to sneak in.

A couple of prospects present themselves - right at the rear of the queue for the gates there's an open wagon with a magnificent mahogany coffin lashed to the back, presumably for interment at the Bilgeton Synod's plush graveyard. Maybe you could use this - turn to 390.

If possibly desecrating the dead isn't your speed there's a very wide, heavily-loaded cart piled high with straw a bit closer to the entrance. You might have more luck in there - turn to 545 to give that a go.

587

With the priest gone the church is a lonely place. The dull red lanterns spill a sombre, blood red light on the bare and tiny church. There's nothing much worth stealing here though you find 5 Guilders (plus any amount the padre relieved you of earlier, if any), a holy Scroll of Dispel and an incongruous and bloody hunk of Meat in the donation bowl at the base of one of the statues.

Searching the back of the room you find a Swag - a kind of rolled-up mattress which the priest was probably sleeping on - which you can take with you if you like.

With your looting accomplished you can either leave the church and explore the town some more - turn to 1701 - or you can do the only other natural thing - burn it down. Turn to 1310.

588

You've always hated Biff but the elfish legal code frowns slightly on outright murder. Since you're now free of the shackles of elfish propriety you unsling your bow and rain arrows on the architect of a good chunk of your childhood trauma:

🔪**KILL BIFF : DIFFICULTY 12**

If you succeed then enough of your arrows come close enough to their mark and the gang scatters into the woods - turn to 1292.
If you fail then turn to 1706.

589

The shovel is, as you're no doubt aware by now, cursed in such a way that it's impossible to unhand despite its tendency to rat you out to anyone who might be interested in kicking your head in for your crimes. It immediately recognises The Spectre as an authority figure and begins to snitch in a loud, pealing tone like a bell being struck.

The Spectre, having never encountered an item like this, listens to the list of your major and minor crimes with rapt attention. Seizing the moment, you swing the shovel into the distracted do-gooder's face, knocking him to the ground and probably mangling him up pretty good. In any case he's not going to be slamming too much evil for a while.

Unfortunately this doesn't take care of the wolf, who bounds towards you showing every indication that it intends to avenge its master.

🔪**SATAN: DIFFULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you win turn to 1214. If you can't beat this animal then turn to 925.

590

You throw scissors, which is met with Kaspars' fist, clenched in the form of the rock. You have been defeated.

"Phew", sighs Kaspars in relief, "Thought you had me there for a minute!". He drains his bottle and hurls it off the mesa. You hear it smashing in the creek bed below.

"Let's have another drink then".

Since the trolls will probably brain you for being a bad loser if you refuse, you don't see what choice you have. Turn to 485.

591

You're desperate to get on with your adventure and don't want to spend any more time dealing with gibberish-spouting lizard folk in frou-frou outfits. You accordingly take a quick tour about the cavern, looking for a way out that doesn't involve doubling back the way you came. After wasting a lot of time taking in the sights (none) as you circumnavigate the cavern, you realise that the only possibility of an easy escape is going to be at the top of that hill, if anywhere at all. Maybe some wizard that can levitate you out of the cavern roof or perhaps a pegasus - you can never tell with these fantasy adventures. Anyway, there's no way you're going to backtrack through those blasted tunnels that you slogged through on the way in. Instead you begin the difficult climb up the stony hill, clambering through the loose scree on your way to the top.

Eventually you arrive at the summit and see your ticket out of here - a huge clockwork contraption featuring a long vertical wooden shaft with a massive, heavy-looking hobnailed boot on the top end, held in place with a simple metal pin attached to a long rope. It looks like some incredibly painful catapult, and since there's no way you're going to slide back down that hill and deal with the nobolds again you're going to have to take it for a spin. Taking up the rope connected to the pin, you position your buttocks right in front of the machine and, bending over, give the rope a yank. The pin goes flying out of the contraption with a metallic ping, freeing the boot to begin its descent. The huge piece of footwear swings down and around in a great arc and catches you hard in the buttocks. There's a godawful crack as your coccyx gives way and you're hurled with incredible force through the air, flying clear of the hole in the cavern ceiling and out into the night. Just as you think you'll continue to soar up into the stars above your ascent slows then reverses and you find yourself coming down hard. You feel twigs and branches catching at you and tearing at your skin and clothes, then a tree trunk fills your entire view for a moment. There's a sickening crunch and all goes black.

Turn to 68.

592

Although you probably assumed that Radabastard was watching, waiting for you to slip up, all the crafty wizard did was conjure a mass of moth eggs into your clothing and effects while he was lecturing you. They've lain dormant until now, but as soon as you entered a large enough forest the horrible things detected the presence of rotting foliage and began to hatch, looking for something to nibble! Since they're already in your clothes they have a snack close at hand!

Cursing the brown wizard you give up on picking the endless squirming caterpillars from your person and continue on your way. Add the Moth Eggs to your Adventure Scroll. Note that the Moth Eggs negate any bonuses you may derive from your outfit. Note also that if you've somehow become infested with Moth Eggs twice you must remove all outfits and armour from your Adventure Scroll altogether as the infestation has become impossible to bear. If a second infestation occurs then you will be considered naked even though you will still be able to cover your privates with a few rags.

If you've been suitably chastened then return to the page from which you came.

593

As you're fumbling around with one of the elf's extra belt buckles you hear as sound behind you - the skeletons have returned! You try to stand and turn to defend yourself but you're too slow - by the time you've gotten to your feet the skeleton has swung his axe down hard between your shoulder blades. Fortunately the skeleton isn't that muscular and your backpack is stuffed with garbage: the blow turns, saving your life but causing you to stumble over the corpse of the elf you were robbing. You slam into the ground hard and the skeleton, unfazed by its failure to kill you the first time, strides forward and raises his weapon for a second attempt....

Just as you're reciting your prayers you hear a hoarse voice bellowing an impressively vile stream of billingsgate from the open window atop the tower:

"THIGHBONE YOU FUCKING OAF, CAN'T YOU BLOODY SEE HE'S NOT A BLASTED ELF. BRING THE PLOUGHING BASTARD UP HERE IF YOU HAVEN'T MURDERED THE POOR BUGGER ALREADY."

Thighbone looks as embarrassed as is possible for a skeleton. He chitters an apology and helps you back to your feet. Lose 5 EFFORT from the beating. Surrounded as you are by skeletons and still in shock you see no alternative but to stagger towards the tower, the skeletons jittering along jauntily beside you.

Turn to 1295.

594

Ignoring the sidelong glances of the locals you head over to the bar where the gnome is pouring drinks from the large casks behind the counter. Some of them seem to be propping up the stone stairs heading up to the next level of the tower.

"You don't belong here any more than I do. If you're an elf I'm a pixie", states the gnome gruffly, interrupting your train of thought. You tell him to shut up and get you a drink.

"Five leaves", says the gnome. "Or one Guilder".

If you've got the cash you put your currency on the counter - turn to 344. If the price is too steep or you're broke you give up on what is very likely to be a dead end and go hassle the locals instead - turn to 1419, or leave the pub without annoying anyone by turning to 187.

595

You know that all this adventuring has made you awfully tanned and buff but even you're surprised when your greasy pick up line gets you invited in for elfleaf tea and a packet of lembas. You can't stomach elf food and rations but you're not one to turn down a polite euphemism for sex. One thing leads to another and you stay the night, and then another and another. On the fourth day the residents of Aelfsburg return from whatever they were doing and your new lady friend introduces you to them. At that point you're pretty much common-law married by elf standards, despite the obvious disapproval of the locals at having a half elf around.

The baby, a half elf bastard sired by the wandering milkman you saw leaping out the window, grows and never truly accepts you as his own father no matter what you do for him. Bullied by the full-blood elfs in town, he becomes sullen and withdrawn, spending weeks at a time in his room, emerging only to stuff some elf food into his face or steal something of yours before locking himself in again. You try to encourage him to go grasswatching, learn lorewardening, anything at all to help him fit in, but he just resents you for it. One day you can take it no more - though it breaks your heart you and your wife give him an ultimatum: since he can't live in elfish society he must go live among the humans. Perhaps his father - a man about who you know nothing other than that he comes from Bilgeton - will let him crash on his couch.

After a lot of shouting and slamming of doors you're left in peace, short of three of your prized possessions and a bastard elf.

596

The remnants of the cart lie overturned and smouldering on a cobblestoned section of the road. Smashed containers and discarded cargo lie everywhere. It's mostly gilded tat and ugly clothes but while you're searching the body of the wagon driver you find 5 Bilgeton Guilders in a small pouch which was overlooked by the elfs. Add this currency to your Adventure Scroll.

As you're counting your scavenged currency you notice some motion from the verge of the forest - one of the giant birds has come back, probably looking for its master. It's still wearing its harness - maybe you could put it to some use? The huge creature, standing ten feet tall, squawks at you and flaps it little wings as it notices your attention. Now you look at them, those wings look like they could be pretty tasty once you've got them fried up, not to mention those drumsticks.

If you'd like to tame this strange bird then turn to 1252. If you'd rather stock up on food then turn to 457. If you'd prefer just to walk on and leave this creature be then turn to 1428.

597

You stomp your foot and inform the guard in as flowery a language as you can muster that as a professional diplomat and experienced roisterer it is a mark of distinction to have weedy, under-developed biceps and soft, dainty hands, and that your time and inconvenience is worth far more than the paltry insult offered. You threaten to take this matter up with the lord of the town.

Among your possessions do you have the Bastard Sword of the Elf, the Bow of the Wood, the Elfish Cloak of Invisibility or the Feewald Map? If so turn to 1021. Otherwise, turn to 1179.

598

You leap to the attack! The priest stands (though kind of unsteadily given the amount of booze he's imbibed), extends his neck frill menacingly and slashes at you with his steak knife.

🔪**PADRE: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

This priest knows some kind of spell of smiting - any time he rolls 6 on a FIST die lose 5 EFFORT as you're bowled backwards over the pews. If he rolls 6 on both dice lose 10 EFFORT.

If you win then you cut the priest down - turn to 1788. If you lose then turn to 1029.

599

The agent is livid.

"There were supposed to be four wagons! Four! Where are the workers? Did you just leave them out there?" he screams. The agent seems close to tears.

"You're not getting paid for this. Now get out of my sight!".

You try to explain about the elf ambush but he's having none of it. If you're done with these skeletons and their annoying agent then you can chalk this one up to experience and go check out the rest of the city by turning to 1364. Otherwise you're going to have to fight for your money:

AGGIE'S AGENT : DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1

If you defeat this sad little man then turn to 1814. If you throw in the towel then turn to 540.

600

The man speaks. "I'm Sven and this is my wife Britta", the man says as his wife waves to you cheerily. "Along with our daughter Emilie, we are the Silvermanes of Silvermane's Sundries. How do you do, pleased to meet you I'm sure."

You wait impatiently for him to get to the point.

"We have a proposition for you. A little birdy from the Feewald told me that you're on your way to Bilgeton. Well, our daughter Emilie", he continues, indicating the large portrait of a young lady hanging just behind the counter, "she's opening a Silvermane's franchise in Bilgeton. She hasn't completely mastered the trade though, so she needs a little help. Long story short, we had our friend Radabastard the Brown make us a copy of the family ring. I wear one, they're enchanted to let us talk to animals". You notice the chunky silver ring on his left hand. "Really helps with the business".

"We want you to head to Bilgeton and drop the ring off to Emilie at the local Silvermane's Sundries", continues Britta. "We'll give you five Guilders to cover your expenses, and you can use the ring as much as you like to help you along the way. But please, don't lose it or try to pawn it. It'll be awful if that happens".

No amount of haggling changes the offer. If you've stolen the Obscene Monkey then accepting is the Silvermanes' price for not calling the militia - turn to 1591 - or you can muscle your way out by turning to 1071.

If you're on the level at least with regards to the Silvermanes you have the choice - are you going to take the job (turn to 1591) or turn it down and get the hells out of here? (turn to 1452)

601

You inform the wizard that you would indeed like a "high score". Despite your questionable grasp of the lingo Radabastard offers you a little leather pouch packed with a suspicious-smelling herb for 60 elfen leaves. You've got no idea how to use this stuff but you sense you'd look really uncool if you backed out of the deal now so you fork over the cash. Remove 60 leaves from the Cash section of the Adventure Scroll and add the Interesting Herbs.

With that transaction behind you, Radabastard the Brown is now pretty sure you're not a militiaman or church inquisitor. He invites you to partake of his mind expanding mushrooms, holding out a handful of the terrifying-looking fungus in your direction. If you want to take him up on this offer then turn to 354. If you decline then turn to 769.

602

As you trudge back through the labyrinth you just get more and more confused about what it all meant. You don't think you really get what this place is about. You decide to ask Karol about it.

In response he launches into yet another lengthy and tedious lecture in that incomprehensible language of his. You begin to feel that Karol's shtick is wearing a bit thin and that it's gone on far too long. You tell him so in no uncertain terms, rudely interrupting his explanation.

His face turns red and he spits out, "Chuj ci w dupę", before storming off on his long shanks, disappearing down the passage far faster than you could run (even if you could be bothered, which you can't). You're not sure what he said but it plainly wasn't nice, and whatever it was he definitely meant it. You don't need friends like that, you tell yourself.

By the time you've emerged from the labyrinth and back into the bat cave, not only he but the lady bat are gone. Losing your best friend AND your beloved in a single day is a new low, even for you. Lose 5 EFFORT from the heartbreak and remove the 10-Foot Pole from your Adventure Scroll.

Too sad to even pick over the bat lady's worthless possessions you emerge from the cave and try to recall the directions she gave you. You could make your way back to the road to Bilgeton by cutting south through the forest via the Glade of Pixies. Turn to 520 if you want to do this. If you don't want anything to do with glades or pixies you can take the high road instead and traverse the Big Rock Goblin Mountains in the northeast by turning to 453.

603

You sheepishly approach the gates of Brunnenfeld. A guard comes out to greet you.

"You'd best get in here and explain what the hell that was about then," he yells. You stride towards him, ready to unleash a torrent of self-serving bullshit on the poor man, but instead you become the recipient of a mailed fist to the face as soon as you come within swinging distance of the guard. You collapse to the ground and remain conscious long enough to see the guard grab you by the feet and feel him starting to drag you somewhere. The last thought that goes through your mind is that first impressions really do seem to matter among these humans, and then everything goes dark.

Turn to 1221.

604

Weirdly, the ring has no effect on this mule. You recall from your readings of the Bestiary (available from anywhere you can find books) that the Goblin King has the ability to shapeshift and to turn people into goblins. You wonder if this ability extends to animals as well. Perhaps you're dealing with an intelligent, if cantankerous being here? Probably someone or other that managed to annoy the Goblin King even more than you did.

You tell the donkey that you're on to it and ask it nicely if it'll work together with you. Either you're coming across as your usual smarmy self or the donkey's a real jerk because it refuses with a loud bray and a hard kick which fortunately just misses you. You'll have to subdue it if you're going to get it to listen to you!

🔪**MILNER: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you succeed then you manage to climb into the saddle. It'll probably listen to you now - you think. Turn to 296.

If you fail the rotten mule manages to bite you while you're trying to reassure it of your good intentions, ripping out a large chunk of your hair and leaving a bald spot. Lose 5 EFFORT. As you scream in pain the animal trots off, forcing you to follow on foot. Turn to 55.

605

Bottles crashing all around you, you make it to the other side of the plateau and slide down the side of the butte. Luckily you find a relatively safe path through the mountains and continue on unsmashed, leaving this terrible diplomatic failure behind you.

If you had a mission from Brunnenfeld you've failed - make a note on your Adventure Scroll to this effect. Now turn to 955.

606

The Palais De Dance is a relatively fancy club on the south side of the river, set in a converted warehouse in a juxtaposition that rich humans pretend to enjoy. Located in the Noble District it's a favourite place for minor aristocrats and their toadies to mingle while listening to the latest in avant garde dwarfen music and enjoying expensive and exotic cocktails made from rare ingredients sourced from distant lands. In other words the place is too good for you, and it knows it. Standing out the front is maybe the meanest bouncer in the entire human kingdoms, the surly and violent Benedikt. Once known for hacking a peasant's grandmother's face off and selling back the pieces for less than a hargroat, Benny the Bouncer has for years been an impassible barrier between undesirables and the delights of the Palais De Dance. It is him you face now.

He eyeballs you as you approach the door.

Are you wearing the Dapper Garb, Imposing Attire, the Magnificent Outfit or the Resplendent Regalia? If so turn to 1356.

If you're just in your regular clothes or wearing armour of some kind then turn to 671.

If you're wearing a barrel or you're stark naked then turn to 815.

607

Hurensohn ducks down in the carriage as the horrible scarecrow and his demon knights approach. He shoves a small bag into your hand and whispers for you to go, so you do. Half-hopping and half-stumbling off the cart, you approach the terrifying visions.

"What is your business here?" says the scarecrow sternly. That question blows your mind - you had no idea scarecrows could even ask questions, let alone pose deep philosophical head scratchers. Abruptly noticing that you're annoying the creature after about a minute of saying nothing coherent by way of reply, you finally venture a response to the effect that you're just out for a ride and enjoying the view. The scarecrow looks deeply unimpressed by this answer.

One of the demonic knights sniffs metallically. "Brunnenfeld mushrooms", it intones. The scarecrow holds out his hand towards you - could he be trying to grab you? No. He wants the pouch. You notice the bag is jingling in your shaking, sweaty hands - could it contain Guilders?

If you want to hand the scarecrow the bag then turn to 1368. If you want to keep it all for yourself then turn to 97.

608

It suddenly occurs to you to wonder why Aggie thinks you can handle this problem of hers - sure, your half-manliness and partial-elfiness may have charmed her but she must have noticed your weedy musculature at some point. Before you can puzzle this out you're on the road with the skeleton caravan of four wagons rolling along behind you. Each wagon has a driver and a guard sitting behind a pair of skeleton horses. The guards are armed with bows, axes, swords and spears but even based on your limited experience with skeletons they look a bit nervous and not all that warlike. Still, they'll probably fight. The wagons each contain another six skeletons and all their worldly belongings - a surprising amount of stuff considering that they're undead - but they're unarmed and chattering their teeth in fright even at the prospect of this dangerous trip. Neither the passengers or drivers will be able to do anything but cower and maybe flee if attacked. On your Adventure Scroll note that you have 4 GUARDS, 4 WAGONS and - at least for the time being - 0 PROBLEMS.

You're riding alongside the front wagon and pondering your situation when you notice a flash of movement among the tree line - it's an elf scout! He's spotted you and is dashing away to warn his buddies!

If you've got a ranged weapon such as The Bow of the Wood and want to take a shot at the fleeing scout then turn to 348. Instead you could order your skeleton guards to try to take him down by turning to 198. If you don't want to tip the elfs off that you've noticed them then turn to 1749 to roll on, but add 1 to your PROBLEMS since they now know you're here.

609

With tears streaming down your face you spin the sad story of how your formerly happy life was ruined when Jeff insinuated his way into your family and robbed you of your mother's affections, your freedom to sit in your room all day jerking off, and finally your home, casting you out like a piece of garbage which, after many tribulations and heart-rending occurrences, finally washed its way down into these sewers where it belongs.

This miserable and self-pitying saga would probably elicit a chuckle from anyone else, but it touches a chord with the hydra. It too once had a happy family life in Bilgeton - hatched from an egg by a warlock, it enjoyed its existence terrorising the urchins of the big city until, one day, the warlock fell in with some filthy hippy of a wizard who considered hydras an abomination against nature. The warlock chose the wizard over the hydra and she flushed the juvenile monster down into the Bilgeton sewers, where it has dwelt to this day among the refuse of the city, growing huge and strong feeding on the filth of the world and its resentment at the way it was treated. A single acidic tear falls from one of the creature's twelve eyes and the drop hisses as it plops into the sewage far below.

Anyhow, the monster no longer seems inclined to eat you and in fact seems to consider you a kindred spirit thanks to your craven and miserable display. Still sniffling, the surprisingly sensitive serpent submerges itself in the sewage and disappears from sight, leaving you free to continue your quest.

Turn to 1633.

610

With the skull silenced, or at least muffled, you must decide - will you continue trying to loot or have you learned your lesson? To keep looting turn to 1229. Turn to 467 to return to the surface the way you came or turn to 805 to head deeper into the barrow in search for more treasures and adventure.

611

As the first pixie realises that you're not as fearsome as you look, he calls in more and more reinforcements. Pixies are little but they fight very dirty, and after a couple of hard kicks to the yarbles and a good stab in the shin you're no longer in the mood for a rumble. You yield and, after roughing you up a little bit more,k the pixies cool down. One of them, a hideous little creep in mismatched rags, steps forward to deal with you.

"Right then. No more playing nice. Way I see it you owe us a bit of work to pay off that tantrum you just threw. Now come this way or you'll be going back to your mother in a box."

You'd quite like to go home, especially if it wouldn't involve any walking, but the pixie notices your expression brightening and jabs you hard in the knee with a stick.

"You'll be in a box because you'll be dead, you numpty. We'll kill you then put you in a coffin and deliver it to your mother because we don't have the zoning permissions to bury you on our land and because really it's the next of kin's job to bury a relative", he explains, crushing your hopes succinctly and comprehensively. While you think it might make Jeff regret sending you out into the world if you came back dead, you're not completely certain of that. Also the part about being dead doesn't appeal to you now you think about it.

Defeated, you follow the pixies as they lead you through the swamp to whatever horrible task they have in mind for you. Turn to 1657.

612

You leave the store and emerge back out onto the chaos of the streets. Small fires seem to be breaking out all over town as the townspeople divide their efforts between fighting off the brownies and robbing each other blind. It's not a scene you want to go back to. Instead you head up the hill to the top of the road where you find a short road running alongside the knight's mansion's outer wall. The mansion's gates are locked down tight but to the right is an empty gatehouse and a wide-open gate leading through the palisades. Whoever was guarding that had the right idea and got out early. You follow suit.

Aiming to put as much distance between yourself and the ruin engulfing Brunnenfeld you set out along the mountain pass which winds upward through the peaks looming ahead.

Turn to 1698.

613

The bartender seems a little annoyed that you're intending to take up precious space without buying anything, but he tolerates your presence so long as you stop hogging up the bar. You go practice your jabs and hooks in a corner while a small group of drunks look on in amusement, occasionally commenting on your poor form or throwing a chicken bone or empty pitcher at you.

It takes a while for the tournament to start and you're not in the best shape, so all this last-minute training wears you out as much as it warms you up- lose 5 EFFORT but add 1 ÉLAN until the end of the tournament, even if this takes you over your maximum. Just as you're completely puffed out and looking for some place to sit down, the bartender rings for final drinks and starts rearranging the tables - the fight's about to begin! Turn to 1705.

614

You walk along the Count's Road for several hours. You had no idea that it'd take so long to get anywhere - from your weeks spent playing Akalabeth and Penultima on your personal conjuring system you figure you'd be in Bilgeton in an hour tops. As the sun begins to sink low in the sky over the western horizon with the forest still off to your left you begin to get a bit worried that you're not getting anywhere, though at least you haven't encountered anyone or anything else out here. Pausing only to fish a snack out of your bag, you trek onwards.

It's night time before you reach the southern edge of the forest where the road turns hard east. Exuberant about finally making some progress you stop looking where you're going. As you start round the corner you almost bump heads with a bay coloured horse which is just standing there in the road, apparently minding its own business. Judging by its elaborate harness someone owns this thing, but no one's around. Perhaps you could make use of this creature? Then again, there's something real creepy about the way it's eyeballing you. If you didn't know any better it was sizing you up like a piece of meat.

If you want to steal the horse and ride out of here, turn to 404. If walking's more your speed then turn to 455.

615

The judge, unable to stand this "freshman" any longer, screams in red-faced fury and points at the lawyer.

"I've had enough of you, young man! I sentence you to DEATH!"

The crowd surges forward, ready to rip this annoying young fellow apart. You're quite forgotten in their eagerness to get at your spoilsport counsel and are trampled underfoot as the audience rush to get their licks in.

Seizing this opportunity to slip away, you crawl beneath the crowd until you make it to an open window where you can clamber out and away from the mayhem you've caused. Luckily, the town guards are far more interested in containing the riot than looking for a fugitive so you're able to make a clean getaway, swiftly blending into the bustling crowd of Bilgeton.

Turn to 1364.

616

Desperate as always for acceptance, you come bursting out your hiding place to do Biff's bidding. Spotting you, he points to the carriage.

"Bastard! Where have you been? Throw that human out of the carriage and you're in. I'll even give you a cut of the loot."

The peer pressure would have been enough but the monetary reward sweetens the pot even more. Needing no further encouragement, you race across to the overturned carriage and leap into the rear door, yelling a war cry. The guard inside seems to have been expecting this development: as soon as you enter he lunges at you with a razor-sharp shortsword.

🔪**GUARD: DIFFICULTY 8 FISTS 2**

If you win turn to 1684.
If you lose, or choose not to carry on the fight, then turn to 288.

617

Ignoring the dire warnings you lower yourself into the ravine and follow it along as it winds gently uphill. It's a recently-dried creek bed coated with fine pebbles: a little treacherous to walk on but preferable to chancing it up on the mountain passes overhead.

Before long you come to a small and wretched wooden lean-to built against a boulder next to the creek bed. If you destroyed Brunnenfeld one way or another this place will be unoccupied - turn to 1496 if you want to loot it or 395 if you want to simply carry on.

If Brunnenfeld was spared your visit or somehow survived it, the structure turns out to be another human guard post and the guard - a wiry old coot in a battered steel helmet and carrying a heavy crossbow - spots you immediately! He's barely done yelling out a challenge before a bolt leaps out of his crossbow, whizzing past dangerously close to your ear! He curses and begins working the winch, quickly reloading the huge weapon for another shot:

🔪**OLD GUARD: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you beat him then turn to 224.

If you can't defeat him or don't want to fight then turn to 773.

618

The Phalloknight, now at full gallop, skillfully hits you square in the sternum with a couched metal penis the size of a large tree trunk. You burst like a blood-filled balloon struck by a lightning bolt, leaving only your shoes and a mile-long spritz of assorted half elf fluids as a testament to your existence.

619

Showing more common sense than usual, you turn the battle-scarred caravan towards Bilgeford. Almost as soon as you make the turn you see the town before you - it's a small town of around thirty eun-down buildings straddling a wide and filthy river. The road continues towards the centrepiece of this town - a stone bridge which crosses the flowing waters. Before you can reach the bridge there's a toll house and a watchtower, which spots you almost as soon as you see it. A couple of guards emerge from the toll house and stand around on the bridge as you draw near.

There's no real point engaging in any wacky hijinks - the skeletons are still too rattled from the scene before to do any more fighting or galloping around - so you approach the toll house at a normal pace and stop as instructed by the guards. One of them - a Bilgeford militiaman wearing an annoyingly fine cloak and several chunky gold rings of a size and quality far beyond the means of a lowly town guard - inspects your caravan while a couple of other guards block the way, trading jokes and leaning on their halberds. Another guard with a crossbow watches from the rickety wooden tower, bored out of his mind as the inspection drags on. The fancy guard's taking his time talking to the skeletons and checking their papers, sometimes taking a coin or two from the skeletons before handing their paperwork back. Just as you're about to lose your patience the fancy guard finishes inspecting the wagons and comes over to you to talk turkey.

"Skeleton workers to Bilgeton? Duty's 5 Guilders per wagonload", he informs you.

That's the entire amount Aggie gave you for 4 wagons! Still, you've got some cash waiting for you with her agent in Bilgeton, and maybe you lost one or two of them- if so you could pocket the difference without her being any the wiser, you think.

If you want to pay without making any more hassles for yourself then turn to 121. If you're not about to pay 5 Guilders a wagon then turn to 1467.

620

It's a tough fight but you soon have the upper hand, and you thrash the terrifying nightmare hell bird into submission. Just as you're finishing it with a savage elbow drop the effect of the pixies wears off and you find that the thing you've been fighting all this time was nothing but the warlock's yellow nightgown! Nursing your bruised elbow you get up off the ruined item of clothing just in time to see the warlock standing in front of you, as naked as the day she was born. You cock an eyebrow and prepare to say something utterly smarmy but you're interrupted by the foulest stream of invective you've ever heard from a lady, or any other being for that matter. It seems that the effect of inhaling pixie dust has worn off for her too, and from the look of pure hatred in her eyes it seems that the warlock is ready to fight!

Turn to 1335.

621

It turns out the humans really do just want to give you a shave. As they don't think you look all that tough they get a good lather going which disguises the fact that the blade is coming away clean with each stroke. The guards are just as unsure as they were before they scrubbed you, but you're feeling refreshed after this impromptu day spa. Restore 10 EFFORT.

Since the guards can't figure out whether you're an elf - which would merit drawing and quartering you - or some other thing which would involve quite a lot of paperwork before they could do that, they decide to send you on to the Bilgeton dungeon to let a judge to take a crack at your case. You are escorted out to a prison wagon and placed in the back. The barred door of the cart is slammed shut and soon you're on your way to Bilgeton as a guest of the Bilgeford militia.

Turn to 227.

622

Concentrating on the caravan, you take the orb out of your pack, give it a shake, and peer into its depths. Remove one charge from the Orb.

Shining words coalesce inside the orb: "Outlook not so good". It obviously sees some betrayal in the future, though not immediately otherwise it'd say something more like "Don't count on it". You knew that the humans couldn't be trusted. You quickly replace the orb into your backpack as the caravan approaches along the road.

Armed with the knowledge of the future, will you flee from the caravan (turn to 893), or bravely stand your ground and greet whoever's coming (turn to 64)?

623

You smite the armoured skeleton a mighty blow, causing it to discombobulate and fall to the ground in an uncoordinated heap. Yelling a victory cry you're about to turn your attention to the wagon when one of the raiders, running nearby, shouts at you:

"Scatter the bones or it'll get up again!"

This warning gives you pause, and as you stare at the heap of bones they seem to be moving somehow...

Just as you're about to do something about that you feel a pain in your back as a carelessly-aimed arrow sails out of the woods alongside the road and sticks into your shoulder blade. You cry out in agony and try to pull the arrow out, but to no avail - you can't reach it! As you're dancing around trying to retrieve the shaft the skeleton pulls itself back together and attacks again - you must defend yourself as best you can!

Lose 1 ÉLAN from the injury (unless you have a shield equipped on your back), and fight:

DISGRUNTLED SKELETON : DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

If you lose turn to 1816. If you win then turn to 1101.

624

You're not going to pay this outrageous sum - more than a whole month's income for an industrious Bilgeton worker, or at least three months for a slacker like you! The guard lays a withering gaze upon you.

"Well, I guess The Spectre was dead right about you. Get out", he says, pointing back out the door. It seems your quest to find a place to crash has been foiled by the masked do-gooder.

If you know where you're not wanted then turn to 493. If you're not going to give up so close to the end then turn to 698.

625

After leaving the relatively bright setting of the crypt behind, you walk slowly along a narrow tunnel for a few dozen yards, heading slightly downwards as the tunnel sinks further into the earth. After nearly impaling yourself on an unhelpfully-placed, groin-height stalagmite at the end of the tunnel, you find yourself in a pitch black natural cavern. By groping around the walls and striking your flint a bunch of times you discover that there are a number of ways out of this place via openings leading further into this network of caves beneath the County of Nonce. This is probably the start of one of those terrible but (for some reason) obligatory maze sections that everyone hates. If you're not travelling with someone who might know something about dungeons or you haven't been given directions you might need to crack out the old pen and paper and make a map, or you'll probably get lost in this featureless trap!

There are four exits from this cave - you can go west, northwest, north or east. It's too early to take the fifth exit back the way you came just yet! If Jeff found out that you'd given up immediately you'd never hear the end of it.

To go west turn to 319. To go northwest turn to 279. For north turn to 1301. To go through the eastern tunnel turn to 529.

626

With Karol's help you manage to hack the creature down and it crashes down, almost capsizing the little boat under its huge bulk. You hear a hacking, squelching sound as the 10-Foot Pole cuts away at it with his pick and there's a wet tearing noise followed by a splash as the beast is cut free into the water. No doubt Karol has salvaged some grisly trophy of this battle.

You're exhausted from all the paddling and fighting so you give Karol a turn at the oar and get some shuteye - restore 10 EFFORT. You are awakened by the excited Pole some hours later, and your eyes flick open to see a dim glow coming from the tunnel ahead. As your eyes adjust you begin to make out glowing dots and the sight of moonlight reflecting on the surface of the creek. Soon the Pole rows you outside again in the fresh night air, the moon hanging high in the sky overhead. You're in some godforsaken wilderness - behind you to the south are hills which rise up in the distance into mountains, and to the north is a long and open plain, dotted with scrub and not a lot else. In the very far distance you can see the white peaks of the huge Skytrap Mountains reflecting the moonlight. Closer to hand you notice the Pole's trophy - it's a massive scorpion's tail! The Pole looks upset.

"Miałem nadzieję, że to nowa rasa strzyga, ale to tylko manticore. Tutaj, weź to". With that he chucks you the horrible trophy. You can add the Manticore Tail to your Adventure Scroll if you wish. Now too surly to do any rowing, the Pole once again gives you the oar.

Just up ahead you can see the junction where your stream branches off from a wide, fast-moving river which descends from the hills behind you and winds away into the distance to the north.

Do you want to paddle upstream to join the main river? If so turn to 1169. If you'd rather head towards Bilgeton then you row to the shore and disembark. You'll need to find an overland route, which -this being a fantasy adventure - is going to involve an incredibly long trek. Turn to 889.

627

Hulagu is very interested in your map. Taking it from you he unfurls it and squints at the markings. He's particularly interested in the markings just a bit south of here along the road - they're some elfish scratchings identifying the location of a whimsyflicking ritual along the road to Bilgeton. The merchant asks you what the marks on the map signify.

To tell him what you know then turn to 1822. If you want to play dumb then turn to 945.

628

Your adventure ends here.

629

You throw scissors, which is met with Kaspars' fist, clenched in the form of the rock. You have been defeated.

"Never mind", says Kaspars jovially, hurling his bottle off the mesa and into the creek bed below with an almighty smash, "Let's have another drink".

Since the trolls will probably brain you for being a bad loser if you refuse, you don't see what choice you have.

Turn to 485.

630

The guard approaches and starts hollering up a storm, waving his halberd around threateningly as he does so.

"Don't you know where you are? This is the travelling party of Count Hugues of Bilgeton, lord of Nonce. What do you think you're doing lurking in that bush? Don't you know this area is crawling with bandits? What if one of the bowmen mistook you for an elf? Do you have any brains in between those oddly pointy ears, man?" yells the guard. Seeing your blank expression, he launches into a follow-up rant which is a very slight variation on the same theme.

You feel yourself getting hot under your open collar - the guard's just going on and on, berating you for your lack of attention, care and general purpose in life - in short, he's starting to remind you of Jeff. You're half minded to clock him one right in the chin (the easiest-to-reach part of his face that isn't covered by the iron kettle helm these guards all seem to wear).

None of the other guards are anywhere nearby - you could pop him one and get out of here before they notice. Hells, you feel like you're going to explode if you don't. To take a swing at the guard turn to 1037. To calm yourself down before you get yourself into trouble turn to 222.

631

A tinge of light appears in the swamp air by the time you've worn yourself out digging at the nugget. By now the potion's finally beginning to wear off and you're starting to feel cold, tired and very sore. The pick doesn't seem quite so magical and more like a regular pick, and you're beginning to wonder about your fellow winners who don't seem all that excited about their haul.

You hear a whistle blow and the pixie who was herding you around earlier reappears.

"That concludes your magical shift... I mean evening. Let us now proceed to the inn where all your wants and needs will be provided for."

You trudge, exhausted, after the others. The town doesn't seem so delightful in the grey pre-dawn light, more a miserable slum made up of identical, grim little houses. The barn-sized inn is beginning to look a lot more like a regular barn too, and not a particularly nice one either. What little paint is still on it is peeling rapidly in the humid, swampy atmosphere of this ugly glade.

Outside the inn the garish pixie, suddenly exactly the kind of repulsive sprite you remember pixies being, checks the amount of GOLD you picked up. As you empty it out of your pockets and backpack you notice it just looks like regular old granite though some of the chunks have a gold side, as though it was painted on.

If you gained 30 or more GOLD then turn to 1748. If you dug less than 30 then turn to 1067.

632

One of the myriad threats of this disgusting forest is the bloodpits - locations where some local megafauna like a Hulking Owl or Greater Drop Bear has met a grisly demise. Scavengers show up and churn the soil into a bloody morass as they feed, then bigger critters show up to chow down on the scavengers, then something larger turns up to feed on them, all the while expanding and deepening the mess. If everyone's really unlucky the smell of a roiling pit of increasingly large corpses will attract something really awful like a Horror Worm. It's into one such pit that your ill-advised nocturnal ramblings has caused you to stumble.

As you struggle to free yourself from the disgusting pit the gigantic blind Horror Worm lurches up from the soggy soil before you. A twenty-foot long tube of meat weighing over two tons, the Horror Worm rears high overhead before slamming its enormous bulk down on where you're standing. You think fast enough to leap aside, losing only your shoes to the sucking, filthy mud. If you had any footwear equipped they're lost as they're slammed deep into the bloody morass - remove them from your Adventure Scroll.

You have seconds to attack before the creature before it rears back for another slam.

🔪**HORROR WORM: DIFFICULTY 8* - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 3**

The worm's body is soft and particularly vulnerable to being sliced. If you are equipped with a bladed weapon deduct 2 from the DIFFICULTY. If you have the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes this barely-sentient meat tube is too mindless to control but you're able to rattle it a bit, slowing it down and weakening its resolve - subtract 1 from its TOUGHNESS.

If you succeed in this struggle then turn to 1161. If you fail then the worm slams its bulk down again. Despite being blind it seems to know how to find you and this time it doesn't miss. Your adventure ends here.

633

The shimmering waters of this cold lake hide an unpleasant secret - it's the home of an awful tentacle beast. It's been following you since you arrived on the scene in the hopes that you'd be stupid enough to take a dip. You're waist-deep in the freezing lake when your first warning comes - the previously placid water starts to boil, and suddenly a quartet of incredibly long, foot-thick tentacles burst out from below with a mighty spray. These great limbs start thrashing at you, slapping at the water around you with pulverising force. You must fight for your life!

🔪**TENTACLE BEAST: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 4**
Moving in this cold, deep water is tough - any time you spend any amount of EFFORT for any reason you must deduct 1 extra point of EFFORT.
If you prevail then turn to 1017. If not then turn to 560.

634

"He said down!" shouts another of the hand-faces in a mocking shriek. You start to protest but the hands pass you down and into the creek where they hold you with the kind of grim strength you could probably expect from an enchanted wall-hand which spends its entire existence lifting buckets of water up and down.

You're trapped underwater and rapidly running out of air when you notice that most of the hands aren't holding directly onto you but mainly your stuff. If you can just wriggle free you might be able to slither out with some effort....

GRABBY HANDS: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1

If you succeed, turn to 796. If you fail, you meet a miserable fate as the relentless hands hold you fast to the bottom of Shit Creek until your lungs fill with water.

635

You've got a job to do! As gently as possible you heave the old man out of the coffin and drag him to the side of the road. Luckily you're far enough from the city gates that the guards aren't particularly interested in your doings and they fail to notice your actions. You climb back up onto the wagon and into the newly-vacated coffin, closing it behind you just as the driver returns from his business. Now there's nothing to do but wait.

The wagons move through the gates far quicker than the wretchedly long line of foot travellers and you soon hear the driver interacting with the guards.

"Ah, another one for the vaults, undertaker? How long's this one been gone?" says a gruff voice.

"Two weeks now", comes the reply.

"I'll need to take a look, unless there's some reason not to...", the first voice continues.

"I'm not paying a hargroat out of my wages to get into this dump. You look, if you can stand the smell".

With that you hear heavy boots climbing up onto the back of the wagon and the lid of the coffin is pulled back! You do your best to appear dead.

Is your ÉLAN currently 3 (or more) lower than your starting score (not counting the effects of equipment), are you suffering from the plague or a shambler bite, or have you been partially or entirely skeletonised? If any of those are true then turn to 647. If you are wearing an uncured hide cloak or some other gross thing and have lost at least 1 ÉLAN then turn to 647 as well. If none of these conditions apply to you then turn to 946.

636

Armed with a long, thin pole, you think you have a good chance of striking the Phalloknight's weak spot as he bears down on you. This would be a sound plan but for a few details.

Firstly, you're not a particularly calm or collected half elf at the best of times and these are far from the best of times. You're shaking like a leaf because you're attempting to shove a thin metal rod up the dickhole of an armoured death-beast the size of a house as it bounds towards you with the force of a tidal wave. Secondly, your rod is waving around uncontrollably because of the minor earthquake the Phalloknight's charge is causing, so you've got a drunk's chance in a tavern urinal of hitting anything you're aiming at. Finally, the phallic lance thrusting at you is much, much longer than the puny needle you're packing and will reach you long before you shove anything up any part of the Phalloknight.

Turn to 618.

637

After a tiring climb you find yourself on the top floor of the tower. You're on a landing above the spiral staircase which leads back down to the ground floor exit. The warlock must be a real pig because this area is strewn with garbage - ritual totems, skeleton parts, empty scroll holders, milk bottles and other detritus, none of it worth rifling through. A large occult symbol is scratched on the stone floor, perhaps something necromancy-related based on the number of skulls you see carved into the floor around it. On the other side of the landing is a wooden door from behind which you can hear the rowdy snoring of someone enjoying a deep sleep.

Being something of a cross between a pragmatist and a coward you decide that the safest thing to do would be to eliminate the warlock before proceeding to loot the tower, so you creep across the wide stone landing to the door and open it a crack. Peering in you can see the spellcaster - a youngish-looking human woman of perhaps thirty years with an untidy mop of brown hair and covered in an unwizardly yellow dressing gown- bundled up beneath a heap of duvets in a large bed. Just like the landing the room is a mess with clothes and garbage everywhere.

You're beginning to have second thoughts - you're pretty sure the warlock would be really angry if she knew you were standing there, and you don't think you'd enjoy the results of making a warlock angry. If you'd like to get out of here instead of tousling with this (doubtlessly) deceptively harmless-looking magic user then you can head down the stairs for the exit by turning to 1685. If you're ready to get in there and get the murdering over with then turn to 347. If you'd rather be cagey about it and have one of the following you could try throwing in some Pixie Bits (turn to 850) a Potion (turn to 1821) or a Glowing Jar (turn to 1644).

638

Emilie noticed your use of her family ring. Far from being grateful for your help, she seems appalled.

"Hey! Isn't that...where did you get that? That belongs to my family! I'll tell my dad!" she cries.

You've been rumbled! If you want to hand it over then turn to 1144. If not then you can just walk right out of the store - turn to 1675.

639

The elfs, having beaten you into submission, do the usual elf thing and rob you blind. You manage to keep a single item hidden from them, but they take everything else - even your shoes!

Remove all but one item of your choice from your Adventure Scroll and all your cash. You could instead protect your cash, in which case remove all your items instead.

Utterly humiliated and with the laughter of the elves ringing in your ears, you resume this benighted journey. Turn to 1424.

640

What a petty misuse of the powers of the fantastic family ring! Anyway, using the ring you telepathically tell the blue fly not to move and order the green one out the window. Both bugs do as you demand.

Since you bet on green you won! Add the 2 Guilders to your Adventure Scroll.

If you'd like to grab a drink to celebrate then turn to 975. If it's time to leave then you make your farewells and head outside - turn to 546.

641

Undeterred by your inexplicable lack of success the first time round, you reintroduce yourself to the first woman you artlessly hit on as soon as you entered the room. Just as she's about to slap your face you hear the stomping of heavy boots and a loud crunch as the bathroom door is booted open with unnecessary force! Drawn by the racket you were making, a pair of household guards have arrived to investigate. Better trained and equipped than the common militia you're probably used to mugging off, the dangerous opponents draw their razor-sharp shortswords and advance on you as one as the women stream past them and out of the room.

🔪**HOUSEHOLD GUARDS: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you overcome these tough foes then turn to 1317. If you can't defeat them then turn to 721.

642

You must have really wanted to get inside the Palais De Dance because you were willing to kill a man over it. After one hell of a fight you bury your weapon in Benny's head. The passers-by who have gathered to watch gasp as he bleeds. A priest who happened to be partying inside tries to stick together all the bits that would fit, but you've hacked something important off and the bar's conjurer isn't skilled enough to summon a replacement part in time.

As Benny's spirit departs to go do some bouncing for whatever god or gods he believes in the guards arrive to apprehend you. It doesn't much matter if you get away right now - murder is illegal in Bilgeton, particularly for no good reason, in broad daylight, in front of a crowd of easily-offended rich people. The walls that once kept you out now lock you in and it's only a matter of time before you're apprehended, given a summary execution and chucked into the Bilge.

643-645

643

There's a signpost outside your house pointing down a charming little lane heading towards the Count's Road. Elfs don't expend much effort on road maintenance but this path has been very heavily trafficked so it's easy to follow. A smooth dirt track winds gently through the trees and you make excellent time.

Eventually you put the leafy avenue behind you and step out onto the Count's Road. You're not very good at being an elf so you've never had any reason to join the whimsyflickers and lore-wardens as they conducted their rites out here. Just north of you, the road curves to head west over the endless plains and undulating hills that stretch to the distant horizon. To the south it follows alongside the forest, further than you can see. Somehow it's not quite as grand as what you'd imagined: it's an impressive vista but you really expected it to be something more than a wide and shallow ditch made up of loosely-packed dirt, riddled with deep muddy pits, stone debris, snapped cart axles and litter. So much for that fabled human engineering you'd heard about.

If you go south along the road you'll probably reach Bilgeton eventually, but perhaps you feel you'll have more luck in whatever faraway lands lie in the direction of the setting sun. To go south turn to 209. To head the other way and follow the curve in the road to whatever rewards lie across those endless undulating plains then turn to 1526. If you packed a map and want to take a look before blundering off then turn to 465.

644

While certainly impressive to a bumpkin like yourself, it turns out that your attire is at the lower end of what would be considered acceptable in a baron's wardrobe - they might wear it while ordering the serfs to do a spot of gardening or beating a churl in the sitting room, but certainly not in polite company. Draped in last year's cast-offs, you completely fail to garner the attention - much less the romantic interest - of any of the ladies here. With all hope lost you stuff a final tray full of canapés into your gob and slump away from the ball.

Turn to 13.

645

You sprint after Brenda but she's far too quick for you and easily gives you the slip. You're back to wandering around in the forest again. What a day.

Actually, it's not much of a day anymore- the sun has set and the forest is enveloped in a deepening gloom. You're beat. If you'd like to find somewhere to take a rest then turn to 1720. If you'd prefer not to sleep in a forest full of whatever this forest is full of then you move on: turn to 527.

646

The Spectre listens patiently to all your stories.

"Well, I suppose your rambling and largely incoherent tale isn't completely suspicious. Many people come out of literally nowhere and are heading towards Bilgeton for no reason, I imagine. However, these lands are incredibly dangerous, especially for a woefully under-equipped and physically poor specimen such as yourself. Perhaps I could aid you? I've been meaning to swing by Bilgeton for a while now to get my uniform taken out a bit: it's a little tight around the calves. I could give you a lift".

You really don't want to go to Bilgeton with this guy. For one his costume is unbearably gauche and it'd make a terrible first impression if you were to arrive at your new home in the company of a man in a shiny purple unitard. Secondly, it's only a matter of time before you break some law or another around him. Based on his powerful physique he would probably snap you like a twig the second you reverted to your generally underhanded ways. You refuse his offer.

The Spectre seems somewhat relieved - he was only offering to be polite after all.

"Well, happy trails, chum," he says dismissively.

Having emerged from this encounter without getting your evil slammed you decide to get the hell out of here without any further ado. Turn to 1812 to wander down from the mountains and into the fog of the Mist Steppes, and turn to 898 to continue in a more direct fashion towards Bilgeton through the centre of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains.

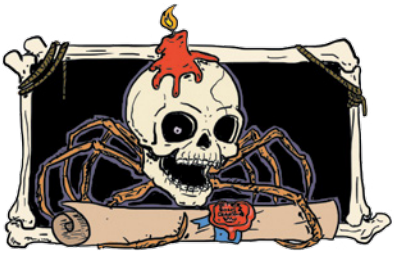
647

Though your eyes are closed you can almost see the green colour of the guard's face as he suppresses a retch. It seems your ruse has worked: the lid is slammed back on the coffin with unseemly haste. The undertaker laughs.

"I told you so. Now, if you'll be so kind..."

You hear the guards clatter out of the way and the wagon lurches forward as the driver takes the reigns once more. As soon as you hear the tumult of the city streets about you pop the coffin open again and clamber out. The crowd of passers-by watch your decrepit form with some horror as you slide off the wagon and escape into the city streets, but since it's probably not even the weirdest thing anyone's seen in Bilgeton that hour no one raises the alarm. You manage to slither away into the great city undetected.

Turn to 1364.



648

He drops your Guilders into his money box. Deduct 3 Guilders from your Adventure Scroll.

“Guard....duty?” the guard says, seeming unsure of himself. “1 Guilder”.

Well, you’ve come this far. If you still have any Guilders and want to pay then turn to 1676. Otherwise, if you’ve taken all you can and you can’t take no more then turn to 327.

649

“Oh bloomin’ heck, it be this guy again”, says the blonde-moustached guard. “I knew he was trouble. Just look at him. Well I’m afraid we’ll have to throw the book at ye this time”.

“Book” turns out to be a charming rural mispronunciation of billhook, a kind of heavy-bladed agricultural tool on the end of a long stick, which one of the guards uses to hack you into bits in the market square for the edification and amusement of the townspeople and traders.

650

The Bilgeton militia are pretty lax about violence in the lines for getting through the Trader’s Gate - after all it’s pretty much inevitable in any crowd of peeved humans, dwarfs, goblins, half elfs and so on, but also it’s not really Bilgeton’s problem as long as you keep it outside. However, they do draw the line at murdering people right in front of the guards which is what you’ve done by bringing a weapon to a fist fight. As you commence your traditional post-victory looting by stooping down to relieve your victim of his valuables, a patrolling guard strides up behind you and plants the business end of a halberd right between your shoulder blades.

Your adventure ends here.

651

You momentarily forgot what kind of a dump you lived in and run for the kitchen, slamming the door shut behind you. It’s only once you’re done barring the thing that you remember that Jeff (and you, but that’s beside the point) never got around to building the back wall of the tower. You find yourself effectively outside again with a clear view of the cobblestone pile in the back yard.

You can hear your mother and Jeff loudly arguing about you on the other side of the kitchen door. It appears you’re not going to be getting back home through the direct approach.

If you have Enough Rope, turn to 1239.

Otherwise there’s not a lot of point sticking around. It’s time to set out on your noble quest. If you’d like to do so by taking your mother’s suggestion and striking out for the road that leads to Bilgeton then turn to 643. If you’d prefer to run gibbering and screaming into the depths of the forest then turn to 785.

652

The adventurers look like they're losing, and they seem to have some fantastic loot on them. You pick your side accordingly, opportunistically joining in on the attack on the skilled fighters. They've been separated by the goblin host - you'll have to pick just one.

To fight the barbarian turn to 1105. To take on the rogue turn to 481.

653

To the palpable relief of the guards you tell the Count that you've had enough. Hughes looks very put out, but he allows you to collect the purse and the sword from the heap of winnings in the middle of the picnic rug. You thank him for the games and rise to leave. With almost unseemly haste, the guards escort you away from the Count and over to your new horse. This would be a completely reasonable thing for guards to do for a foreign noble, though you're fully aware it's so you don't get into the saddle with their share of the loot.

Standing beside the horse, the guards make their terms clear - they either want the sword or the 20 Guilders. Since they won't help you up into the saddle of the impressive creature without one or the other, you must decide which you will keep. Add either the 20 Guilders or the Heirloom Sword to your Adventure Scroll. As soon as they're paid off, the attitude of the guards goes from somewhat menacing to completely jovial. They help you up into the saddle, point the huge white horse in the direction of the road and give it a slap on the hindquarters to get it going. You're not much of a rider so it's all you can do to stay upright in the saddle, but you eventually get the hang of riding and are soon trotting steadily along the road towards Bilgeton. Add the Noble Steed to your Adventure Scroll as well and turn to 1455.

654

You fork over another 3 Guilders - remove this sum from your Adventure Scroll. The patrol leader and his men stand up from their game.

"We'll get right to work sir, thank you. So, from your detailed statement we're looking for someone or something that potentially could be described as a person and who may be in possession of money. Right lads, let's catch our man, or woman, or goblin or whoever!"

With that the guards depart, disappearing among the market crowds, though you can hear their chortling for quite a while. It's only then that you realise that the patrol leader didn't take your details and so has no way to contact you when they find your stuff. Oh well, you can always check the lost and found at the gatehouse later on.

For now, you decide to get the hells out of the marketplace before any more crimes befall you.

Turn to 827.

655

You ask Karol what he makes of all this.

“Jeśli pamiętam ... wschód to wielka mrównica. Idź prosto na północ i nie odwracaj się”, the tall archaeologist replies.

You give him your wisest look and nod sagely. Karol reacts to the stupid expression and clear lack of comprehension with irritation.

“Na północ! Północ! Północ!”, he spits, jabbing his hand towards the northern tunnel. You shrug and he gives up in disgust. You guess you’re on your own.

To go west turn to 319. To go northwest turn to 279. For north turn to 1301. To go through the eastern tunnel turn to 529.

656

The Malrog’s brow furrows as you talk. While what you’re saying is accurate enough (as far as you know), it’s not what this author wants to hear about his ground-breaking theory before he’s even finished melting it into the steel.

“HOW DARE YOU CRITICISE ME, BUG. YOU ARE MARKED FOR DESTRUCTION”.

Welp, you’re boned.

Turn to 242.

657

You hammer once on the door with your fist. What’s next?

To hit it twice hard turn to 435. To thump it four times as hard as you can turn to 299. To give it a single quick rap turn to 1267.

658

Elfish ration packs are carefully packaged in leaves, a notoriously fragile wrapping especially when they get dried out. Famished as you are, you tear the thing open just wrong and the contents go everywhere. To your dismay you can’t tell the difference between the elfen rations and the twigs, leaves and dirt already present under this bush, so you just indiscriminately cram whatever you can into your mouth.

You don’t regain any EFFORT from this unsatisfying meal. Remove the Elfen Rations from your Adventure Scroll and return to the page from which you came.

659

There's not a dry eye in the house by the time you're finished spelling out your tale of woe. The judge dabs at his eyes with a handkerchief.

"In thirty years of judging I've never found anyone not guilty - until today. Until today", he sobs. "You are free to go, and may The K-NG bless your steps, gentle Bastard".

The crowd cheers you as you stride from the courthouse where the prison guards are already waiting with the evidence chest full of your possessions, minus half your Guilders, naturally. Restore everything to your Adventure Scroll except half your Guilders, rounding down to a whole number.

Free at last, you step out into the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

660

You notice that your diminutive opponent drops his left hand after a jab. You take advantage of this weakness in his defence by kicking him in the entire body with a boot several times bigger than he is. He goes down hard. Long after the ten-count he just about manages to pull himself upright, swaying unsteadily on his feet in front of you with the fight clearly knocked out of him.

"Every brownie's got to figure to get beat sometime", he says. "Look, there's lots of things wrong with this place, but you aint going to fix them. Let these people alone and I'll come along with you. Maybe I can help you out."

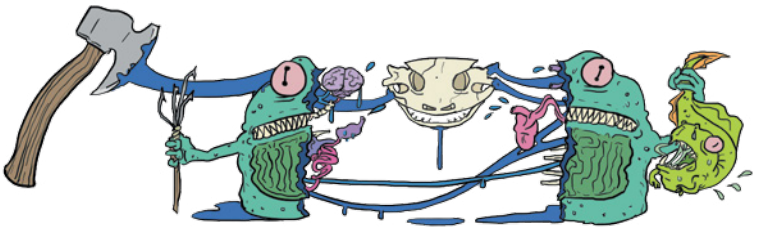
If you're feeling merciful and want to take the Brownie Bomber up on his offer turn to 690. If you'd rather just get down to pillaging turn to 367.

661

Well, you could use the company. The golem will accompany you to Skull Mountain so long as you head that way through the pass ahead - if you go any other direction it will bid you farewell.

With the golem standing guard (you assume), you sleep soundly despite the night's ordeal. You wake refreshed the next morning (Restore 20 EFFORT) and after a brief repast set out into the mountains.

Turn to 521.



662

You implore the Bishop to relieve you of your afflictions. He looks you over.

“Brother, I can only do that for the Redeemed who have undertaken at least a short pilgrimage to prove their faith. May I suggest you see Brother Chlothar at the Three Boulders Redemptist Church of The K-NG in Brunnenfeld? He’ll hook you up. And if that’s too hard for you may I suggest a Healthy Poultice? They sell them in the market square”, he says unhelpfully.

If you’ve been Redeemed by Chlothar already and have some sort of task you should be doing for him then you tell the Bishop as much: turn to 942. Otherwise nothing you can do or say will convince the Bishop to heal you. It’s time to go. Turn to 683.

663

You left home to get away from all the judgement, not to be hassled for your character flaws and criminal acts by some costumed jerk. He’s no better than Jeff! You charge at the purple patrolman, who responds by raising his dukes. Meanwhile his wolf tries to get around behind you to tear a chunk of your booty out. Treat this as a Multiple Hassle:

🔪**THE SPECTRE: DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you lose a round to The Spectre then immediately turn to 137.

🔪**SATAN: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

While Satan’s in the battle you lose 1 extra EFFORT per round as he worries, snaps at and generally harasses you. Lose this EFFORT whether you win or lose and in addition to the usual penalty for being in a Multiple Hassle.

If you somehow slam The Spectre and his lupine lapdog then turn to 1214. If you want to surrender then turn to 986.

664

You take the side passage, which soon turns into quite a steep climb. After a couple of slips you manage to scramble your way up to the top, where the dirt begins to give way to rock. A few strikes of your flint reveal you to still be very much underground, but now in a more traditional cavern type setup complete with stalagmites and stalactites and stuff. Behind you the ant tunnel yawns, a dark, dirty hole in the earth, waiting in case you decide to return to it.

You have a horrible feeling that you’ve stumbled into the maze section of this Two-Fisted Fantasy adventure book. In the future technological advancements will make it so you don’t have to write maps yourself - computers for instance will do that for you, or perhaps the authors will like their readers enough to include maps of their annoying mazes in the map section of the book - but for now you’re on your own. If you don’t make a map, don’t blame me when you get lost!

Since there’s only one exit from this room, a hole in the southwest wall, you decide to go that way for now. Turn to 266.

665

Drawing your weapon (or clenching your fists if you have nothing better to hand) you charge into the next room, ready to do battle with the lich! Unfortunately for you the lich is prepared for this exact kind of treachery. Before you can whimper out half of your pathetic war cry you're blasted with a terrible spell that envelops you in a burning cloud of corrosive green fog. You can only watch in horror as all your flesh melts from your bones, leaving you thoroughly skeletonised and standing in a puddle of goo that used to be the rest of you! The lich chuckles mirthlessly and slams the door to his quarters in your face, leaving you to the awful fate that your unreasonable belligerence has brought upon you.

Turn to 1743.

666

You hobble over to the mutilated corpses to have a poke around. Elfs tend to travel light and most of the things these guys had that was worth a damn were slashed or trampled by the charging guards. Still, you do find some elfen rations and currency. Unfortunately thanks to it being dark, your head having been kicked in and the fact that you could never tell elfish currency from elfish cuisine you get the two mixed up. In the end you're pretty sure you have a meal and change. Add 1 Elf Ration then roll a die and add 10 times the number that comes up in elfish currency to your Adventure Scroll.

With your looting done you allow yourself a smug little gloat at the demise of your hometown bully before staggering south to Bilgeton at last. Turn to 25.

667

The dragon is really creeping you out. You reject its advances and tell it you have somewhere important to be. It's depressed and probably more than a little angered by your decision, but it feels bad enough about causing your injury that it doesn't roast you from behind as you make your way hurriedly out of the cave. You emerge back onto the tundra and head south as fast as you can.

Were you sent here on a quest from the Goblin King? If so you've let him down - turn to 114. Otherwise you're in the clear - turn to 889.

668

Reasoning that one man's minor treasure is another man's major treasure you take the dying torch and head for the minor treasure chamber. The tunnel there is long and narrow but after a couple of tight squeezes you emerge into the treasure chamber. It's a cavernous room with many shelves and annexes carved into the rock face ready to store the promised minor treasures, but evidently The Spectre hasn't accumulated any. The room's empty. You search until the already unimpressive flame of your torch starts finally giving out and finally locate 10 Bilgeton Guilders on a high shelf. Add these to your Adventure Scroll.

It's not exactly a meagre haul but you can't help but feel a bit ripped off as you squeeze your way back through the tunnel. As you remerge into the main living area the torch finally dies out and you toss it aside.

With nothing further to accomplish here in the skull cave you step back outside, squinting as your eyes readjust to natural light. Turn to 1738.

669

The goblin apothecary operates out of the back of a butcher shop down a dingy side alley where he performs no-questions-asked surgeries. His constant and unsolicited reassurances that he won't sell your vital organs and his collection of rusty and only moderately sharp cutting tools are a little off-putting, but his prices are rock bottom.

If you trust the apothecary to heal your injuries then for every Guilder you spend you may restore 1 point of ÉLAN up to your maximum. However, each time you do this you must roll a dice - on a roll of 1 or 2 turn to 569.

The sawbones refuses to take elfen leaves or other currency. Once you've spent all your Guilders or you're otherwise done here then you bid the dodgy doctor farewell and head back out onto the main street - turn to 192.

670

Now that the wagon's no longer being mobbed by raiders, you yell at the driver to get moving. The skeleton whips the reins and the wagon rolls forward, steering as nimbly as possible around the empty aelfwine casks the elfs have rolled out as obstacles. Suddenly the wagon halts again as its met by another bombardment of arrows from a group of elfs hidden in the trees along the road ahead. The driver pulls its head into its sternum like a scared turtle and the horses turn the vehicle sideways so as to put the covered wagon between them and the source of the projectiles. You can hear the terrified chitter of the traumatised skeletons inside the carriage.

The situation for the other three wagons is incredibly grim - this is the only carriage you have even a hope of saving now, so long as you can ride ahead and clear those archers lurking in the tree line away - turn to 820. On the other hand, no one's looking at you right now - if you'd like to trot away while the trotting's still good then turn to 1171.

671

Benny stops you.

"I'm gonna need to see three pieces of identification" he says, matter-of-factly. This is an outrageous request but no matter what you say he's adamant.

Do you have at least three out of the Bilgeton Residency Scroll, a Noble Crest, Medical Diploma, a Signet Ring and the SWU Card? If so turn to 1068. If not, if you've got 3 Guilders you could show him those three pieces of ID by turning to 476. If you know when you're not wanted then you could give up on this place: turn to 1497 to check out the cheaper joint or turn to 827 to just get on with whatever you came to Bilgeton to do.

672

Bruce asks, "What'll ya have? It's my shout". The so-called esky turns out to be a magical chest enchanted with a spell of cold, and as the nobolds lift the lid you see it's filled with a variety of metal cannisters pained with fanciful designs. As the nobolds each reach in and take a can they rip the top off, revealing a piss-coloured bubbling potion which they tip into their open maws.

The esky has numerous icons painted onto it, probably corresponding to the potions inside. At least you can read the letters on the designs though they make no sense to you. Bruce is looking at you with concern.

"Strewth mate, don't be a galah. Get a dog up ya".

Maybe this language will begin to make sense eventually but for now you're bewildered by it. At the moment all you can do is point at the logo which corresponds to the potion you want.

If you'd like the green and red oval stamped with "Victory Bitter" then turn to 906. If you enjoy the red, black and white "Westerned Draught" design then turn to 1362. If you find that the yellow and red "Four Ecks" motif tickles your pickle then turn to 147. If you're a fan of the red "F" on a blue background inside a gold ring then turn to 1283.

673

The two guards walk around behind you to inspect the bag. Sweat starts dripping down your forehead and you feel your heart beating in your throat as the two take an interminable amount of time prodding and poking the thing. You don't dare to look around in case they've found something incriminating.

After what seems like forever the two guards leave off ogling the bag and walk round in front of you again.

"Traveller, that backpack certainly is a cheap piece of crap. Our condolences. Have a nice day".

And with that the guards continue along their patrol, leaving you clear to continue on your way towards Brunnenfeld. Turn to 777.

674

You run at Aggie, intending to boot her out of the tower window, but before you can take two steps a skeletal arm snakes out of a nearby barrel and plants a rusty dagger between your shoulder blades. The last words you hear as you slump to the tower floor are, "Why are the pretty fuckers always so ploughing stupid? Chuck this cretin in the flenser with those other shits."

After the flensing you will return from the dead as a reanimated skeleton, though this ritual involves summoning a wandering spirit other than your own into your mortal remains. His adventures will be recounted in an upcoming Two-Fisted Fantasy Gamebook, "Crypt of the Bone Lords", available in all good bookstores summer 1985 . Your current adventure, however, ends here.

675

Ignoring your racing heart you push the door open and find yourself in what looks to be a fairly well-appointed bathroom. There's a bath full of a bubbling liquid and wet footprints leading to an open door on the other side of the room. You are almost beside yourself with dread. To get the hells out of here right now and head back to the corridor turn to 805: and if you're still here reading this section it's too late. Tracking the wet footprints across the floor you look up and see a dreadful four-armed lich leaning against the door frame, staring at you intently with sunken, glowing eyes. The abomination is a little taller than an average man, with taut, grey skin still covering most of its face and arms, though bones show through in places. Mercifully, you can't see all of his skin - his body and an immodestly small amount of his upper thighs are covered with a bathrobe. Hanging from the robe's cord, tied tight around the undead monstrosity's waist, are a pair of glowing green lanterns which momentarily grab your attention until the lich coughs. You look up to see him beckoning with a bony finger for you to follow him into the next room.

Hypnotised by this horrible being on some level you're unable to resist following him, but as you pass through the room you may snag the Lich's Loofah which is floating in the tub if you wish - add this to your Adventure Scroll.

Turn to 1670.

676

Even if these dark elfs weren't enraged beyond reason at your trespass (they moved down here to get away from you surface-dwellers, after all), they're impoverished to the point of malnutrition and wearing belts as articles of clothing. They can't afford to allow someone as relatively rich as you to go un-looted.

After battering you into submission (lose 5 EFFORT) they relieve you of any belts you are wearing - remove any such items from your Adventure Scroll. These will be added to their belt-based wardrobe. So greedy are they for your leathery scraps that they don't even leave you the normal belts that come standard with your elfen adventurer outfit! By elf standards you are basically naked - make a note on your Adventure Scroll that should you take any Hassles that involve elfs they will have +1 DIFFICULTY from now on! They also take all your food - remove all food items from your inventory - but since they don't trade with outsiders they have no use for your cash, weapons or other items which they allow you to carry away.

Having taken everything they want, they unceremoniously chase you out of their living area. You scream as they cruelly scourge your buttocks with your own belts whenever your hindquarters get within reach. Eventually they herd you into a tunnel which becomes quite constricted, and you're worried about getting stuck as the lowering roof forces you into a belly crawl. The lashing of belt buckles on your feet and calves hurries you along though and you wiggle all the way through the passage and out into the bright light of day.

You emerge from the cave and find yourself up on a narrow ledge a few yards up the side of a rocky cliff-face. Ahead of you the mountains continue, endlessly to the east. You're beginning to regret not taking the road when you had the chance. Fresh out of options you press on, hoping that the dark elfs don't choose to follow you.

Turn to 955.

677

You've had enough of the tavern, so you "rack off" by going outside. There's a church sunk into the side of the hill, conveniently next door - if you haven't yet visited it then turn to 1539. Otherwise there's nothing left to do in this dump - time to get out of town. Turn to 591.

678

You're soon passing under a large sign welcoming you to Bilgeford, gateway to Bilgeton. It's a small, neat human township straddling the river Bilge. In the middle of the town is the large stone bridge for which the place is named - it's the only place in the county where you can safely cross the Bilge without getting soaked in its unpleasantly polluted water. Merchants using the bridge to get to Bilgeton are forced to pay a hefty fee to get through but you're just a simple traveller. After all this time on the road you're far more interested in blowing your money on a warm meal and maybe somewhere with a soft bed.

As you approach the town you see a small horse-drawn wagon coming towards you. Driving the vehicle is a human with a military bearing through dressed in gaudy silks instead of the usual padded armour of a town militiaman. He must be doing well for himself. His chest is adorned with a gold star inscribed with the town's crest of arms and the word "Sheriff". As the wagon is about to pass you, the driver pulls on the reigns and stops the horses.

"Morning", the man says cheerfully. "You visiting someone around here?"

You answer, but you get the impression that it doesn't matter much what you have to say. He smiles wryly.

"You know, looking the way you do - you're just asking for trouble around here, friend. Heading north? Why don't you hop on up?" he continues, patting the driving board of his cart. "I'll make sure you're heading the right direction".

If you want to take the free ride then turn to 203. If you just want to head into the inviting-looking town and find some place to get your needs seen to then turn to 1438.

679

You'd rather not get closer to any more humans if you can help it - being surrounded by them in their walled capital is enough, you don't need to pack yourself in among them like a sardine in a tin (an innovation yet to be invented in this setting, but you get the idea). Instead, you calm yourself down and simply enjoy the show.

The Waits are pretty good but in the end no one can stand against the more popular Seed Drille. Their flautist blows the opposition away with their crowd-pleasing saga, "The new horse-houghing husbandry, or, An essay on the principles of tillage and vegetation wherein is shewn, a method of introducing a sort of vineyard-culture into the corn-fields, to increase their product, and diminish the common expence, by the use of instruments lately invented by Jethro Tull" and

immediately launches into a new epic, "A supplement to the essay on horse-hoing husbandry. Containing explanations and additions both in theory and practice. Wherein all the objections against that husbandry, which are come to the author's knowledge are consider'd and answer'd. By Jethro Tull". The crowd goes berserk and Seed Drille are declared the winners before the noise from the audience causes the whole quarry to cave in.

Since the show's over and the guards are starting to arrive to haul the drunks out of the quarry it's time for you to move on. As soon as you reach the top of the rope ladder and haul yourself out of the rock pit you realise that it's late and you'll need to find that place to crash real soon. Turn to 1793 to go in search of your father.

680

No you didn't. This isn't some computer game where you can enter a code and do whatever you want. In the real world (and even in this weird gamebook world), your lies have consequences!

Lose 1 FIST and return to 1433.

681

The Trader's Gate is an immense portcullis set in the northern wall of Bilgeton. Far larger and busier than the somewhat snooty and exclusive Noble Gate on the southern side of the city, the Trader's Gate is used by almost all the denizens of Nonce and even by those who come from further afield: painted trade caravans from the ancient merchant cities across the Endless Plain of Fortune in the far west to the peddlers and workers from the eastern manufacturing hubs of the Dwarfen Kingdoms. In short, it's busy: lousy with merchants, peasants, beggars, farmers and other assorted humans, with a few dwarfs and goblins scattered among them but absolutely no elfs. Numerous wagons are lined up for inspection by the town guards, men dressed in the usual human guard uniform which you're no doubt familiar with by now (if not it's a kettle helm and padded gambeson, with some of the richer and higher-ranked guards wearing pricey pieces of flair and more ostentatious equipment like chain mail or bits of plate). Every so often a wagon is waved through the gatehouse and into the city though the line is moving slower than new arrivals are coming. The carriages are starting to back up a long way down the road. A parallel queue of people on foot weaves towards a side entrance to the gatehouse through a wooden door. It seems that this is where you'll need to go to get into the city. You stride straight in that direction only to find your way barred by some extremely angry-looking humans.

"Back of the line" shout several outraged voices and you look around to find yourself assailed by an assortment of withering stares. Since you've read the Bestiary (available at numerous good bookshops and so on), you're aware that humans take their queuing extremely seriously and you're culturally sensitive enough to realise that violating this stupid ritual would be so offensive that it could earn you a savage beating on the spot. Giving up your hopes of a speedy entrance, you trudge towards the back of the line accompanied by a lot of muttering and shaking of heads.

You could queue up like a schmuck - turn to 1091. If that's not your scene then you could try to sneak in with the wagons - turn to 586.

682

The golem was only doing what comes natural to it. It doesn't seem to mean you any personal ill will so you figure that if you can get the thing working again with a bit of DIY necromancy it might be able to help you out. You cram the scrying orb on top of the jaw where the rest of its head should be. Remove the Scrying Orb from your Adventure Scroll.

Once the orb is seated in its place the golem lurches back to life. A glowing message appears on the scrying orb, and you peer in for a closer look.

"OUTLOOK GOOD", it reads.

The scrying orb only has about twenty possible phrases it can display, but by changing the message a few times the golem gives you to understand that it's grateful for your help and means you no harm. It offers to help you on your journey - it suggests that you take the path towards the Skull Mountain up ahead and from there traverse the Mist Steppes to the north east until you reach the distant Alp of Abandonment at the feet of the Skytrap Mountains. There, a mystical blacksmith offers the fruit of his powerful arts to the worthy souls who endure the journey.

The golem offers to accompany you at least to Skull Mountain - it apparently has a bone to pick with whoever or whatever lives there. If you'd like to take it up on this offer then turn to 661.

If this all sounds like a hassle and a bit out of the way then turn to 1740.

683

You don't believe in the human K-NG, you've got nothing to say to the bishop and there's no way you'll get away with stealing anything from here. You had a pleasant time sightseeing in this brain-buggeringly big building but it's time to go. You turn and stride out.

It seems that your haughty nature has pleased The K-NG because on the way out you spy a donation box tucked away in a dim and unobserved corner of the narthex. Prying it open you find a single Guilder and a heaping handful of groats, hargroats, groatfatherers, half-farths and numerous even smaller denominations of loose change. Add the Guilder and a Pouch Full of Shrapnel to your Adventure Scroll!

Whistling a jaunty tune you stride out of the Synod. Now would you like to visit the market once again to see if you can't find some place to spend your hard-earned change - turn to 244 - or would you prefer to just get on with whatever you came to Bilgeton to accomplish? If so turn to 827.

684

You tell the half-drunk musician that you're on a Mission From The K-NG and immediately launch into a tirade about Queynte, the up-and-coming musical act that's going to take Bilgeton by storm. Herman, impressed by a combination of your divinely-inspired enthusiasm, his level of inebriation and the miserable earnings he gets playing in the Aelfsburg local, agrees to join your band.

"You've got me! I'm very excited about this collaboration. I have a multi-part epic about the cruel and unjustly difficult income tax forms which elfs were expected to fill out nearly every five years under the terrible reign of Lorilindell the Accountant that I've been working on for just this occasion. Let us away at once!". He packs up his instrument mid-set but no one really seems to notice or care. Add the Elfish Prodigy to your Adventure Scroll.

Time you were moving on - do you want to get out of here (turn to 187) or would you prefer to talk to the locals first (turn to 1419)? Although it's now late if you still want to party on you could hit the bar in hopes of getting a buzz on by turning to 594.

685

The manticore is part lion, part scorpion and part bat, so the power of the ring should work on it. You command it to bugger off and go find some nobolds to eat. Unfortunately (as you'd know if you'd checked the Bestiary, available in every good bookstore nationwide) the manticore has the mind (and the face) of a particularly evil and unpleasant man, and the ring has little effect other than to make its leathery wings flutter involuntariliy. In fact, you've managed to really piss the thing off and it roars in rage! Catching a second wind, it redoubles its efforts:

🔪**INFURIATED MANTICORE: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you lose this thing will rip you to pieces! No surrender is possible. If you win then turn to 921.

686

Now that everything's calmer, Emilie is willing to look at what you're hauling around.

If you have the Owlet it's worth a lot to Emilie - she'll pay 10 Guilders for it.
The Baby Rukh is an exotic animal and is worth 5 Guilders.
If you've got a Giant Bird Egg it's also worth about 5 Guilders.
Emilie suspects the Noble Steed you're trying to sell is hot, but she doesn't want to leave it in your substandard care. She offers 3 Guilders for the animal.
She will purchase your Clapped-Out Old Nag or Butthead for a Guilder each. The Familiar Cat is also worth a Guilder to her if for no other reason than to get it out of your backpack where you've been storing it.
The Dire Wolf is not worth quite so much, though she'll take it off your hands for whatever change is in the till - useful for making purchases in the marketplace, if nothing else! You may add the Pouch Full of Shrapnel if you sell the Dire Wolf.

She has no interest in any spare animal parts - she only sells whole specimens and doesn't do repairs - but she suggests that you try your luck in Gobholme where they're known to exchange more esoteric currencies into Guilders.

If you sold any animals, make the appropriate adjustments to your Adventure Scroll.

Whether you sold something or not, you bid Emilie farewell and step out into the market square. Turn to 1475.

687

It was probably a bad idea to leave the wagons unguarded. The skeletons drivers, already skittish, freaked out and moved on as soon as you were out of sight.

You find the remains of the wagons a few miles down the road, already looted bare. They're up on blocks - the elfs even took the wheels! A few of the passengers are wandering about, distractedly searching for missing arms or picking through the remnants for any of their possessions which may have been overlooked. Most of them are just gone - skeletonnapped, destroyed or just driven away, it's impossible to tell.

In any case this desolate scene is the end of your short-lived career as a caravan guard. Remove all GUARDS (if any remain) and PROBLEMS and make a note that you failed Aggie.

Since you've got no intention of going all the way back to get yelled at and probably cursed by Aggie, you bravely decided to hold on to all the money she gave you and continue on your way as if nothing ever happened. Turn to 294.

688

The vendor seems very interested in the map and offers you the princely sum of 5 Bilgeton Guilders. If you'd like to haggle you can:

HAGGLING: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

Each time you succeed you can add 1 Guilder to the offer up to a maximum of 10 Guilders.

Once you've arrived at a settlement you swap the map for the cash (make the appropriate adjustments on your Adventure Scroll). With that settled will you head to Trader's Lane to spend your new-found riches (turn to 1473) or are you more interested in getting a lift out of town? Turn to 1020.

689

You spend the afternoon drinking the fruitiest human cocktails the Dribbling Wand offers (moonshine with a dash of filthy water, as it turns out) and questioning the grumpy barkeep to get the lay of the land, but you get drunk enough that you remember very little other than that the County boxing tournament is tonight. As dusk sets in you are feeling quite refreshed - restore up to 10 EFFORT and temporarily subtract 1 from ÉLAN from the booze - but your peace is shattered by the arrival of a boisterous gang of dwarfen women, apparently here for a ritual they call a "hen party". Although dwarfs pride themselves on their advanced civilisation they still enjoy this atavistic ritual which includes a lot of drinking, yelling, attaching numerous prophylactics to hair and clothing and writing names in ancestral books of grudges.

You're pretty drunk but you're as sleazy as ever: will you hit on these eligible ladies? If so then turn to 1751. Otherwise you might want to keep idling while you wait for the fight - turn to 692 if you want to keep ordering drinks or turn to 1052 to get up on the now-vacant stage and tell a few jokes to amuse the crowd. If you're done for the night you could settle your "tab", whatever that is, and get out by turning to 502.

690

It's unlike you to spare anything that's at your mercy but you think this little guy might come in handy. True to his word in return for not destroying his village, the Brownie Bomber swears his fealty in the form of a contract that names him as your personal trainer but not before he hands over his title belt to the new Feewald champ. Add Joe Louis and the Feewald Championship Belt to your Adventure Scroll.

You skim through the agreement, but just as you're putting your old John Hancock on the dotted line you hear a rustling in the undergrowth as a small horde of brownie warriors comes bursting out to do battle. You count at least a dozen armoured knights riding on adorable dormice, a flight of sparrow-riding brownies and a battery of cart-mounted artillery loaded with darts.

Before it comes to a bloodbath your new buddy explains the situation to them and they lower their little weapons. The lead knight, probably the guy in charge of being a pain in your arse all day, apologises profusely for the misunderstanding and promises to explain everything if you'd but hear him out. If you're willing to listen to what will no doubt be a sob story ending in an unreasonable request for you to put your arse on the line on behalf of a bunch of turds who've been tormenting you all day then turn to 305.

If you'd rather not deal with these little jerks you can tell them to stuff it and stomp off into the woods by turning to 527, or if you're real mad you can tell them to stuff it and stomp all over them instead by turning to 1142.

691

The stoat bit you one too many times and you snapped. In your rage you forgot what you were supposed to be doing and simply butchered the animals. You only realise what you've done when the poor shopkeeper snaps out of her shock of witnessing you bludgeoning a bunch of small animals and starts screaming her head off. You'd better get out of here before the militia arrives, though naturally there's time to loot, of course. You may add the Meat or a Mink Stole to your Adventure Scroll.

With that accomplished you do your best to wipe at least some of the blood off your face and make a bee-line for the door. You step back out into the market square. Turn to 1675 if you still have the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes for some reason or turn to 244 if not.

692

You plot and scheme but mostly you just put the drinks away while you wait for the tournament to begin. Temporarily deduct another point of ÉLAN from intoxication - you're getting utterly hammered and you're having trouble seeing straight or even sitting upright on your stool. As you wait for your next drink you wobble in your seat and manage to slump into the guy on the stool next to you - a very mean-looking fellow in a black leather jacket and slicked-back hair. He growls in fury and shows you his middle finger, a gesture which is considered quite rude among humans.

If you have any animal or monster eyes in your possession then turn to 1191. If you want to apologise to this rude fellow then turn to 1026. To make something of it instead turn to 154.

693

You inform Aggie that Sister Aethelcruel sent you to bring her a sack of child bones. You hand the Bag of Child Bones over to the warlock and she looks inside.

"Aethelcruel's a right sick bitch, but she ploughing knows how to tickle my arsehole! Complete sets of dwarf bones are as rare as bloody hen's teeth. Some buggering pervert or another will pay top sodding dollar for a couple of dwarf skeleton workers. Well you've done me a solid, and here's five Guilders for your trouble. Now how about doing me another bloody good turn?"

Remove the Bag of Child Bones from your Adventure Scroll and add 5 Guilders. Now with that accomplished, if you've been collecting bones and still want to complete a mission for Chlothar then turn to 81. Otherwise if you're ready to battle the elfs for Aggie then turn to 704. If you'd prefer to keep out of it then turn to 532 instead.

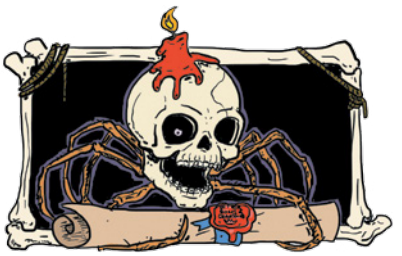
694

You slide the insane amount of money across the bar and the bartender chucks you a key. You cram yourself up the narrow staircase to your room.

The rooms up here are pretty spartan for something that costs 5 Guilders a night but they're indoors, nothing in here wants to kill you and there's a bed! You flop down on top of the mattress, pull the blankets over yourself and try to tuck your knees up to your chest so you're entirely on the bed. It's cramped and a bit awkward but that doesn't stop you blacking out instantly.

You're exhausted enough after your travails that you don't notice the insane ruckus that takes place outside. You sleep right through to noon the next day (restore up to 30 EFFORT and remove any effects of potions or alcohol) and are only rustled to consciousness by the proprietor poking at you with a knife on the end of a stick. He screams at you about checking out times as he hustles you down the stairs and marches you at bayonet point back onto the streets of the Goblin Town.

Turn to 192.



695

"Next!". The line shuffles forward and you can finally see the tellers now - or rather, the lone teller. Despite there being several windows only one is manned. You continue to wait despite no longer recalling what the hells you're doing here.

Roll a die and lose that amount of EFFORT. If you survived that, are you ready to give up now? If so turn to 827. If you're going to hold on then turn to 956.

696

You go from tower to tower, forgoing the relatively cosy places to curl up and sleep (by elf standards, the towers here are just as draughty as the ones back home) in favour of loot. You soon regret this decision - the pitiful haul isn't really worth your time. Add one of the following items to your Adventure Scroll (assuming you don't already have it):

Extra Buckles, The Bastard Sword of the Elf, Bow of the Wood, Enough Rope, Elfish Cloak of Invisibility, Healthy Poultice, A Cut Purse, Lorewardening Key, 100 Leaves of currency.

Disappointed with these meagre pickings you step back out into the clearing intending to find somewhere out of the way to sleep in case the elfs return. You're shocked out of your skin to see a dark squat figure leaning against the side of a rickety tower (probably the tavern since it's adorned with a sign proclaiming it to be "The Lorewarden's Arms"). Only the tip of its bulbous nose is illuminated in an ominous red glow thanks to a pipe dangling from its mouth. You stand motionless, waiting for the figure to move, but it doesn't move either except to emit the odd cloud of white smoke which is lit up by the moonlight as it ascends into the sky. You hope against hope that whatever it is hasn't seen you, but as soon as you move it shatters your hopes and dreams by speaking.

"Listen, I hates these elfs as much as the next guy", says a gruff voice "but I hate filthy thieving burglars making a racket around my tower of business late at night even more". The owner of the voice steps out of the shadow of the tower and into the moonlight, revealing itself to be a diminutive but muscly gnome with the bushy white beard and pot belly typical of the horrid little sprites. Ignoring the insult you ask the wee fellow what he's doing outside so late at night.

"I'm a guardin' gnome, coglione".

With that the little guy charges right at you, swinging his surprisingly hard fists wildly!

🔪**BEMBO THE BARTENDER: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Did you defeat the gnome? If so turn to 929. If you lost or gave up then turn to 411.

697

The guards let out a suspiciously loud sigh of relief as you insist upon your winnings. The Count is a bit miffed but hands the purse over. You thank him for the game, bid him adieu and head back on out of the clearing. The guards escort you, which would be a completely reasonable thing for guards to do for a foreign noble, though you're fully aware it's so you don't get away with their share of the loot.

Once you're back on the road the guards shake you down, and after some mild threatening manage to claw their share of the prize off you. Add the remaining 10 Guilders to the cash section of your Adventure Scroll. With this transaction completed you have no further business here and the humans bid you farewell. You start walking down the long road to Bilgeton once again.

Turn to 1445.

698

No! You will not be turned away from your new home like you were from your old one! You're not worth much but you're at least worth...something, you think. As you fill with rage your shoulders unslump, your tears dry up and your jaw clenches in fierce determination. If you can't get in peacefully you'll force your way in! Screaming a war cry you race at the guard, who responds by turning, sweeping your legs out from you with the shaft of his halberd and kicking you in the head hard with his hobnailed boot. You briefly black out.

You regain consciousness in time to find yourself being bustled into a guardroom deep within the gatehouse. There you are strip searched and all your gear is confiscated. You watch it being secured in a wooden evidence chest at the back of the room (keep it on your Adventure Scroll for now, but none of it's available for you to use). Finally, you're given your Prisoner of the Count starter kit - a couple of filthy sackcloth tunics, a toothbrush with only one bristle left and a pot to piss in (don't bother adding these loathsome items to your Adventure Scroll). Now that you've been formally inducted into the Bilgeton prison system a couple of the surly prison guards march you down a narrow spiral staircase to your new home.

Although your head feels extra soft from where you've been stomped you're glad you finally stood up for yourself - lose 1 ÉLAN but from now on you may re-roll any 1s on your FIST dice (the second roll stands even if it's a 1).

Now turn to 49.

699

You find yourself inside the plush interior of the Palais de Dance, a rather high-concept establishment mostly aping the fashionable dwarfen styles. It's a large, high-ceilinged and utterly bare space with a clean parquet floor and plain grey walls. With no tables to speak of the patrons - all painfully thin humans in outrageously fancy and fashionable clothes - stand in small groups, each with a slightly large group nicely-dressed but clearly servile hangers-on lurking at a short but respectful distance. A young-looking wizard stands motionless in the centre of the room with his arms folded into the sleeves of his white robes. Behind him is a raised platform atop which a small group of dwarfs play a kind of unpleasant atonal droning noise. Though the nobles all have drinks in their hands you can't see any kind of bar. Well, time to unwind, somehow!

If you want to mingle with the patrons then turn to 143. If you'd like to go talk to the wizard then turn to 77. If you'd like to listen to the band then turn to 1461.

700

It takes a while, but you eventually get the attention of a guard patrol. A trio of halberd-wielding militiamen approach you to find out what you want. You explain that you've been robbed.

"Oh, we'll get right on that, I'm sure", says the patrol leader, another anonymous guard with his face mostly hidden under the standard issue kettle helm. If you didn't know better you'd say he sounded amused. You blurt out a description of the perpetrator but can't help but notice he's not writing any of this down or paying any particular attention, and you tell him so.

"Well, what with the cost of stationery these days we can't afford to take out our notebooks as often as we'd like. A Guilder would go a long way to restocking our office supplies", says the guard.

If you have Guilder and want to pay then turn to 1386. If you're not going to let yourself get ripped off yet again then turn to 827 to leave the market square once and for all.

701

It's a tough fight which consists of you running away from the armoured pugilist's ponderous punches and landing a few ineffectual slaps on Krungs spiked metal armour. In the twelfth round your dancing and cringing finally wears the goblin out thanks to the heavy suit of plate he's wearing. Sweating mightily, Krung takes a final wild swing at you, misses as you cower away, then collapses exhausted under the weight of his armour. Seizing the opportunity you give the goblin an almighty kick, nearly breaking your foot as it connects with Krung's head with a sound like a ringing bell. Krung groans and rolls onto his side while you hop around on your good foot hoping you haven't broken anything important.

The announcer is incredulous. "The Jabbing Jabroni wins by knockout!" he yells. He hands you your purse of 5 Guilders (add these to the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll) and leaves you to yank the Gobholme Championship Belt from your fallen opponent which you also add to your Adventure Scroll.

If you like you can turn your stunning victory into a room for only 5 Guilders - turn to 694 if you urgently need to rest and want to rent out a place to sleep for the night. Otherwise there's nothing else for you here - turn to 192 to drag yourself out of the bar and back into Gobholme.

702

Fear gives you wings: you leap into the undergrowth seconds ahead of the taurcents, who have as much trouble getting through the dense foliage as expected. Their big horsey heads keep whacking into branches and their stumbling gait keeps causing their bare human feet to get caught in roots and stomp painfully on thorns. You can't see any sign of Batu - you guess he made good his escape. Not feeling safe so long as you can see the taurcents or hear their enraged whinnying you run deeper and deeper into the forest, mostly heedless of direction. It's not until dusk starts to fall that you finally feel safe enough to stop and catch your breath.

Although you're exhausted and miserable after a long and harrowing first day away from home you resolve not to die out here and to continue onwards to Bilgeton. You find your bearings from the setting sun - the road to the big city is somewhere south of here, so you put the evening light to your right-hand side.

Turn to 732.

703

Brother Chlothar motions for you to sit so you pull up a pew. The chubby cleric delivers the following oration from behind the altar:

"And now, folks", he says, glancing around the room at you and the empty pews, "and now folks. When I woke up this morning, I heard a disturbing sound. What I heard was the jingling and jangling of a thousand lost souls. The lost souls of all the men and women, dwarfs, goblins, yea and even elfs, departed from this life. Those lost souls are roaming the earth, looking to find the life they'll never find again, because it's too late, unless some necromancer bungs them into a skeleton or the like. But for nearly all of them, it's too late! They squandered the chance they had to follow The K-NG's teachings in life and now they'll never see the light of The K-NG. Unless someone raises them as a skeleton before they head on down to Damnation. Anyway, don't be lost when your time comes. For the day of The K-NG comes as a thief in the night! And now if you'll open your hymn book to hymn 805, The K-NG is my shepherd, the King is my king..."

This gibberish leaves you unmoved but as the cleric sings atonally to the empty room an errant beam of light streams down directly onto you from the little window above the door, suffusing you in a warm glow. You feel as though The K-NG is looking right at you - speaking to you. A troupe, Bastard. The troupe? The TROUPE!

Chlothar interprets the beam of light and the express as divine inspiration. He stops his hymn halfway and gazes at you in wonder.

"Have you seen the light?" he shouts ecstatically.

THE TROUPE! : turn to 1761.
Or, not : turn to 20.

704

Aggie grins unsettlingly widely and slaps your shoulder so hard that your bones creak.

"Good fucking man! Right, now that's settled, let's have a cocksucking drink and you can tell me what your fucking excuse is."

Aggie's skeletons bring some bottles of viciously strong booze and over a tasty meal you proceed to get hammered with the necromancer. Aggie doesn't display much interest in your stories but you find out that she's been alone out here for several decades aside from her skeletons and the odd customer and she is looking forward to, as she puts it, "seeing the look on those prick-eared pricks' faces when you leap out and bugger the ploughing shits right up the arse - without tallow!"

You're not sure if it's the booze or maybe the crushing pointlessness of your existence but the way her face lights up when she talks about buggering elfs (without tallow) makes you think she might be receptive to your clumsy advances. If you want to bust a move, turn to 752.

If not, you decide to call it a night. The skeletons have made you up a bed somewhere near a stack of barrels and you pass out as soon as your head hits the mattress. Turn to 1177.

705

You head into the stupidly-named Gobl Inn, hoping to find a bed on which you can lay your head, or at least some decent booze. It's a cramped place with a low ceiling - not surprising considering it's designed for goblins who at least a foot shorter than you. The main bar area is an open hall complete with tables, chairs, a stage where, presumably, a band might play when the place gets a little busier after business hours. There's also a fighting pit which is currently empty but also should also see some goblins punching each other's lights out after they've punched out of work. Most importantly there's a bar, and beside it a narrow staircase leading upstairs to what are probably the rooms, judging by the sign which says as much next to the bar.

The place is unoccupied aside from a couple of scruffy goblin bums in rusted armour and the proprietor of the Gobl Inn who sits behind the bar, glowering at you through the slits in his steel helmet. He seems cranky, probably because of the heavy, spiked armour he's wearing which makes it uncomfortable to sit on his stool. You stoop over to him, trying not to bang your head on the lanterns hanging on chains from the ceiling.

"Whatcha want?" the bartender enquires gruffly. You ask about room and board.

"5 Guilders" he says, matter-of-factly as if this extortionate fee - more than a month's wage for a Bilgeton worker - was a matter of course. You nearly splutter, and you see the goblin's eyes narrow behind the eye slits in response. "And if you're not here to sleep you'd best drink. No loitering around waiting for the entertainment to start up: if you aint paying I want you gone".

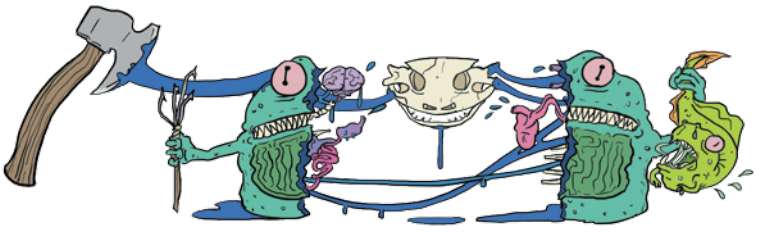
If you're here to deliver a Heavy Pack then turn to 871. If you'd like to pay the fee for the room (and have the means to do so) then turn to 694. If you want to haggle then turn to 278. If you'd rather just buy a drink (1 Guilder, says the bartender) and can afford it then turn to 1653. If you've enough of this place already you can instead leave by turning to 192.

706

You pile lie on top of lie until the house of cards comes toppling down. The merchant isn't impressed, though you're not sure if it was the darting, shifty eyes, the uncontrolled sweating or the transparent falsehoods on matters of general knowledge that tipped him off. Hulagu narrows his eyes, spits on the ground next to your feet and shakes his reins. The caravan moves off, leaving you behind on the road to nowhere.

If you'd like to double back and follow the wagons as they disappear down the road then turn to 480.

If you feel that since you've come this far you might as well push on then turn to 939.



707

The Goblin King, despite being a famed pain in the arse, might be able to help you on your quest. You set out through the town for the castle.

After a bruising crossing of the thoroughfare you find the crowds thin out and you make your way up the steep hill to the white spires of the Goblin King's castle. You huff and puff up the hill but you're stopped by a pair of goblin guards just before the gates. They're taller than the specimens in the village, mainly because they're mounted on the back of strange lizard creatures. They cross their halberds to bar your way and the guard on the right speaks:

"One of us will let you in, and the other will kill you on the spot. You may ask one question - to one of us - but beware! One of us always tells the truth, and the other one always lies! Now pick wisely!"

This riddle might be a piece of cake but after lugging yourself up this hill you're not in the mood for these kinds of shenanigans. In fact, you're getting steamed. If you'd like to walk away from this whole frustrating Mazyrinth and these irritating goblins right now then turn to 1277. Otherwise you're going to have to bash your way in:

🔪**RED GUARD: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**BLUE GUARD: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

This counts as a Multiple Hassle unless you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes: in that case the steeds they're on won't cooperate in this fight and you can fight them individually.

If you win turn to 1737. If you can't defeat these two then you drop to your knees and beg these guards who you attacked unprovoked for mercy. They respond by dragging you by the hair in through the front doors of the castle to stand trial before the Goblin King! Turn to 1314.

708

You mutter a bunch of generalities that might or might not have any bearing on the topic of music. Nonetheless the elf appears impressed with your blather and, encouraged, you continue to slather on layer upon layer of obfuscations, gibberish and nonsense until its literally impossible to tell whether you're saying something profoundly important or utterly inane.

The musician seems to have decided that you have something important to say about his trade. Introducing himself as Herman, he invites you to sit with him for a drink. Over a few chalices of aelfwine (his treat), he tries and fails miserably to explain to you the importance of challenging aesthetic conventions in music regardless of the commercialist tastes of the audience, especially essential when highlighting the juxtaposition of a traditional elfish piece like the Breaking of the Third Age at Elfindal with a human instrument like the cornamuse. This tedious wank is of no use to you unless you're on a Mission From The K-NG - turn to 684 if so.

Fortunately, after three chalices of aelfwine he's too bleary-eyed to notice your blank look of incomprehension and changes the subject. He tells you that he was hired to entertain the Aelfsburg villagers who are all setting out tonight on a big and presumably profitable lorewardening expedition, and then he suddenly passes out right in front of you, falling right through one of the pub's fragile chaise longues. This is a frequent occurrence and no one looks over to you.

Aelfwine has no effect on you what with your half-human physiology, so you're sober enough to rifle through your discomfited drinking companion's possessions without making too much of a scene. Add 30 elfen leaves and 2 Bilgeton Guilders to the cash section of your Adventure Scroll. You can also keep the hat he was using to collect the tips if you like - add the Fly Hat to the scroll as well, assuming you don't already have one. If you're feeling particularly cruel you can also take his musical instrument - add the Cornamuse to your Adventure Scroll.

With that done you hear last drinks being called. It's nearly time to go. Will you go to chat with the locals and try to find out more about this lorewardening expedition (turn to 1419), or do you want to get out of here via the front door (turn to 187) or a back exit (turn to 1753)?

709

You pick up the shovel and give it a heft. Its solid iron head is impressively sharp and it sings menacingly as it cuts an arc through the air. Mounted on a four-foot long solid oak shaft, it's better weighted than most swords you've messed around with (though, to be fair, those were typical poorly-made elfen swords). The handgrip is a comfortable width and wrapped in buttery-smooth, supple leather that you just don't want to let go of, even though you're struck with the strangest feeling that this shovel is watching you. And judging.

Add the Confessor's Shovel to the Equipment section of your Adventure Scroll, making sure to unequip any other weapon you might have. Strangely, you can't unequip or drop the shovel! Make sure you keep a note of any people and monsters you kill and items you nick from here on out! Should you somehow ever lose the shovel turn to 207.

If you'd like to dig around in front of the fanciest gravestone you can find then turn to 1202. If the beautiful shovel is enough of a reward for you then turn to 1617.

710

You are never heard from again. Some say you got lost among the freezing fogs of the north, stepped off the roads and become ensnared in the terrifying Mist Steppes. Others say you fell victims to the hazards and tribulations of the long road to the Dwarfen Kingdoms. Some say that you roam the lands to this day, still looking for something for nothing. But the vast majority of people just get on with their own business, never knowing that you lived or died. While your adventure doesn't end here, it passes from the realm of what is known into the unknown, and there we must leave it.

711

This whole area of forest seems to be flooded with swamp water and since you're travelling at night you can barely see where you're putting your feet, even if the moon is bright enough to light the way a little. In short you are doing something at least moderately dangerous.

If you are currently hallucinating, poisoned and/or drunk, turn to 1798. Otherwise turn to 1190.

712

Like every other elfish school the doors of this institution, set right into the huge trunk of the rotten old oak, are barred shut to you. Since there's no way in you entertain yourself by scratching some epithets about Jeff into the thick wooden door, though they're hard to make out against the annoyingly complicated carved patterns already adorning the entrance.

If that's enough for you then restore 5 EFFORT thanks to the cheery thought of some elf learning from your handiwork that Jeff of Elfsdale Downs enjoys the amorous attentions of dire wolves. Turn to 332 to move on with this adventure and your life.

On the other hand if you're not satisfied with this petty revenge then forget about that 5 EFFORT, there's still work to be done. Turn to 1223.

713

It doesn't take very long before things get very, very strange. Down is up, up is down, the skies turn into a kaleidoscope of colours (including several new ones which you never spotted before) and nothing makes a whole lot of sense any more.

"Keep it together man... keep it together...." Hurensohn mutters, though you can't be certain if he's talking to you or himself. Meanwhile the world rips past, more a fluid, amorphous sea than any kind of landscape you're used to.

Turn to 1616.

714

You've thrown a few weedy little jabs and ducked a couple of Biff's haymakers but the fight has mostly consisted of dancing around and smack-talking. Biff's nameless goons start getting visibly bored and it looks as though they're about to jump in and give you a well-deserved stomping. Luckily one of the gods loves you more than your fellow townselfs : the fight comes to an abrupt halt at the sight of a dust cloud rising round the bend to the north and the sound of heavy wagon wheels rolling your way!

Biff's gang scatters into the woods by the road, leaving you and Biff menacing each other in the middle of the road. Biff shoots you a pleading look.

"Come on Bastard, let me go. We can finish this later", he whines. Noticing the look on your face (a mixture of stern determination and smug schadenfreude) he continues, "That's a human caravan. They'll kill us! Think, Bastard, think! So how about it?"

If you think running for it might be the smartest move then turn to 862. If you want to continue this honourable struggle regardless of the doom rolling rapidly towards you then turn to 352.

715

Karol Myśliwiec's reach is far greater than yours but he's an archaeologist, not a fighter, and in any case he's been drinking heavily enough to agree to this crackpot scheme. You kick his arse handily and force him to agree to carry out your bidding by giving him the mother of all Chinese burns until he caves in. The 10-Foot Pole hoists you over the gate and into the mansion grounds without any further complaining.

If you have the Signet Ring then turn to 1777. If you do not then turn to 789.

716

Grumbling, you hand over a pouch containing the scandalous bribe of 30 Guilders. The guard smiles and bows insultingly obsequiously.

"Very well, m'lord, step right this way. Next time perhaps your highness would consider entering via the Noble Gate, but who am I to question such a generous patron of the city".

Feeling much lighter in the pocket you allow the guard to escort you through the guardhouse and out of the city-side exit. Putting that shameful rip off behind you, you find yourself at long last on the busy streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

717

Bilgeton's a huge place but there's no time to look around - you've got to get paid. The drivers and horses have done this trip before so they know which way to go. All you need to do is ride at the front of the procession and shove pedestrians out of the way with your mount, which you do with some gusto.

You proceed down the main thoroughfare from the Trader's Gate and arrive in a large plaza where numerous merchants are trying to hawk their wares to the endless numbers of passers-by while guards stroll about disinterestedly. There's plenty of time to look later though - for now you keep an eye out for thieves as the caravan proceeds to a small brick building with a sign out the front labelled "Skeleton Workers Union". This must be the office: the drivers halt the caravan and the skeletons, chattering happily amongst themselves at finally arriving safely, disembark and begin unloading their surprisingly huge quantity of personal possessions.

Suddenly the door flings open and a short, bald man dressed in a brown robe storms out. His pallid skin, sunken eyes, creepy thin blue lips and his sweet staff with a skull on the end of it marks him as a necromancer, probably Aggie's agent. He looks over the caravan briefly to make sure it's all there before turning his attention to you.

Did you arrive with all four WAGONS intact? If so turn to 1744. If you have 2 or 3 WAGONS turn to 599. If you've got only 1 WAGON left then turn to 552.

718

You hurl the toxic substance at the barkeep's face. As he staggers back you vault the bar and run like billy-o through the kitchen and into the back alley. Behind you the bar erupts into a full-scale hallucinogen-based riot. Remove the item you used from your Adventure Scroll.

Unfortunately, in the process of leaping the bar you inhaled enough of the noxious, rancid and/or poisonous chemicals to get a solid dose yourself. Roll on the Potions Effects table and deal with the consequences. If you survive you shake off the hallucinations and stagger away into the night, just in time to dodge a guard patrol which has arrived to deal with the terrible problems you've caused.

Turn to 827.

719

Karol seems to be enjoying himself here and he seems to be very interested in all your exciting plans for the future (though you can't be sure because you never learned to communicate with each other in any meaningful way). As you both gradually get plastered (deduct 1 ÉLAN from booze if you haven't already done so in the previous paragraph) you lay out your various ideas.

"Co dalej?" he asks.

If you successfully impersonated Tedbald of Bilgeford to get into town then you might be able to brainstorm something interesting with the 10-Foot Pole - turn to 308.
If you have the Milkman's Card then you could show it to Karol and see what he makes of it - turn to 491.
If you've got nothing then you might be inclined to hear Karol's ideas: turn to 764.

720

Most of the pixies make good their escape and you begin to calm down. Although you're worried that the little creeps might come back for more, you're bone tired and could really use a nap. Turn to 462 to find some relatively safe place to sleep. On the other hand, you think you can see the road to Bilgeton in the distance, shining in the moonlight behind a dense thicket of trees and probably a whole mess of swamp. It might be safer to head straight there rather than try to rest in the forest, despite the hazards of a night-time swamp crossing. To attempt this turn to 711.

721

You throw yourself on the mercy of the guards, but they display very little of it. Usually your sleazy pickup lines would earn you a judicial horse-whipping at worst, but since the people you've irritated are very rich the guards have no choice but to summarily execute you.

Your adventure ends here.

722

While going anywhere near fay lights is usually a terrible idea there's literally nothing else to do out here. Maybe there'll be some sprite you can ask for directions or at least loot. With such thoughts in mind you make a bee-line for the lights, neatly stomping into a circle of tiny blue-skinned sprites who are seated on a ring of toadstools and playing a game of cards. Before you can stop you grind a couple of the little beings underfoot with a sickening crunch. The little bunch of Will O' the Wisps (the source of the light) disperses into the mist, having no wish to be involved in whatever the hells is happening here.

The remainder of the fog sprites stare at you in abject horror, dropping their tiny beer bottles in shock.

There's only eight of the six-inch tall beasties left - if you reckon you can take them then turn to 854. If you'd prefer to mumble out an apology then turn to 1050.

723

Time for Queynte's debut! You bust out your instruments and play a short set. The guard is blown away - by the time you're done strumming he's pinned against the door, his helmet blown off, his hair and moustache swept back as if caught in a powerful gale and his eyes wild with shock and amazement.

"I.... I've never....." he stutters as a single tear rolls down his face. You stride over to him and pull the Bilgeton residency scroll from his hand, which he's already validated. Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink: you are now permitted to enter Bilgeton through the Trader's Gate in future adventures.

You shove the guard out of the way. He falls limply to the ground, powerless to resist as you step over him and out into the guardhouse. As you head for the exit all the guards and peasants being searched burst into applause. You barely deign to notice them as you open the city-side exit and step out into the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

724

The hands reach out to try to grab you but the stream is just wide enough that you and your little boat remain out of reach. You manage to slide on through safely and continue onwards into the dark.

Hours pass - you think, you have no idea what time it is or how long you've been down here. All you know is that you're miserable, exhausted, cold, wet and, as evidenced by the growling from your stomach - hungry.

Just as you're rummaging around in your bag for a snack, you hear a loud splash from just ahead of you and you realise that the growling wasn't all coming from your guts - there's something in this dark tunnel with you! Whatever it is roars loudly and slams into the punt hard with a sound of splintering wood. It grabs on to the boat and wrenches it down into the water, attempting to pull it under. If you want to survive you'll have to fight for your life:

🔪**GRUE - DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 2**

Did you win? If so, turn to 364. If not, turn to 1638.

725

You haul yourself to your feet and jut out your puny little chin. After being kicked around all day yesterday by brownies you don't want to start today off by being kicked around by humans.

Treat this as a Multiple Hassle.

🔪**HALBERDIER: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1**
🔪**BOWMAN: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1**

If you win turn to 1639.
If you can't defeat these two or don't want to try then turn to 1535.

726

You double back and look into some of the rooms you passed lining the hallway. These are where the various skeletons, ghouls and shamblers that inhabit this crypt stand around when they're not outside working, eating corpses or shuffling around pointlessly (respectively). The Merry Men managed to cut their numbers down somewhat and the first couple of rooms you investigate are empty of unlife. Sadly, the undead don't really own many possessions unless rags count, and you already have enough of those. Undaunted, you keep looking for stuff and in the third room you check you encounter something strange - it's a skull skittering around on eight tiny legs which remind you of those of a spider, though they're made of knucklebones all joined together. The little horror, upon spotting you, emits an ear-shattering scream which seems fit to wake the dead! In fact, it does, as you begin to hear moans and groans all around you as the "surviving" undead begin to be disturbed from wherever they're loitering down here. You'd better shut it up, and fast!

If you like you can cram it into your backpack to muffle its yelling - add the Screaming Skull on Spider Legs to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 610. Otherwise you must smash it good!

SCREAMING SKULL ON SPIDER LEGS: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2

If you can't shut it up within 3 rounds then turn to 1229. If you manage it then turn to 610.

727

You boldly stride onwards. The corridors are becoming shorter and the turns more frequent. Still the labyrinth is as boring and featureless as ever. Until - you start to hear something as you walk. Steps coming towards you from the middle of the labyrinth, the stomping of some great monster echoing off the walls. You stop and the stomping stops, replaced by a noise like hoarse breathing, also echoing off the walls from somewhere deeper within this ancient death-trap. It's stalking you, hunting you in this ancient tomb.

THE HORRORS: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 3

If you succeed you press on ahead regardless: turn to 1059. If you fail then you give in to your fears and turn back before it's too late. At first the sounds of pursuit haunt you but eventually they grow quieter and stop altogether. Allowing yourself a breath of relief you return to the exit. Turn to 1339.

728

You inform the guards that you've elected to piss off. They glare at you as you return to the road but no harm befalls you.

The road stretches into the distance ahead of you. There's still a long way to go before you reach Bilgeton. Time to resume trudging.

Turn to 1445.

729

The horrible mushrooms you've taken fill you with a demented strength and cause your skin to exude a foul-smelling greasy substance. In any case the scarecrow monster loses control of you for a moment and that's enough time for you to accidentally fling a leg up and catch him right in the crotch with a wild kick. From your completely insane point of view you literally knock the stuffing out of him. As he roars in agony you pull away and run for it as fast as you can, doing your best to put this hell town behind you. As you flee along the rainbow road a projectile whizzes down from the glowing red eye in the sky behind you and bounces off the ground beside you in a shower of sparks. You don't want to get hit by that! You start weaving from side to side, but in your state your weaving gets too wide. You completely miss the bridge and instead plummet into the river of skulls and souls below.

The freezing cold and the stinging fumes of the horribly polluted water of the River Bilge (for that is what you've just submerged yourself in) quickly sobers you up and you soon realise you're drifting downstream at a rapid pace. At least you're free of the guards who you just encountered - even if they were inclined to chase a vagrant downstream they probably wouldn't be able to catch up to you in the swiftly flowing current. Instead you are borne along to freedom (for now) along with the contents of the purloined pouch, which turns out to be 5 Guilders! Add this windfall to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1456.

730

You don't care what happens to Biff so you hand him over. Hulagu yells an instruction in some weird, harsh language to the guard next to him who fires several arrows one after another into the prone elf. The merchant, pleased with this accomplishment, orders his guard to throw the elf into the bushes along the side of the road.

As the guard leaps down from the wagon and hauls Biff away Hulagu offers you your reward for helping him be rid of that hindrance to trade: an all-expenses paid trip to Bilgeton where the trade caravan is headed. Although this involves hanging around humans, they don't seem to be as hostile to you as the stories all said they would be. In any case it beats the hells out of walking. Hulagu asks you to take a seat on the rear carriage so you climb aboard. A few minutes later he whips the reins, the huge birds strain at their harnesses and the wagons are away!

Turn to 1124.

731

Not entirely comfortable amidst a gang of cranky human ruffians and definitely not interested in encountering a lich, you decide to take your leave of this company. Loudly announcing to anyone within earshot that you're off to take a leak, you wander into a group of hedgerows and from there slip away into the gathering gloom, crawling from bush to bush through the marshy scrubland. At first you could swear you hear the sounds of pursuit from behind you, heavy boots squelching in the mud as they stomp after your trail, but before long they give up and go away. You allow yourself a sigh of relief.

As soon as you think you're safe you curl into a ball and go to sleep. You wake unnaturally early the next day after a restless night and find yourself completely covered with insect bites but mercifully un-murdered and without a lich in sight. Restore up to 10 EFFORT. You're still in a horrible, trackless wasteland made up of a maze of dense hedgerows growing out of marshy soil. Aside from inconvenient walls of foliage and sting insects it's nothing but pools of brackish water stretching for at least several miles in every direction. To the north of you is the Big Rock Mountain Goblin range which means the Count's Road to Bilgeton is probably somewhere to the south.

You spend much of the day bush-bashing to the east in the general direction of Bilgeton before turning south to rejoin the road. You're pretty sure you've gone far enough from those goons that they won't be bothering you again. After another half a day of grim, nasty slogging you make it back onto the firm surface of the paved road to Bilgeton.

Turn to 1455.

732

Showing a surprising amount of grit for a half elf who had never been known for that attribute you stride purposely through the forest, heading generally south through the untracked wilderness.

Night falls and you press on through the dark woods, trying to ignore the rumbling in your mostly-empty stomach until you can get to someplace safe to have a meal. Something's not right though - it sounded like some of the last bout of gurgling noises might have come from somewhere other than your gut.

Roll two dice and add them together - if the total comes to less than your ÉLAN then turn to 1627. If the score is equal or higher than your ÉLAN then turn to 1588.

733

Fettwanst shrugs off your puny attack and showing a great strength despite his corpulence he lifts you clean over his head and throws you a couple of yards through the air. You land heavily in the dirt, puffing and wheezing almost as much as your opponent. Now you look at him, he doesn't look quite right. He's sweating uncontrollably, wheezing horribly and going purple in the face. Even so, he wants to gloat over his victory.

"You...wheeze...want to get out so...wheeze...bad? Price....has gone up. Everything...you own. wheeze...now...gotta sit down".

If you're willing to pay this insane price then turn to 1459. If you want to see where Fettwanst is going with this then turn to 544.

734

As luck would have it the goblin merchants are currently loading up a heavy carriage with crates of gaudy goblin knickknacks for trade in Bilgeton. Since it costs them nothing to have you follow along with the carriage, they'll take you as long as you help them load the thing up.

LOADING: DIFFICULTY 10 TOUGHNESS 3

If you give up (or otherwise decide you'd rather walk than travel with a pack of goblins) the merchants jeer at you and carry on the work themselves. With an aching back you sheepishly let yourself out of town and back out through the Mazyrinth. Turn to 1277.

If you succeeded in actually finishing a job you started then you help lift the heavy boxes of worthless tat up into the carriage as requested: turn to 1329.

735

Your trust in your fellow felons is admirable but misplaced. The sun sets and rises again as you stand around outside the supposed entrance to the Thieves' Guild. In addition to losing what little faith you originally had in humanity (and your Guilders) you were also prey to a particularly merciless swarm of bog insects who saw you as an all-night buffet. Lose 10 EFFORT.

As you're rubbing your exhausted eyes and scratching your itches you are surprised by the sound of heavy footsteps coming from behind you. You turn to see a human guard who seems somewhat unsurprised to see you here.

"What's this then?" he says jovially, "Another victim of the 'Thieves' Guild' eh? Well, piss off. I've got to take a dump".

With that the guard retrieves a huge iron key from his belt and unlocks the door, which swings open to reveal a latrine. The guard steps in and shuts the door behind him, closing the latch with a loud clang. Your nostrils are immediately assaulted by a foul smell which causes you to retreat. Bidding your dreams of thievery and your money farewell you trudge back to the gate.

At least it's early enough in the morning that a queue hasn't formed yet at the gatehouse, so when it opens you're the first in line. You step in through the doorway.

Turn to 851.

736

The sentence is carried out as promised. The townsfolk pillory you for three days and on the morning of the fourth day the guards return, release you, and drag you off to be thrown over the walls. A pompous oaf in rich clothes who you assume is the lord of this dump addresses you, or rather his servant does on his behalf while the rotund old nobleman gives you his sternest look:

"You have completed your ordeal and will now be banished. It is the most civilised custom of Brunnenfeld to allow the penitent to decide which wall he and his worldly possessions will be hurled from - the north or the south."

If you'd like to be thrown from the southern wall and into the plains then turn to 1123. If you're more of a "being hurled into a rocky scree" type of guy then you can opt for the northern wall in the direction of the mountains by turning to 1604.

737

The merchant laughs heartily.

"You barely have any idea of where you are right now. I thank you for the jape though".

If you have the Feewald Map you can produce it now - turn to 627. Otherwise Hulagu reaches into a fold in his robes and produces a tiny gold coin which he tosses into the dirt by the side of the road. As you scurry over to pick it up you hear him whipping the reins and you turn to see the carts rolling away down the track, pulled by those weird giant birds. Oh well, at least you got something out of it. Add 1 Bilgeton Guilder to the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll.

If this windfall has sated your lust for gold in the far west then you can turn back down the road towards Bilgeton - turn to 480. If you think there might be more where this came from in the exotic western lands then turn to 939 to carry on with your explorations.

738

You're almost at the church doors when you feel a tap on your shoulder. Spinning around you see the grinning face of the very same skeleton you just smashed! It puts up its dukes!

🔪**GREENBONES: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2**

If you can't defeat a foe that won't stay dead then turn to 1784.
If you win, you can leave the churchyard behind before any other terrible thing happens. Turn to 1236 to head on up the lane. Otherwise you're sure you bashed it good this time - if you'd like to loot the remains then turn to 1468.

739

Once your eyes adjust you find that you've emerged behind a dilapidated wooden farmhouse in a minuscule human hamlet - just a few peasant huts clumped together in the junction of a few turnip fields. A human townswoman stands on the other side of a rickety fence leaning on a hoe, staring at the weirdo who just clambered out an abandoned cellar.

"What were you doing down there then? Most of the drunks who try to use the Ameise cellar as a toilet never come out again".

You reply by asking her where you are. She squints at you.

"K-NG's oath, drifter, you look like you haven't slept in a month. And you smell like the devil. You'll want to head to Bilgeford, just a little further up yonder road ", she says, pointing towards a cobbled road not far in the distance. "There's a junction but half a mile from here. Follow the signs to Bilgeford and get yourself a feed, a bath and a bed".

With that she goes back to hacking at the ground with her tool. While you wouldn't be averse to seducing this somewhat weathered farmer in return for her hospitality, she doesn't seem all that interested in your advances. You leave off and decide to follow her advice.

You quickly find the road and head on towards the junction. Turn to 897.

740

You're tired, but not that tired! You leap up out of your resting place and turn to see what the problem is.

In the moonlight you see that the gravel where you were lying is indeed moving. Protruding through the surface are two rows of sharp bones of varying sizes - the rib-cage of some large undead beasty. You had unwittingly fallen asleep atop the final resting place of a long-decommissioned bone golem which, sensing your life energy, had reanimated in the hopes of getting a meal and replacing some of its missing parts. You watch as its rib cage closes around where you were trying to sleep. Finding nothing, it pushes itself to a sitting position and you can see the whole thing at last. It has three arms, two legs, and apparently no skull, just a jawbone loosely attached to one of a pair of spinal columns.

With no life force present, the golem slumps forward as though asleep. Without a head it will continue to act on its undeathly instinct to feed on the life force and warmth of living bodies that are stupid enough to pass out directly on top of it, though it'll be many years before it sinks beneath the gravel again. You kind of feel sorry for it, or at least as much as you can feel sorry for anything that isn't yourself.

If you want you can smash it down and loot it for parts by turning to 1312. If you think you can repair it and you have the Azari PCS with 4000-in-1 Games Cartridge then turn to 995, or if you have the Scrying Orb with at least 1 charge left then turn to 682.

741

Unbelievably you manage to lay out this giant in a fair fight! The crowd cheers as you kick the giant in the yarbles, gouge his eyes, bite his ear off and headbutt him over and over again. Soon the former champion lies motionless before you. It's a knock out!

"While I'm not sure any of those moves were fair, they weren't technically against any rules for boxing, which we haven't codified as a sport yet after all" shouts the bartender-turned-announcer. "The Jabbing Jabroni is therefore the new ultra-heavyweight champion of Bilgeton!"

You tear the title belt off your fallen opponent and raise it above your head! The crowd roars!

Now that you're the greatest pugilist in Bilgeton you can probably coast on this victory for the rest of your life if you want - turn to 398 to do this. Otherwise you decide to stick around until closing time, lapping up the only genuine approval you've ever received from other people. By the time the bar closes, you've gotten so many slaps on the back that you've developed a hard callus. Add 1 ÉLAN from your stunning and hard-won victory.

Once the bar closes and dislodges you back onto the streets of Bilgeton you try to figure out where to go next.

Turn to 827.

742

Although the Elfish Cloak of Invisibility is little more than a green rag with some gold embroidery and a few twigs sewed on, it's close enough in appearance to the rogue's finery that the barbarian evidently mistakes you for his companion. Hard-pressed by his goblin adversaries he sees you in the clear.

"LEGLESS! CATCH!" he roars and throws you a glittering object which arcs through the skies. You completely fail to catch it but you do manage to pick it up off the ground on only your second attempt. It's a Mighty Codpiece - a gem-studded treasure, probably stolen from the collection of the Goblin King. Add this to your Adventure Scroll.

"GO!" continues the barbarian, now surrounded and swinging his sword wildly as he shouts. "THERE'S NO HOPE FOR ME. RUN TO BILGETON SELL IT. GIVE MY SHARE TO MY WIVES AND CONCUBINES...."

His last words are cut short as the goblins overpower him and start looking around for their next victim. They spot you holding the codpiece and several them advance on you, their armour clattering menacingly as they jog in your direction.

If you want to make a break for it then turn to 378. If you want to attempt to explain your way out of this mess then turn to 14.

743

You are back in your childhood room, also your adolescent and early adulthood room, now you think of it. In fact, you've rarely had cause to leave this place aside from your ill-fated sorties into elfen society. It features a bed, some smutty elf paintings on the walls and a mountain of rubbish, unwashed doublets and last season's belts on the floor. A slit of a window cut into the southern wall provides a view of the forest (which you hate) and a hint of fresh air which struggles mightily against the stale atmosphere of your den. You've already taken everything of value.

If you have the Azari PCS with 4000-in-1 Games Cartridge then turn to 43.

Otherwise there's not a lot to do here. If that suits you fine then turn to 310. If, on second thought, you're itching for adventure after all then turn to 1648.

744

Shortly after the guards clear off you begin to hear the dreadful sound of howling coming closer and closer. The dire wolf is returning!

Lucky for you dire wolves are a bit crap and this one forgot where he left his trap. Excited by the prospect of a meal at last he bounds right into its own pit, tumbling head over tail and snapping his neck at the bottom. You extract yourself from under the dead dog, wincing in pain thanks to your busted arm.

If you like you can attempt to skin and butcher some of the huge animal, resulting in a Dire Wolf Cloak and a Meat - add these to your Adventure Scroll if you wish. Your preparations complete, you climb on top of the corpse of the dumb mutt and clamber out of the pit.

You look around - you're still in the forest. One tree looks pretty much the same to you and you'd forgotten which way you were heading after your night in the hole. Luckily humans, especially in armour, are stereotypically oafish and have left a clear trail of broken branches and crushed bushes in their wake. They look to have been going southwest, slightly downhill. If you'd like to go that way turn to 1103. If you'd prefer to stay the hells away from those guys after what just happened then you can wind your way through the trees uphill to the northwest - turn to 1192.

745

You creep up right behind the Malrog - only a stalagmite separates you from it. From your vantage point you see that it's not reading but rather is writing, muttering softly to itself in gravelly tones as it melts red hot runes into the surface of the steel plate with its finger. Only an expert archaeologist would be able to comprehend the ancient Delvish language, but the runes radiate power, as well as heat. In fact, even with this rock shielding you from the Malrog, the heat is almost unbearable. If you hang around much longer, you'll cook.

From here you can reach the bridge pretty easily, though it's still a risky proposition. Turn to 1136 to try to escape this cavern by crossing the chasm. You're reasonably certain that attracting the Malrog's attention would be suicidal, but if you want you can try to engage it in conversation by turning to 1635. Or you can rush to attack it by turning to 242. If you'd rather weaken it first, you have an idea - turn to 1102 if you'd like to wing a Potion at it (assuming you have one) or turn to 838 if you've got a bladder full of some other liquid you'd like to let loose, you disgusting half elf.

746

Your song, amounting to little more than tuning your instruments and trying not to hit too many bum notes, doesn't exactly light the quarry on fire. Still, it's way better than what the crowd just had to tolerate so you're allowed to finish your set without being pelted with anything too heavy. Just as your polite applause is dying down the crowd roars once more as The Waits step onto the stage. One of the headline acts, The Waits are a six-piece band dressed in a uniform of crimson overcoats and silver chains. Their polished instruments gleam in the light of the sparks struck from flints that the audience are knocking together over their heads.

They waste no time launching into the crowd-pleasing favourite, the Alta Cappella! Even though the Bilgeton populace have heard this song every single morning and evening since The Waits were formed it seems to have lost none of its novelty to the audience, who commence to leaping about and smashing their heads and bodies against each other in the mosh pit just in front of the stage.

The popular tune is nearing its end - it's time for you to take on this headline act!

Are you on your own? If so turn to 1324. If you've got a band of some kind together (travelling with at least one out of the Dwarfen Troupe, Elfish Prodigy or Shinsplints) then turn to 1566.

747

Although doing the sensible thing would normally be out of character for you, sometimes you accidentally manage. You decide to stay low until the humans clear off. Face down in the brambles you hear the tramping of the big birds and the rolling of wheels as the caravan rolls on by. Suddenly there's a tumult and you sit up to see that Biff and his gang have all left their hiding spots to pelt the rear of the last carriage with paving stones. The caravan speeds up but it's too late: the whimsyflickers manage to smash a rear wheel of the last wagon with a barrage of rocks. As the wheel disintegrates the vehicle overturns in a flurry of screeching birds, cursing humans and the crunch of wood as crates of dislodged cargo slam into the road. The birds, free of the wagon, race into the forest as a guard tries to emerge from the wreckage. The elfs pelt him with stones until he ducks back inside the where it's relatively safe from the rain of rocks.

While his goons keep up a fearsome barrage on the overturned wagon Biff looks around for you and calls out:

“Bastard! Help us out! I’ll let you be one of my stooges if you do!”

If this offer is too good to refuse then turn to 616. If you’d rather stay hidden and watch what happens then turn to 149. If you’d like nothing at all to do with whatever crime is going on here you can instead sneak off by turning to 1487.

748

Unwilling to sit and unable to sleep standing, you spend the hours before dawn leaning against the outhouse walls and trying not to breathe in the odours of this farmer’s bog. Finally, dawn’s light arrives, you hear a cock crow, and the old coot rises. He yawns and turns to peer at you through the moon-shaped cut out in the door. You ask him what he’s going to do with you.

“I reckon I ought to turn you over to the count’s guards, but I’ve had a night to think on it and I’ll tell you what. You’re a bit scrawny but you aint got any deformities. My daughter’s of marrying age and there aint many eligible men come this way. I’m getting too old to provide for her. So you marry my Nilde and I’ll give you a proper send off. Either that or the guards will”.

While the idea of marrying some rusticated peasant’s daughter isn’t exactly appealing to you, neither is being clapped in irons and dragged into an oubliette. If you take the farmer’s offer then turn to 1671. If you’d rather risk hanging than holy matrimony then turn to 33.

749

You cross over the enchanted clearing (being careful to avoid the larger pieces of debris and ration wrappers which litter this pristine paradise), and wander over to the entrance to the Grass-watching Academy. You duck under an arching root which serves as the front gate and enter the grounds of your old college. You may not have graduated or even passed a class, but you sure owe the place a lot of money. If that doesn’t make you an alumnus you have no idea what would.

Occupied with such thoughts you immediately stumble over an elf lying face down on the ground just inside the gate. She lets out a horrible strangled cry followed by a sick-sounding gurgle and a threatening silence.

If you’d like to check if she’s ok, turn to 515. If you want to put as much distance between yourself and this terrible accident as possible then you flee back to the town clearing: turn to 1284.

750

The handle of the toothbrush should make a handy chisel! There's a particularly damp spot in the wall near your straw heap where you've been carelessly emptying your piss pot. Your waste has slightly softened the mortar holding the stones in place: though the work could take weeks or months you could chisel your way through the cement and eventually, if you worked hard with every ounce of your strength and used every hour the gods sent you, you could shift several layers of stone blocks away and create a tunnel that would let you crawl out into the hallway. From there you'll wait until nightfall when the guards are no doubt sleeping, sneak up to the guard room, steal some jail keys, retrieve your stuff from the evidence chest and slink out into Bilgeton without anyone being the wiser. You resolve to get to work immediately.

Three months of diligent labour later a guard unlocks your cell and enters to find you tuckered out on your straw mattress, your toothbrush still jammed into the narrow and shallow crack you've spent months half-heartedly scraping into the mortar whenever you could be bothered. He kicks you in the ribs with a hobnailed boot to jolt you awake.

"I came to give you a new toothbrush for K-NGsmas but you clearly don't need one" he says sulkily.

With that he plucks your old brush from its shallow cavity and storms out of the cell, his feelings almost as badly bruised as your recently-kicked side. You guess there's nothing more to do but wait for your day in court.

Turn to 1411.

751

As soon as you're past the guard the cursed shovel rings out in a clear metallic tone, alerting all within earshot that you're currently breaking in and you have no business being here. Trapped inside you are swiftly surrounded by guards and apprehended.

Since trespassing is only a misdemeanour in Bilgeton you are given a mere slap on the wrist by the standards of the human judicial code - a life sentence in the oubliette. Your adventure ends here.

752

If Nilde is with you then you're in big trouble! Turn at once to 1689. Otherwise read on.

You lean over uncomfortably close to Aggie and clumsily slur, "I'm sure all these skeletons want to take you to bed but they don't have the guts. So here I am".

Aggie regards you with a look similar to that of a butcher appraising a beef carcass.

"You smell like a ploughing tanner's scrotum. There's a tub around here somewhere - scrub off some off that blasted filth and come find me in my chamber when you're done."

That having turned out surprisingly well, you clean up and make your way to Aggie's bed.

753-754

You rise the next morning, well-rested despite the hangover. The skeletons have cleaned your clothes and prepared you a hot breakfast. Restore your ÉLAN and EFFORT to their maximum values. Aggie is outside preparing the caravan to leave and you go down to say goodbye.

"Fare fucking well, and don't put up with any shit from those blasted elves. They'll jump you as soon as you reach the road so be ready to give them a good ploughing. If there's anything here you could use, let me know and I'll bloody bring it to you."

She hands you a pouch containing 25 Bilgeton Guilders. Add this to the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll.

"That's part payment and it includes the bloody Bilgeford toll so don't go ploughing any whores before you get there. You'll get the rest when you meet my agent in Bilgeton. He's an utter cunt so you'll get on like a fucking house on fire. Don't forget to check your pack for a special bloody gift from me to you. And if you're ever passing by this way again, well, don't be a ploughing stranger."

Your pack now contains the Skeleton Friend, a decaying old skeleton with a dagger who usually dwells in one of the tower's many barrels. You may also select one from the following as a parting gift: Boots of Elfish Stomping, The Robe and Wizard Hat, A Rusty Scythe of Scything, The Necromancer's Undies. If you don't already have a horse or other mode of transportation Aggie also gives you a Clapped-Out Old Nag which you can add to your Adventure Scroll.

You stammer out a farewell, mount your steed and follow the skeleton caravan as it trundles away. Turn to 608.

753

You smell smoke... and the smell of burning fabric and searing flesh. You look down and find to your horror that your pants have burst into flames! Screaming, you race around the markets until you find a trough outside the Skeleton Workers Union to soak your posterior in. The trough is for skeleton horses and so is full of milk instead of water (they need to look after their bones) but it's just as effective for putting out spontaneous trouser fires.

Lose 10 EFFORT from the third degree burns you just sustained and turn to 827 to limp out of the market.

754

The 10-Foot Pole, perhaps realizing that his fate may be tied up with yours here, is actually helpfully for a change.

"Może to być Strzyga. Mamy wiele kłopotów!" he shouts. You hear him grunt as he takes a swing at whatever you're battling. You should have an easier time with his help.

🔪**STRZYGA??? - DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you win turn to 626. If you still can't beat this thing even with your pal Karol's assistance then turn to 1638.

755

Thinking fast, you crouch down as the fist sails overhead. Fistface roars in apparent fury. The crowd laps it up.

He's overextended - if you'd like to take this opportunity to hit him then turn to 1786. If you'd rather keep away from this monster then turn to 1263.

756

You're not fighting anyone called "Savage Sid", especially not when you didn't get the drop on him and you don't outnumber him by at least three to one. You do what comes naturally and curl up in a ball, blubbering as you shamelessly apologise for even having eyes and begging the kind thug for your worthless life.

Sidney is utterly disgusted at this revolting display of craven self-abnegation to the point of forgetting to kick the hells out of you. Instead, he points at the eye and growls, "Right, you can fuck along then. After you eat that fucking thing." Before he's even finished talking you're cramming the eye into your face.

This thing would have been repulsive fresh but after fermenting in your pack for a day or two it looks, smells and tastes exactly like an uncured leather purse filled with rancid pus. The sight and smell of you enthusiastically chowing down is too much even for Sid: your craven capitulation to his unreasonable demands just to get out of a beating has taken the wind out of his sails a little bit, and he's beginning to reconsider if professional bullying is really the life for him. He leaves to think it over.

Well, that eye isn't sitting right with you. You're already seeing double but if you want to order another drink to wash it down then turn to 1230. If you don't think the booze is going to help the situation then you can settle your tab: turn to 502.

757

Do you have a weapon of some kind AND an ÉLAN of 8 or higher? If so turn to 1613.

Otherwise Hulagu snorts derisively.

"Look at you - your weedy physique, your greasy skin, your fluid-encrusted leggings. It's evident that the only strength in your arm comes from chronic masturbation. If only you could wield a sword as well as you wield your prick then maybe we could come to terms, but alas."

With this accurate assessment he whips the reins. The huge birds squawk raucously and begin to move off.

Despite having nothing to be proud about, this rebuff has wounded your pride. If you want to press your case more forcefully then turn to 842. If you know when you're not wanted, you step aside and let the caravan roll on by - turn to 799.

758

You somehow manage to retrieve the tiny gold coin from your coin pouch without throwing all the rest of your money everywhere and you hand it over to the bartender. He is suddenly a lot less annoyed about the damage you've caused. A Guilder is an outrageous fee - you drank and ruined maybe a fifth of this sum's worth of booze - but in your inebriated state you're in no condition to notice. The bartender, worried that you'll figure out that you've been had if you stick around long enough to sober up, takes your arm and firmly escorts through the tavern door and back into the town square.

You're feeling a bit unsteady on your feet and the bright daylight is suddenly blinding after your time in the dimly lit tavern. You don't really feel like walking anywhere - if you want to canvas the vendors to see if any of them could offer you a lift to Bilgeton then turn to 1247. If you'd rather spend some money while your inhibitions are lowered you go for a walk along the tradesmen's row - turn to 1473. If you'd mostly just prefer to get the hells out of this direct sunlight then you can trek up to that church which you're pretty sure will let you in- turn to 501.

759

The Elf Bastard turns one of your clumsy thrusts with a swish of his greatsword, then launches into a graceful pirouette and swings the huge blade in a flashing arc towards your head. It'd surely be curtains for you but one of your brave skeleton guards launches him or herself between you and your doom, chittering a farewell. The blade slashes down and smashes into the guard's skull with enough force to shatter the magical bonds holding the thing together with a bone-pulverising crunch. The skeleton is discombobulated instantly and scattered all over the road and into the bushes.

It'll be some time before the guard can pull itself together again - deduct one GUARD and continue the fight as before. Each time you are hit from now on you'll lose another GUARD.

Should you lose them all and lose a further round then turn to 831. If you want to surrender then you beg for mercy: turn to 165. If you somehow prevail then turn to 922.

760

The remarkably spry man has already vanished into the undergrowth. Realising that you've got no chance of catching him you turn your attention to the tower from which sobbing is emanating. Before you reach it though a young elf lady comes running out through the front door. Her face is wet with tears and she's carrying a small bundle tight against her chest. It's a baby!

"Come back! Oh you f..." she begins, but stops in surprise as soon as she sees you loitering around nearby.

If you'd like to immediately lay your best lines on this lady then turn to 1291. If you'd like to awkwardly shuffle away then turn to 1808.

761

The foul language coming from the tower keeps your skeletal foes occupied for long enough for you to crawl away on your belly into the safety of a nearby bush. The skeletons soon realise you're gone and start looking for you, but they can't really see in the dark any better than you and they can't hear your muffled sobs over all the swearing. After about half an hour of looking for you they give up and clatter away, leaving you to dry your eyes in peace. Once you're certain you're alone you stick your head out of the bush: everything's dark, including the tower which was previously lit. All the windows have been shuttered other than one at the very top. Perhaps even warlocks like to sleep at night. All signs of the battle are gone - the skeletons must have tidied up after themselves once they'd given up on finding you.

If you'd like to put this whole miserable scene behind you then you continue back to the road and get on with your journey towards Bilgeton - turn to 294. Otherwise, assuming you haven't already gotten on the bad side of the elfs you can go seek them out to discuss the next move: turn to 879, or you can attempt to make your way into the tower by turning to 1680.

762

Briefly confusing the definitions of worthless and priceless you decide to pay these guys whatever they want in exchange for your life. You hand over your entire coin purse.

If the purse contains less than 5 Guilders then turn to 109. If there's 5 or more Guilders in there then Sigbot releases you and chucks the purse over to his man Manegold. You rub your smarting arm.

"There, that wasn't so hard. Thank you for your custom, my liege", he says mockingly, bowing exaggeratedly low. Mainly glad not to be dead you leave, continuing on along the road to Bilgeton accompanied by the raucous laughter of the highwaymen and an empty feeling where all your money used to be.

After a long and uneventful stretch of travelling (mercifully excised from this tome to save on printing costs and to avoid further straining the reader's patience, but either way it's taken long enough to allow you to recuperate somewhat: restore 20 EFFORT) the road emerges from the woods at last and you finally see the great walls of Bilgeton in the distance. It's still at least half a day's ride away or twice as long on foot, but the end's in sight at long last! Still, before you lies a long and lonesome road.

Now, have you summoned a Shiny Demon into the world? If so turn to 1574. If not, turn to 897.

763

You're not sure what Hardmod is getting at with his cryptic request, but since you figure it'd be extremely unsafe to refuse this ancient horror you agree to do whatever he likes. Hardmod smiles, you think. It's hard to tell since the flesh on his face has long since atrophied, leaving greying skin stretched drum-taut over a bony frame.

"Excellent. Here's what I need. I would like to expand my operations but unfortunately there's a clan of nobolds which have set up a town in the neighbouring caverns. My helpers can't take care

of them because they've got a cleric who knows Turn Undead - every time I send a few skeletons to rough up the townsfolk they just get turned around and more than a few of them have been Smited. If you could promise to get rid of that priest for me I'll make it worth your while by not murdering you right now. What do you say?"

It's a difficult offer to refuse, given your proximity to this incredibly threatening being. Hardmod takes your silence as assent.

"Excellent. Now begone - you'll find the way at the far end of the barrow. Go north all the way through the caverns or you'll probably get lost. Do not fail me!"

The lich stands up, clearly done with you. Not wanting to overstay your welcome, you beat a hasty retreat out of his room and back out into the crypt. Turn to 805.

764

You've got no idea what to do now that you're here, so you ask your trusty companion what he thinks you should do next.

"Nie mój cyrk, nie moje małp" he says. After a pause during which time you chew on these wise words he adds, "Moglibyśmy dziś wieczorem pójść na 'Grand Ball'". Jest na rogu 'Tent Avenue' i 'Fort Lane'. Spróbuję załatwić nam jakieś dziewczyny". With this gibberish spouted he downs his drink, slams the empty tankard on the bar, goes over to the dwarfen ladies and starts chatting them up.

"Ładnie pachniesz. Jadłaś kiełbasę?" he says to the one that's caught his eye, a pretty lady just over a third his height. She giggles, flattered by this unintelligible come-on, and calls one of her friends over. Within seconds Karol has his lanky arms around both their shoulders and is heading straight for the exit.

Jealous, you desperately try to hit on all the remaining dwarfs, working your way up and down the bar until you've been thoroughly rejected by every woman in the joint. As you're busting a final disheartened move on a dwarf you've already worked your magic on, you accidentally jostle against the bar stool of an extremely ugly-looking bruiser who's been drinking hard at the bar all night.

If you have any monster or animal eyes in your possession then turn to 1191. Otherwise he growls in fury and rudely tells you to fornicate off. That really hurts your feelings! If you'd like to make something of it then turn to 154. If you'd prefer to apologise for any upset you've caused then turn to 1026.

765

You describe your encounter with and destruction of the Lich under the Graveyard of Kings. The guard is on the edge of his seat but at the end of the story looks a bit confused.

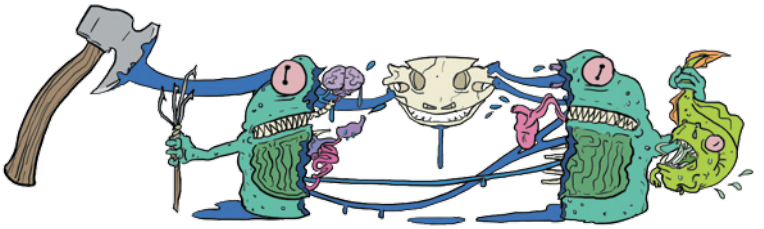
"OK, so you killed the lich... but did you really kill him? Did the crypt start collapsing around you or were there still undead shuffling about afterwards?"

If the crypt collapsed then turn to 936. If not then turn to 535.

766

Pretty generic don't you think?

Turn to 1747.



767

The donkey's hideous braying gets worse and worse as you approach the Alp, but you'd rather thrash the hell out of the creature than walk, so that's what you do. As you draw near to the base of the mountain on your skittish steed you see that the front opens into a great black cave.

Your problems start immediately as you near the entrance. The beating you have to bestow on the donkey to get it to move at all causes it to go mad with a combination of fury and terror and it starts kicking wildly in an attempt to dislodge you. You manage to hold on but not before it kicks a huge pile of empty glass bottles which are unaccountably stacked next to the entrance, and they explode with a shattering sound which reverberates through the cave. Cursing the donkey loudly with the most witheringly awful oaths you've picked up on your travels, you bring the beast back under control again and steer it in through the dark hole where no doubt Bhad the Black will be found.

It takes a moment for your eyes to adjust to the dim light of the interior of the mountain but when they do you find yourself amid a great hoard of glittering treasures - heaps of gold coins, rubies the size of your fist and piles of possibly enchanted weaponry and armour glimmering softly in the gloom. But before you can get to looting the noise of the smashed glass being trampled under the heavy hoofs of the deranged donkey, its stupid braying and your shouts as you try to bring it to heel have awakened the terrible guardian of this place!

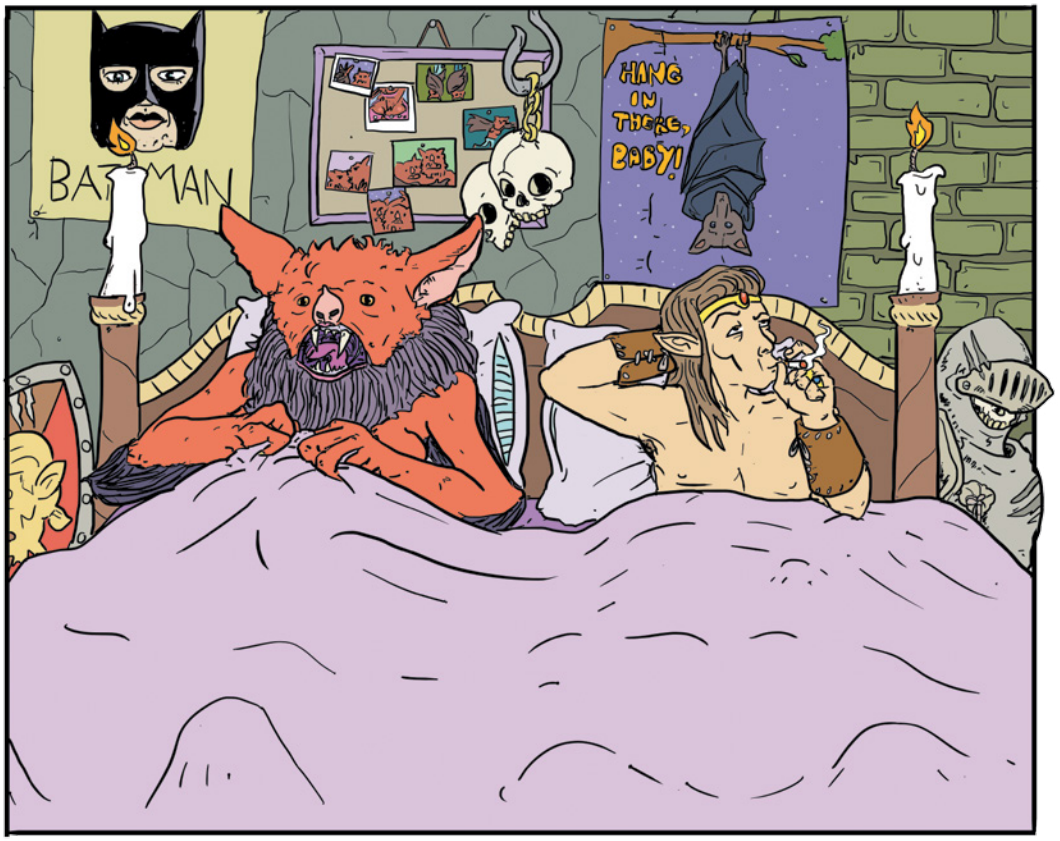
"WHO DARES BURST IN ON THE FORGE OF BHAD THE BLACK?" roars a tremendous voice. Glinting in the darkness at the back of the cavern you see a pair of huge yellow eyes, like those of a snake, coming closer and closer - and then the razor-sharp teeth, scaly dark blue head, massive claws and leathery black wings of a huge deep blue dragon! Despite its impressive paunch it looks utterly lethal and both you and your donkey completely brick it as it sinuously winds its way forward.

You're about to stutter out an introduction when the dragon's glowing yellow eyes open wide.

"YOU! HOW DARE YOU COME BACK HERE AFTER LAST TIME?". The dragon inhales sharply and an ominous blue glow fills its gaping maw. If your childhood fairy tales about dragons and/or the Bestiary entry are correct you're probably going to be set on fire within moments.

If you'd like to flee then turn to 1559. If you think it's too late then your only hope is to stand your ground: turn to 1395.

768



Never one to let an opportunity for petty bullying go to waste, you set about ritually humiliating your fallen opponent. As he cowers and marinates in his shame you use his guano to daub many a penis and titty on his face and torso. This takes a while but makes you feel like a real big man. You gain 5 EFFORT.

It's only when you're done screaming in his ears that you realise you may have gone too far - you've ruined his super-sensitive bat hearing and you were eventually hoping to shake some directions out of him. Still, all is not lost. Since you came a-knocking while his lair was a-rocking, you reason that he's got a female accomplice nearby you can question.

Following the overpowering smell of guano and Polo for Batmen you quickly find his cave and descend into the darkness. Your half elf eyes quickly adjust and you make out a large bed and its occupant - a horrifying gargantuan bat monster much like its mate, seven feet tall with a cruel maw lined with razor-sharp fangs. A coquettish glitter in her eye and a flirty note in her inhuman ultrasonic shriek indicates that she's taken with your extremely handsome belt and your manly/elfly/batly odour of fresh guano.

One thing very quickly leads to another and as you puff on a post-coital cigarette the female bat clicks and chirps out several possible directions to Bilgeton, as if she wanted you to get out or something.

Will you take her directions and continue with your quest? Turn to 1507. Or do you wish to stay here with the only woman that has ever loved you, physically or otherwise? Turn to 1687.

769

While spending hours tripping balls with a dirty old man in the woods behind your old house is a tempting prospect, you tell Radabastard that you sadly must decline his offer. He takes it in his stride.

"Yeah, I figured you for the paranoid type. Well, if you're ever in the market for some mind expansion you know where to find me". With this he goes back to scrabbling in the dirt among the toadstools and you take your leave.

Turn to 1623.

770

You mumble some excuse about needing to get to Bilgeton in a hurry. The dragon seems sceptical.

"So soon? Well, how about I give you a lift? We can talk on the way".

If you'd like to take the dragon up on this offer then turn to 1035. If you'd really rather go it alone then turn to 1254.

771

You're a horrible liar, especially under pressure, and to anyone but this guard your sweating, shifty eyes and generally squirrely demeanour would be a dead giveaway that you were hiding something. To this bored, incompetent guard though you don't look much shiftier than any of the other conmen that come to town to hawk their wares every market day. He's got a lot of other merchants to see to today and most of them are going to offer better bribes than some greasy half elf with a backpack full of crap, so he ignores all the red flags and waves you through.

As soon as you reach the market square and you're pretty sure no guards are watching, you take the backpack off and open it. All hells immediately breaks loose. The brownies, free of their confinement and back in their rightful environment, scatter throughout town and into every house, racing in through doors left ajar, leaping in through open windows and even clambering down the chimneys. Guards yell, women shriek, carts are overturned and small fires break out as the townspeople make a futile, last-ditch attempt to keep the brownies out of their homes.

You have no way of knowing this right now but you've successfully ruined Brunnenfeld. The brownies are supposedly helpful household spirits but they are insanely bad at actually mending anything, and they have a tendency to strip their materials from things that are still working. It took a lot of money and a huge effort to drive the critters out in the first place, involving the hiring of a powerful and expensive witch and the building of the palisades which will soon be torn apart to make substandard wooden clogs, leaky barrels and bent, blunt nails. The hammering will go on all night and no one will get any sleep. The brownies are a noxious pest and the town no longer has the resources at hand to drive the little beasts off again. In the coming days, weeks and months the population will steadily drain away - some to the hardships of subsistence farming around Nonce, others to rot away trying to eke out a living in the Bilgeton Drudgers' Quarter, others roaming even further afield. Make a note that you've destroyed Brunnenfeld.

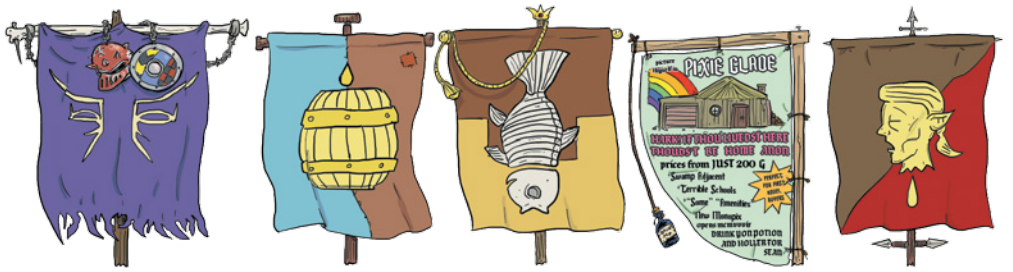
For the now everything is in a state of panic - no one has time to worry about a lone half elf. Except it seems, for a small fox who, if you didn't know any better, was beckoning for you to follow it along the road to the right of the square with impatient flicks of its tail. Once it's sure you've got its drift it runs off up the street to the right.

If you'd like to follow it then turn to 1168. Otherwise you'd prefer to get the hells out of Brunnenfeld before anyone realises that you did this to them. You let yourself out the south gate and head away from the town you've just destroyed. Turn to 372.

772

You quickly loot the corpses - the miners aren't a rich folk but they have a few things that might come in handy. You can take any two of the following - a Frill Neck, a Sturdy Pick, Detachable Tail, and/or the Esky Full of Cold Ones. You also find 5 Guilders worth of gold nuggets on the deceased - add this bounty to your Adventure Scroll.

With your arms full of loot (or not) you stop picking over the dead lizards' possessions and prepare to move on into the tunnels. Turn to 811.



773

You don't stand a chance against someone with a crossbow that's probably designed to shoot trolls. You put your hands up to show you mean no further harm. The old man squints at you along the length of the bow.

"Yer on the knight's land, man, and that's an offense. The sorta offense that'd cost yer dear. A Guilder, say, or thereabouts."

If you're on a mission from Witold then you can put this old bastard in his place - turn to 1514.

Otherwise if you've got a Guilder then you can bribe the old man - subtract it from your cash. Or if you're carrying around the Feewald Map he'll take it despite it not being of much use out here - remove it from your Adventure Scroll. If you purchased any items from the shops in Brunnenfeld you could hand one over for a bribe. If you're too cheap for any of that you could hand over the incalculably valuable +1 Ring of the Silvermanes should you have it - resolve the action on page 297 before returning to this page. If you take any of these options the guard accepts your bribe and lets you pass on along the dried creek - turn to 395.

If you've got no mission, no money and nothing to give away (or you're just too cheap or sentimental to part with anything) then turn to 1423.

774

It's a grim trudge towards Bilgeton - you really could have used a place to take a load off. Still, you get the feeling that could have escalated quickly. At least the rain eventually lets up, though not until you're soaked through to your skin.

The Bilgeton Plains are quite densely populated in comparison to the more or less empty wastes you've been traversing since you left home, and all manner of small farmsteads and peasant huts line the way. None of the farmers are any more welcoming than that sheriff - not that you'd want to stay in their filthy mud huts anyway - so you press on towards the city. Just a few hours later you are approaching a gate set in the immense walls - the great Trader's Gate. You see the sun glinting off the steel helmets of what are probably guards. You doubt that these guys are going to wave you through just the be rid of you. This might be your last chance to equip your gear for your grand debut and to get rid of anything that could get you into trouble in the city.

Make whatever adjustments you're going to make and turn to 681.

775

While you're hunkered down and bricking it as your mind flicks through the limited options that might possibly end in your surviving, your lanky companion is peering around the side of the stalagmite in rapt fascination. The 10-Foot Pole is reading the Delvish over the Malrog's shoulder and apparently is very interested in what's there!

"Przepraszam", utters the Pole, immediately drawing the monster's undivided attention. It swivels its massive head, bringing two hate-filled glowing red eyes to bear on your companion. Unfazed, he continues:

"Do, co piszesz tam widać fascynujące. Jedno pytanie - czy uważasz, że kryzys qubańskiego antymagiarakietowania mógłby być odwrócony, czy uczestnicy są zwracali większą uwagę na organizację swoich wojsk i skarbów?"

The Malrog's expression softens.

"I UNDERSTAND NOT WHAT YOU SAY BUT IT SEEMS YOU UNDERSTAND DELVISH AND HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE TOPIC OF INTER-REGNAL RELATIONS. COME, LET US DISCUSS THE MATTER IN EXCRUCIATING DEPTH."

The Pole goes to talk with the monster, who is now thoroughly occupied with expounding its theories in great detail now that it has a willing and intelligent listener. You are free to cross the abyss and get out of here. You wave to the Pole to get him to come along but he just shoots you an irritated glare and goes back to his conversation with the erudite hells-spawn. You're on your own from here on out! Remove the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole from your Adventure Scroll. Simultaneously grateful not to be pulverised by a two-ton magma monster and sad to have lost your travelling companion, you cross the bridge and exit the chamber.

Turn to 1347.

776

You step into the office to enquire about hiring a skeleton worker.

After a convoluted series of negotiations over the job description, contract signings and job skill matching you're eventually assigned the only worker on the books who happens to be free today - Shinsplints, a manual labourer who happens to be an excellent drummer in his spare time. Add Shinsplints to your Adventure Scroll.

It's only after you leave the office that you realise how much having a skeleton retainer in your entourage is going to cost you - after wages, payroll tax, pension contributions, health insurance and gratuities you're going to go broke rather quickly! Shinsplints will cost you 1 Guilder per paragraph you visit, including this one, and cannot be dismissed. Should you run out of Guilders he will leave you the very next paragraph you turn to, probably so he can go prepare a lawsuit for wrongful termination.

In the meantime he's a great addition to your team. Now, would you like to revisit the markets - turn to 244 - or, if you're conscious that time is ticking away now that you're paying for it by the hour, would you like to get on with whatever you came to Bilgeton to do? If so, turn to 827.

777

With all that militia-related unpleasantness behind you, the rest of the walk is a pleasant amble along a sunlight-dappled stream, marred only by your carrying a murderously heavy pack crammed full of squabbling faeries. Even with this inconvenience you soon emerge from the woods and find yourself on the plains just the south of the walled human town of Brunnenfeld. The huge front gates stand open, affording easy entry through the palisade, and you watch a couple of carts laden with good rolling in. As one of the brownies explains to you, it's market day so it's particularly easy to get into the place today. You'd ask why the brownies don't just waltz in on their own if it's so easy, but you think better of it. It's possible to know too much about the affairs of the wee folk, and that amount is nearly anything at all.

You walk right up to the main gates where you're stopped by another armoured guard immediately after passing through the gateway. Your insanely full pack has marked you out as merchant, which means you need to go through customs before you can set up your stall.

If you're currently equipped with the Dented Helmet or the Soiled Gambeson then turn to 1129. Otherwise the guard glares at you through the eye slit in his metal helmet. "Anything ye'll be wanting to declare, merchant?"

Now it's time to show what you're really made of! If you want to roll over on your supposed allies and declare that you've got a sack full of brownies then turn to 1325. If you're committed to the mission you can put on your best lying face and tell them you're clean - turn to 771.

778

You enter one of the relatively intact stone hovels and push the solid oak door shut behind you. The latch is a bit stiff thanks to rust, but if you put a bit of elbow grease into it you could conceivably get it shut should you be paranoid enough to feel the need - roll one die and subtract that much EFFORT if you choose to do this. There's nothing worth stealing here but you do find a rotten pile of bedding in the corner. Since your bedding back in Elfsdale Downs was completely rotten as well (you never washed it) this little detail makes you feel a little more at home despite the lack of windows. Wondering if you might be able to make a life for yourself right here you curl up on the filthy rags and drift right off to sleep, snoring merrily.

Turn to 1815.

779

Fear has given these elfs wings and you keep getting your new beard tangled up in the twigs protruding from the increasingly dense woods. You're unable to catch them and you soon find yourself lost in the dark forest that you've blundered into.

It takes until dawn to find your way back to the road. You'd ordinarily be exhausted but you're still pretty juiced up from the after-effects of that testicle you devoured earlier. You carry on towards Bilgeton right away.

Turn to 294.

780

If this adventure has taught you one thing it should be that you're not always going to come out ahead, especially against four armed men who are single-minded in their mission to rip you off. You sigh and hand over your captive. The patrol leader responds by reaching into his pouch and counting out just 3 Guilders, which he deposits into your waiting palm.

"I forgot the arbitration surcharge", he says unapologetically as he mercilessly hoses you down. You pocket your coins as the guards march the elf away to his no-doubt grisly fate.

Remove the Elf Bastard from your Adventure Scroll, add the 3 Guilders and turn to 1054.

781

You're about to slur out whatever expert lie you think will get you out having to pay your bill but the bartender has your number.

"Before you say it, I don't accept excuses, second-hand items or elfish currency. You pay up in gold coins or I'll call the militia."

You're in a tight spot! Then again, this guy looks like even less of a fighter than you are. You reckon you could take him! You put up your dukes:

🔪**HIPSTER: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1**

If you win then turn to 1622. If you lose or otherwise give up the fight then turn to 1113.

782

Although the ring lets you communicate with animals, you're either too far away or they're deliberately ignoring you. If you want to chat you'll have to climb up. The narrow spire is extremely tall but it's craggy and there are numerous hand-holds. Still, it's not the easiest climb in the world.

UP THE SPIRE - DIFFICULTY 10

If you make it to the top then turn to 1719. Otherwise you slide to the bottom as the eagles squawk loudly in what your ring translates as a mocking tone. With the wind taken out of your sails, you decide to move on rather than deal with these pesky peregrines. Turn to 138.

783

"Well at least you're honest, man", the hippy says, "but I aint got a lot to say to a square. Better get out of here, you're harshing my mellow".

With that the hippy returns to rummaging in the dirt.

If you'd like to take advantage of his back being turned to snag a few of those mushrooms you saw then turn to 124. Otherwise you can leave quietly by turning to 1623.

784

You race up the janky stairs with a grace borne of sixty years of practice. Jeff, who has only been here a handful of decades at most, stumbles badly on the unattached trick step, smacks his head on a protruding cobblestone half-way up and almost plummets to his death after stepping through the rotten plank that could charitably be considered a decorative step. By the time he's struggled his way to the top you're safely ensconced in your room with the door bolted shut. After hammering on your door for a few moments and bleating some impotent threats Jeff gives up and stomps back down the stairs.

Turn to 743.

785

Your trials and tribulations have driven you mad with rage and despair. You plunge heedlessly into the forest, screaming and babbling inarticulately for what seems like hours until you run out of steam and collapse to the ground in a heaving foetal ball of tears, snot and blood from your numerous scrapes. Lose 5 EFFORT.

You eventually get ahold of yourself and, after unscrewing yourself from the forest floor, you examine your surroundings. They appear to be the mating grounds of a Giant Rutting Forest Bat! He is not pleased with your inadvertent cockblocking.

🔪**GIANT FOREST BAT: DIFFICULTY 9 - TOUGHNESS - 2**

If you win you are compelled to steal the Sweet Belt he's wearing: add it to your Adventure Scroll as Equipment.
If you lose, he gives you a good hard kicking before leaving. Lose an additional 5 EFFORT.

Now that's settled, did you pack the Feewald Map? If so, turn to 189.
If not, you have no idea where you are.

If you successfully defeated the bat, you can search it and its lair for clues about your location: turn to 768. If you didn't beat the monster or don't want to look in its lair, then you have no choice but to continue to wander in circles, pissing and moaning ineffectually: turn to 1742.

786

Your cowardice is second only to your laziness, a crippling character flaw which turns out to be beneficial for once. Despite your mounting panic you're not going to let something like being throttled to death in your sleep wake you up, and you snore on merrily. The thing that was gripping you wavers in its determination and releases you, the ground stops moving and you slumber on until morning.

You wake in the morning relatively refreshed for someone who spent the night on a gravel bed (restore 15 EFFORT) and also entirely surrounded by bones. Some reanimated nasty or another tried to feed on your life force and apparently starved to death. Weirdly, the bones are all different sizes and don't all appear to be from the same creature. You may, if you like, sift through the remains for anything worth taking by turning to 509. If you'd prefer not to mess with whatever arcane magics nearly murdered you last night you can instead press on into the mountains by turning to 521.

787

You roam about the marketplace, checking out the vendors' wares. They're mostly sold by the chest-load or in multipacks of a dozen barrels.

You're investigating a crate of shiny baubles when the bauble merchant yells at you, "Wholesale only, mate. If you want to buy retail the locals shop on the Trader's Row", he says, gesturing to the road leading uphill to the right. "Unless you've got something really interesting to sell".

The only thing the traders here might be interested in is in your Feewald Map - if you've got one for sale then turn to 688. Otherwise if you'd like to take his suggestion then turn to 1473 to head for the Trader's Row. If you're more interested in hitching a ride out of town then turn to 1020.

788

You completely lose your bottle at the thought of getting a bolt in the spine and throw your hands up in the air to show you mean no further shenanigans. As the crossbowman covers you with his weapon his compatriots approach. Upon coming within hacking range with his cruel weapon one of the halberdiers shouts, "Halt, field, and face justice!" with an air of smug inevitability, even though it's not quite apropos since you're already halted and facing your comeuppance. After a light beating you are clapped in irons, stripped of your possessions and strong-armed into the back of an iron-barred prison wagon which is locked up tight behind you.

Turn to 227.

789

You creep into the mansion and dig in like a tick. Since you are appallingly rude to the staff they don't notice much difference between you and the real Tedbald, and as minimum-wage churls no one in the city guard is going to take their word over yours anyway even if they did have suspicions. Tedbald never comes back and you pretty much get away with stealing his identity.

Months pass and you've ingrained yourself into society as Sir Tedbald of Bilgeford. Half elf knights are not unheard of and your rough manners and general ignorance of comportment and etiquette are put down to your years roaming the hinterlands. You coast along on a moderate fortune- as the lord of the Bilgeford estate you have all the toll income you can shake out of the bridge guards and taxes from several small hamlets and a lumber mill, though the increasing gambling debts and consequent demands of your liege, Count Hugues "the Mark" of Bilgeford, soon begin to take a bite out of your lifestyle. After scutage, value added tax, luxury carriage fees, mansion duties, party attendance levies, miscellaneous deductibles and plain old compulsion (which all increase year on year) you soon find yourself barely any richer than when you started this adventure. Still, as a minor noble in a luxurious manor you don't really need to worry too much about where you'll be sleeping or where your food is coming from, and you're free to fritter away your many remaining years in relative luxury.

If you have the Sword of the Bastard Elf turn to 82, otherwise your adventure ends with you stretched out on the chaise longue next to an erotic tapestry, with an underpaid servant hand feeding you grapes.

790

Using the cunningly-designed elfish tool you're able to easily sever the numerous unnecessary belts, straps and cinches on the nearest elf's outfit. Like most elfs this one wasn't carrying much of worth any real worth but you still find a couple of potentially useful items. Roll another die - on a roll of 1-3 you find a Cut Purse and some Extra Buckles on your corpse, otherwise on 4-6 you find a Medical Diploma and a Healthy Poultice. Add these items to your Adventure Scroll if you want to bring them along.

Having robbed one elf, you shuffle over to scavenge what you can off the next. Turn to 128.

791

You're standing before the Alp of Abandonment. It's definitely an alp, that's for sure. Having ascertained that, you briefly wonder what you're supposed to be doing here when you see a bright gleam of sunlight reflecting off something. Going over to investigate you find a large pile of empty milk bottles stacked haphazardly outside the entrance to a cave which plunges into the heart of the mountain. While you're a bit apprehensive about letting yourself into random holes in the bottom of landmarks, you didn't come all this way for nothing so you let yourself in.

You find yourself in a cavernous, dimly-lit chamber which is filled with a great hoard of glittering treasures - heaps of gold coins, rubies the size of your fist, priceless artworks in huge, expensive-looking gilded frames, suits of plate armour on stands, all the stereotypical loot you might expect to find in a ... dragon's lair.

This ominous thought interrupts your salivating over the riches, but only briefly. Will you immediately get down to looting - turn to 826 - or will you announce your presence - turn to 2? If both options seem suicidal you could instead leave quietly at once by turning to 877.

792

The tunnel is dark in this direction too. You emerge into another cavern, this time taking the form of a T-junction. There's not much to get excited about here, so you don't. There are more tunnels running to the north, south and west.

Turn to 1228 to go north, 1634 to go south or 1360 to head west.

793

Getting yours isn't worth the serious risk of having your head staved in by a cobblestone so instead you issue a bloodcurdling oath and turn south along the road to Bilgeton. Biff's goons wing a couple of rocks just over your head to hurry you along. You jog for a while to avoid getting pelted and soon you've left them far behind.

Turn to 614.

794

While you're grateful for the mind-destroying hallucinogens you know way better than to follow a bunch of pixies to one of their rotten "glades", no matter how interesting the effects of the potion make it look. You've read the Bestiary (or you should have!) that indispensable guide to the land of Nonce (available in all good book stores and a few mediocre ones), so you're aware that you're currently the target of some greasy scam involving drugging up travellers and forcing them to do construction work while they're too strung out to resist. Wishing to avoid this fate, you turn in the opposite direction from the glowing pixie path and strike out through the swamp in the direction of the Count's Road.

The pixies, furious at being rumbled like this and suddenly out the value of one potion, rush at you hoping to beat you into submission, or at least to teach you a lesson about what happens when you try to scam a scammer. Assuming you've been weakened by the potion one of the pixies slices at your buttocks with a dagger: this causes you to spin around and slam him into a tree with murderous force. You kick another pixie to the ground and trample his head into the soil underfoot. The rest of the little forest folk, realising their terrible mistake, suddenly find themselves fighting for their lives in the face of your hallucinogen-inspired fury.

🔪**HORRIFIED PIXIES: DIFFICULTY 6 FISTS 1 TOUGHNESS 2**

If you win turn to 1316. If you lose or give up the fight then turn to 720.

795

Reckoning that it'd be best not to run over a human guard right before trying to approach the human capital, you yell shrilly to get the caravan to stop. The skeleton driver pulls the reins back hard and the wagon grinds to a halt, mere feet from the groaning figure.

Predictably, it's a trap - the "guard" leaps to his feet and you see the unmistakably weedy legs and ugly pointed shoes of an elf. He tugs the dagger out of the gambeson where he was holding it and lets out a loud, high-pitched whistle before swiping at you with the blade! Your steed rears back in panic and it's all you can do to cling on:

🔪**ARMOURED ELF: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1***

Due to the element of surprise and your panicked mount the elf gets one additional FIST in the first round of combat. If you lose this round then turn at once to 1147.

As the battle rages on, elfs pour out from the sides of the road to attack the caravan and the guards, instead of coming to help you, look to save their own un-lives. If you defeat your opponent then turn to 1399. If you lose then you soon find yourself isolated and surrounded by marauding elfs. Turn to 816.

796

You manage to work your way free of the hands, but only by shedding nearly everything you own! You may keep one item - remove all other items (equipped or not) and cash from your Adventure Scroll! You may instead elect to keep your purse, in which case you keep your precious money but lose all items.

The hands also managed to tear off your clothing - unless you kept an equipable outfit then you're buck naked! Make a note of this in your Adventure Scroll.

Free at last you wade back downstream through the dark chest-high water in hopes of finding the punt. Luckily the current is pretty sluggish and you find the boat nearby wedged against an outcrop in the tunnel wall. Clambering back aboard you push off upstream once again, dreading the gauntlet of the hands that awaits you just ahead.

Turn to 724.

797

Did you have a weapon or tool (other than the knuckle dusters or rings) equipped during the fight with the dwarfen lasses? If so, turn to 1664. Otherwise read on:

You put up a spirited defence against the hen party, eventually knocking the matron of honour off the stage with a shriek. As her friends help her up from the floor they stop to think about what they're doing and realise that they're no better than you. You wipe the blood from your face as the dwarfs write your details down in their books of grudges and depart the bar in a huff.

You return to the bar to drown your sorrows but the bartender shakes his head.

"You've had enough. I mean, we've had enough. Of you. Time to settle your tab. Two portwater whiskies comes to a half-farth and two clippings."

If you want to pay using Guilders then turn to 105. If you have no Guilders then you're out of luck - turn to 1688 to explain you can't pay, and 32 to do a runner.

798

Karol hears you calling from inside the lair and, bending over nearly double, the huge Polish archaeologist enters the cave. Lighting a torch, he immediately sees what you've done. The look of shame, disappointment and disgust that contorts his face would put a better man that you to shame. You on the other hand cheerily ask him to fossick around the lair looking for secrets and loot.

His professional curiosity aroused, Karol overcomes his profound feelings of horror and contempt and, ignoring the clicking, shrieking and flapping of your beau, surveys the lair.

He's found something before you've pulled on your leather undergarments. He gestures towards you to come over to where he's standing. He puts his finger into a small hole in the wall and you hear a click, and then a rumble as a rock wall slides aside. A secret entrance to... something.

In the torchlight you notice an inscription carved above the now-open door. It reads:

Οἰόμενοι ἤδη ἐπὶ τέλει εἶναι, περικάμψαντες πάλιν ὥσπερ ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς ζητήσεως ἀνεφάνημεν ὄντες καὶ τοῦ ἴσου δεόμενοι ὅσουπερ ὅτε τὸ πρῶτον ἐζητοῦμεν

You ask Karol what it means. He shrugs and replies, "Nie wiem. To dla mnie greka."

As you understand neither the inscription nor the archaeologist, if you decide that you don't want to risk encountering whatever's in this secret entrance then turn back to 768 and make another choice. If you're ready to explore this find, step through the door and turn to page 1205.

799

You sidle out of the way and the caravan rolls on by, the raucous laughing of the guards and drivers mocking you as they pass. Soon you're alone on the road once more.

If you'd like to double back and follow the road in the direction of Bilgeton then turn to 480. If you'd like to press on to the west then turn to 939.

800

You don't care about goblins and you're not interested in getting cut to ribbons by these adventurers. Instead you just stand on the sidelines and have a snack as the two sides duke it out. Restore 5 EFFORT.

The adventurers are badly outnumbered by the goblins who - clad as they are from head to toe in heavy armour - aren't exactly pushovers despite their short statures. Still after a few minutes of hard fighting the warrior and the rogue manage to bash their way free and make a break for the edge of town. The goblin host races after them but, slowed by their plate armour and stumpy little legs they don't have much hope of catching up as the adventurers disappear into the depths of the Mazyrinth.

Turn to 218.

801

You claw your way free of the terrible plant, mercifully uncrushed. The horrible thing keeps reaching for you, its vine-like tendrils and roots still snaking in your direction in hopes of drawing you back in. From the outside this bush is far less threatening and it's enough to take a step back every minute or so to keep out of its deadly grasp.

If you've got a mace, sword, shovel or any other large melee weapon in your pack you can use it to batter the Bloodthorn into submission - turn to 141. Otherwise there's no way you're hanging around this homicidal plant. Time to move on. Turn to 632.

802

The blind shopkeeper somehow notices your interest in the lute.

"You have a good eye, half elf. That's the best in the township of Bilgeton."

"How much?" you say, uninterested in hearing the sales pitch. "Two thousand Guilders and it's yours," he replies. "You can take it back to yon hovel with you. As a matter of fact I'll throw in the treble strings for free."

You try not to sound taken aback by the extravagant mark-up.

"Two thousand Guilders for this chunk of shit? Come on." You strum a couple of chords. "I mean, really, it's used. There's no action left in this fingerboard."

The shopkeeper closes the store window and sidles over to you. "Ah, ah, excuse me, I don't think there's anything wrong with the action on this lute".

He takes the instrument from your hands and proceeds to strum up a storm, playing a popular quadrille with such proficiency that passers-by partner off and start square-dancing in the marketplace outside with wild abandon. After a pretty good dance scene he puts the instrument back down.

If you're ready to buy this axe no matter what you have to do to afford it then to 1388. Otherwise you leave the shop empty handed. Turn to 244.

803

Anything could be going on in there. Maybe the royal couple are just engaging in some count-and-countess coitus. You're not one to judge other than it being out of wedlock which you are appropriately scandalised by, though not enough to prevent you from going to sleep.

You snooze like the dead and have to be jostled awake by a guard late in the morning. Humans like to wake up unconscionably early and you've been holding the royal party up while they wait for you to get out of bed. Despite the short duration of the slumber and the mild concussion you received from the jostling it was the most comfortable sleep you've ever had. You may restore up to 25 EFFORT.

As you're getting ready to depart by scratching yourself while the hands and guards pack up your tent for you, you notice that you may have slept through some kind of a fracas last night. One of the servants lies beaten and bloody at the bottom of an iron-barred prison wagon. Apparently the churl got arrested trying to rob the royal tent last night and is about to be taken back to Bilgeton to stand trial.

Reflecting on how little any of that is your problem, you ignore the prisoner and clamber aboard the royal coach where the count and countess are politely pretending not to be impatient as they await you. As soon as you're seated the coach lurches away back down the road towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 947.

804

Otto's moustache twitches.

"Not that I'm doubting you, sir, but why would a noble of the realm be guarding a trade caravan? Ascertaining your royal heritage may take some time, time which could be better spent accompanying these fine workers to their new home".

If you insist on your noble rights and dues then turn to 1489. Otherwise you could lower yourself to pay the 10 Guilders for access (assuming you have it) by turning to 108.

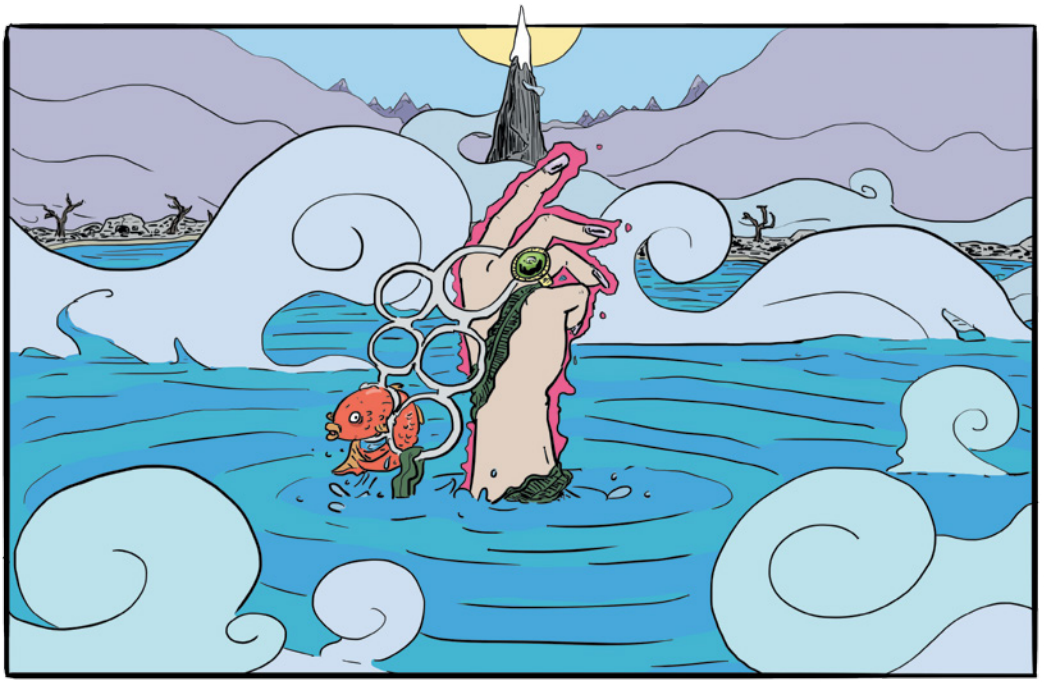
805

You continue along the crypt's central hallway and eventually arrive at the crumbled remains of a stone wall which was probably meant to mark the end of the tomb. Over the years it's toppled and no longer forms much of a barrier to anything more agile than a shambler. Beyond this rubble is the darkness of a natural, unlit cave tunnel, complete with stalagmites and stalactites and the occasional screech and flapping of bat wings. The dim light from the poorly-lit crypt doesn't penetrate more than ten feet past the breach, so you're going to have to move carefully in there to avoid breaking your neck in the dark or running face-first into a grue.

Although you're suddenly concerned about grues, you rummage around in your backpack for your trusty flint and, taking it in hand, step over the busted wall and into the black caves beyond.

Turn to 625.

806



As you continue along the lake shore you see something utterly bizarre - a hand, belonging to a human woman, sticking out of the dark waters. You quickly realise something's up - first of all, the head that the hand belongs to isn't coming up for air, plus it glows with the subtle inner light preferred by spirits, magic wielders, minor deities and miscellaneous powerful encounters. You somehow get the impression that it wants something from you.

If you'd like to toss an item in, make a note of what it was and turn to 1693. If you'd rather go in yourself and acquaint yourself better with this lovely hand then turn to 1107. If you'd prefer to just forget about it and carry on to the Alp then turn to 1632.

807

The evil lich disintegrates before your eyes, bones crumbling into dust and leathery skin sloughing away as the magics binding the ancient horror fade away. You give him one final club and he collapses back into his bathtub, now little more than a heap of ashes and rags.

With that, the lich is defeated! The mace glows extra brightly for a second before dimming, and you realise suddenly that you've been gripping it a bit hard. Its enchantment is spent - it will no longer glow, stick to your hand or talk to you, but you can finally unequip it if you want.

You have a quick look around the Lich's bathroom and his quarters in the adjacent room, which turns out to be the lich's study and bedroom. You fill your boots with any items you find that you're reasonably certain aren't cursed - add 10 Guilders and you can take any two of the Gold Crown, Ivory Wand, a copy of Better Bones and Graveyards, Twin Swords of Corruption, Lich's Loofah or a Potion.

Now turn to 902.

808

You sigh and hand over a pouch containing the extravagant sum of 20 Guilders and the guard puts the finishing touches on your Residency Scroll. You can't help but notice that he looks obnoxiously cheerful about this arrangement, and not without reason - 20 Guilders is almost 6 months' salary for a guardsman, and even though he won't get to keep most of it thanks to the hierarchy of corruption that comprises most of human society he's still looking at a tidy bonus.

After dotting all the is and crossing the ts, the guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Remove the 20 Guilders you paid and add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink : you are now permitted to enter Bilgeton through the Trader's Gate in future adventures and will begin every game with this item. With that done the guard escorts you out of the office and through to the other side of the gatehouse. Hoping this was worth it in any way you step through the exit and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

809

Despite the crossbow bolts whizzing all around you and the rukh's constant flapping almost bowling you over you manage to unhitch the chicks attached to both remaining carriages. As soon as they're all gathered around the rukh's ankles the great bird extends its wings and flaps hard, lifting it off the ground and knocking you and the dozen halberdiers confronting it onto your asses. As soon as the gargantuan mother is airborne it picks up all dozen of its young in its talons and beak and, with no further ado, wings away to the west.

If you were hoping to get any credit for your brave actions you're about to be disappointed. You swagger over to the nearest guardsman to boast of your deeds. He just gives you an incredulous look and replies,

"Bugger off vagrant, it was us what scared it away".

In fact, none of the guards are willing to acknowledge your actions at all, no matter how much you pester them while they set right the upturned carts. You march into the gatehouse to claim your due but the guards are back on duty there already. Before you can even speak one of the guardsman shouts at you,

"Hey! No cutting! Back of the line!"

The guard points to a long queue of peasants, petty merchants and chancers which has already re-formed in the hopes of getting into the city.

Reflecting darkly that ingratitude is the essence of vileness, you slink away back along the line. You'll have to figure out some other way in.

Turn to 681.

810

You withdraw some elfen leaves from your pouch. The shopkeep shakes his head sternly.

“Sorry pal, I wouldn’t want anything I could buy with those".

He rapidly loses interest in you when he realises you’re not going to pay him. Feeling impecunious despite a purse crammed full of leaves you slump out of the shop and back into the street.

Turn to 1543.

811

The nobolds have hollowed out miles and miles of underground tunnels using a mix of explosive potions and hard yakka, whatever that is. Outside of the nobolds’ work area they’re unlit, but you snag a lantern from the wall before setting out and step into what you hope isn’t yet another underground maze. Compared to the relative cleanliness of the worksite the tunnel is a bit of a mess, full of crushed tins and ration wrappers.

After about an hour’s uneventful walk the tunnel forks to the right and left. There’s a nasty heap of foul-smelling slime in front of the right tunnel, blocking the way. If you’d like to investigate it then turn to 1287. Otherwise you can go left (turn to 883) or right (turn to 1269).

812

As much as you hate Biff, you can’t just hand him over to the humans. There are still so many horrible things you want to do to him!

As soon as the humans realise you’re not going to comply, they get mean. The caravan master whips his reins hard and the huge birds at the front of the wagon go berserk, screeching and snapping as they struggle to pull the wagon forward. One of the massive animals lashes out at you with its beak, smashing you to the ground where the wagons drive forward over you. Luckily you’re able to quickly roll yourself under the centre of the wagons and avoid getting mangled by the heavy wheels (a disgusting fate which Biff isn’t spared), but you don’t escape getting trampled by three teams of giant flightless birds as they stampede overhead. One of the birds attached to the last wagon stomps on your head, finally knocking you out cold.

You awaken sometime later at night with your face partially mashed into the ground. You sit up and are immediately overcome by a wave of nausea as the stars spin crazily overhead. You’re still in the middle of the road, mercifully alive although you’re in horrible pain and possibly suffering from brain damage after having your head stomped all over by a dozen half-ton birds. Lose 10 EFFORT and 1 ÉLAN. As bad as you feel, Biff’s in worse shape - stretched for a very long distance through the dirt and up onto the cobblestones to the south.

You rise to your feet and stumble to the south, wobbling left and right as you try to regain your equilibrium and avoid treading in Biff leftovers. Turn to 25.

813

You're so close to finding a place to crash and you're not about to be stopped by some lousy guard! You kick the door to the gatehouse open and the armoured security guard looks up from his book in shock.

"Halt! Oh, Sir Tedbald!" he exclaims in surprise. The guard has no reason to think that you're anyone other than his liege- as a knight errant Tedbald was rarely in his manor, and the only thing his servants saw of him was a generally unkempt man in full heraldic armour storming in and out of the property between fits of errantry. You have no way of knowing this, however, and striding forward you strike the unresisting guard, felling the unlucky servant instantly.

Were you armed when you did this? If you had a weapon of any kind equipped then turn to 1199. If you were unarmed then turn to 1006.

814

The elfs barely had time to get their trap into position before you sprung it, and it shows. The bandits racing from the trees aren't all that numerous and some of them are still only half-dressed. You can see one who's struggling to pull his leather pants up as he rushes towards you! Still, they outnumber you and your fighting skeletons, and they even manage to roll a bunch of barrels out onto the thoroughfare to block the caravan's passage. Since they didn't quite expect you so soon most of the caravan is safe before the barrels block the road and only the last wagon is caught in the trap. Its skeletal horses rear back to avoid tripping over the improvised barriers and the wagon grinds to a halt. The elfs, always after the easiest prey possible, charge on it as a body, ignoring the rest of the wagons.

If you like you can leave the wagon to its fate and carry on with the rest of the caravan - turn to 28 to do this. If you suddenly feel like you should be doing something approximating the job you were paid for, you can rouse the remaining guards to assist you in freeing their comrade - turn instead to 1605.

815

Benny holds out his hand to stop you.

"No shirt, no shoes, no service", he says. "On your bike".

Well that's a fine how do you do! Well, if it's the kind of place that doesn't want naked half elfs it's not the kind of place you want to be. You go in search of more accommodating taverns that cater to your love of fine dining and your distaste for undergarments.

After a couple of hours roaming around the city you've attracted numerous stares and comments on your appearance, but you only find one place that'll let you in wearing what you're wearing: the Dribbling Wand. To go there turn to 1497. If you'd prefer to spend your remaining daylight hours running errands in the marketplace then turn to 941. If this whole experience has put you off Bilgeton in general and you just want to do what you came here for then turn to 827.

816

Bursting into tears, you throw yourself on the elfs' mercy but your grovelling doesn't get you all that far. At least instead of killing you they merely relieve you of your valuables before giving you a very hard kicking to encourage you on your way down the road. As you rub your sore arse and limp away you reflect that perhaps the life of a caravan guard is not for you. Remove all currency, weapons, outfits, jewellery and steeds from your Adventure Scroll, make a note that you failed Aggie and lose 1 ÉLAN from the injuries and chagrin you sustained.

Nothing's more miserable than a plundering that you're not invited to. With no reason to stick around, you abandon the hapless skeletons and commence the long trudge on foot towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 294.

817

You manage to put the threatening humans behind you and, returning to the road, set off towards Bilgeton at a brisk clip. They don't bother coming after you and after a few minutes you feel safe enough to slow down to your normal trudging speed. Turn to 1445.

818

In desperation you open a potion and chug it down. Remove it from your Adventure Scroll and roll on the potion table, deducting 2 from the roll and ignoring any positive effects you might get from the potion. Resolve any negative effects and continue reading, should you survive:

While the health effects are questionable, chugging random potions is a great way to make yourself throw up which is precisely what your body needs to do at this moment to survive. Although a portion of the manticore venom causes some serious damage to your vitals most of it winds up in a pool of sizzling black vomit at your feet. You fall over on your back and pass out right next to the dragon.

You wake a long time later, still feeling like hell, though at least the alcohol component of the potion has worn off. Still, you feel slower somehow - in fact, the venom and potion combination has permanently dented your brain. Lose 1 ÉLAN and 10 maximum EFFORT permanently. Even with this impairment your first impulse upon lurching to your feet is completely in character for you - you resume looting. If you haven't already you can take treasures adding up to 20 Guilders in value (which you may add to the Cash section your Adventure Scroll), a Full Harness of Steel Plate and a Palavan Army Knife. You no longer consider any part of the dragon corpse salvageable after your close encounter with the afterlife and your new acquaintance with brain damage, so you leave it well alone.

With that accomplished and that lesson learned, will you investigate the cave further - turn to 1683 - or will you get out with your arms full of loot while you're still alive? Turn to 1235.

819

You bid the skeleton farewell and take the first steps in the direction it's pointing, back towards Bilgeton.

Did the Goblin King send you out here? If so then turn to 114. If you're a free half elf then turn to 889.

820

You figure that almost all the wagons are lost but you should still try to save what you can if only to stay in Aggie's good books. You charge toward the tree line on beast back, hoping to scatter the archers who are firing into the first carriage.

🔪**CHARGE!: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Once you've reduced the TOUGHNESS to 1 you may subtract 1 from this hassle's DIFFICULTY and FISTS as the archers begin to scatter in the face of your ferocious and barely-controlled charge.

If you succeed in your charge then turn to 1127. If you fail then turn to 1405.

821

You wake up just before dawn feeling refreshed despite sleeping wedged under a rock. Restore up to 20 EFFORT. You're the only one awake - although brownies are supposed to be nocturnal, these ones are mostly active during the day, presumably to chase the humans off when they get too close to their disgusting little slum. This messes with their sleep patterns so they tend to stay up late and sleep in. Anyway, you get up quietly so as not to wake the little blighters.

Now that you've had a chance to sleep on it the thought of trying to smuggle a bunch of forest fairies past a guarded human town seems a tad risky. In the quiet moments before the brownies start hassling you maybe you'd like to think about a better plan of attack. If so turn to 369. On the other hand if you'd like to take this occasion to weasel out of it altogether then turn to 1600.

Otherwise the troops start rousing themselves for the big push on Brunnenfeld - turn to 1098.

822

You bet your couple of Guilders on green but the blue bug flutters straight out the window as soon as you drop the coins into the kitty. Deduct 2 Guilders from your Cash section.

Although the nobolds cheerily invite you to try your luck again you're a ludicrously bad sport and you storm right out of the tavern.

Turn to 546.

823

The Mazyrinth is torturously long, horribly convoluted and completely crammed with dangerous monsters and traps. Still, you crawl through it all and after numerous beatings, bludgeoning, pitfalls and a dip in something called the Bog of Eternal Funk you finally feel like you're getting somewhere... and somehow wind up back outside the walls of the Mazyrinth, exhausted and stinky. Deduct 20 EFFORT thanks to your travails.

If you're still ticking you give up on this damn place and trudge away. Turn to 1277.

824

As you tell the story of how you defeated the Warlock of Warlock Tower the guard's expression transitions from rapt attention to horror.

"You did...what? She was the sole supplier of the skeleton workforce for Bilgeton. They'll start to fall apart without her. What have you done?!"

You're hurt by this unexpected reaction to your heroism, but not as much as you are by the guard slamming your head into the table.

"You're under arrest for murder. You've got the right to remain... no wait, you've got no rights. You're coming with me".

With that the guard grabs you by your ear and bustles you into a guardroom buried deep within the gatehouse. You're handed over to a couple of prison guards who book you in, strip search you and confiscate all your gear. You watch it being secured in a wooden evidence chest at the back of the guardroom (keep it on your Adventure Scroll for now, but none of it's available for you to use). Finally, you're given your Prisoner of the Count starter kit - a couple of filthy sackcloth tunics, a toothbrush with only one bristle left and a pot to piss in (don't bother adding these loathsome items to your Adventure Scroll). Now that you've been formally inducted into the Bilgeton prison system the surly prison guards march you down a narrow spiral staircase to your new home.

Turn to 49.

825

While flailing desperately at the eagle you manage to clip it right on the wing just as it's attempting some spectacular aerial manoeuvre. Surprised at its sudden inability to work one of the wings it was relying on to stay airborne, the eagle flips over in mid-flight and slams into the spire beak-first with bone-snapping force. The bird goes limp and tumbles down the spire, dead long before it hits the ground.

You don't have time to celebrate - the other two eagles, furious at your murdering their nest-mate, are hurtling down towards you with talons outstretched. From the sound of their war screeches you don't think they'll be satisfied with a hunk of your hair or whatever you're carrying.

You must fight, as best you can:

🔪**TWOGLE: DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 1**
🔪**THREEGLE: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1**

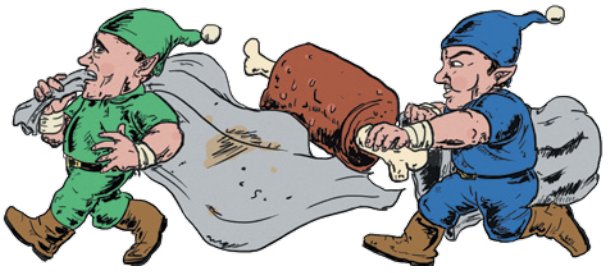
Treat as a Multiple Hassle. No surrender is possible here - these enraged eagles will have you for breakfast if you give up the fight. If you win then turn to 1063.

826

Your greed-crazed rummaging through the mountains of loot makes enough noise to wake the dead - or at least a dragon, which is what you've managed to awaken. You hear a strange rustling like that of beads and looking towards the source of the sound you see the two glowing yellow eyes of a colossal reptile glaring at you from the darkness at the back of the cave. The eyes come closer and then you spy the razor sharp teeth, scaly dark blue head, massive claws and leathery black wings of a huge deep blue dragon! Despite its impressive paunch it looks utterly lethal.

"WHO DARES TO RUMMAGE IN BHAD THE BLACK'S STUFF? WHY DO YOU THINK I KEEP IT ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?" booms the dragon in improbably good Palavan Humanese. It squints at you as if it can't believe that a lone half elf would do something so suicidal as trying to rob a dragon hoard on its own. It begins to take in a deep breath which, if the Bestiary and your fairy-tale knowledge about dragons hasn't misled you, means that you're about to be roasted by a jet of flame. You'd better act fast.

If you've got some especially heavy weapon that might be able to cut this dragon down to size or you're just supremely confident then turn to 473 to launch an attack. If you'd rather leave off the looting and explain yourself then turn to 1537. If you want to flee before this gets even more out of hand then turn to 1264.



827

Well, you're done recreating and time for sightseeing's running short. It's time to finish this puppy.

If you've made a note on your Adventure Scroll that you've Summoned Something Horrible then turn at once to 1374.

Otherwise you're free to choose your next move. Pulling up a crate in an alleyway you unfold a handy Bilgeton tourist guide map and consider your options.

According to the guide there's a Grand Ball on tonight - if you'd like to attend then turn to 994.

Also on tonight is the semi-famous Battle of the Bards, held in the disreputable Drudgers' Quarter. If you've got a band or even a solo act and want to try to take that on - or if you just want to listen to some music - then turn to 1426.

If you'd rather just go look for your father and find that place to crash then turn to 1793.

828

The Malrog is busy but creeping right up on him is a daunting proposition. You make your way from stalagmite to stalagmite, hoping that some jangling coin or clinking superfluous belt buckle doesn't give you away.

CREEPING ON UP: DIFFICULTY 10

If you succeed then turn to 745. If you fail then your half-human clumsiness and/or half-elfish incompetence has once again let you down - the beast notices you and attacks! Turn to 242.

829

The huge animal growls at you and gestures furiously for you to get down, but you resolutely stay put. This turns out to be the safest course of action - the marsupial is a drop bear, after all, and really prefers to drop on its unsuspecting prey. You're perfectly safe so long as you don't walk around underneath it or attack it. You curl up carefully on the branch and try to get some sleep. The beast doesn't make it easy - you're woken up repeatedly by growls, snarls, shoves and the odd poke from monster's sharp claws, but you don't rise to the provocation and pretend not to notice. Several annoying hours later a monstrous hulking owl struts under the branch and the bear plummets with an ear-splitting roar. The owl flees with the horrible marsupial clinging to its back, carrying it deep into the tangled woods and far away from you.

Finally you're able to catch a bit of shuteye, but the sun comes up all too soon and with it a swarm of horrible biting insects. It's barely past dawn as you groggily climb down the tree. Restore just 10 EFFORT from that unsatisfying rest. Yawning, you continue your hike.

Now that you can see where you're going the journey through the woods is a bit easier. In just a few hours you emerge from the forest out onto a half-paved, half-dirt highway. The great city of Bilgeton, its walls looming large, lies just a few miles down the road to the south east. You strike out towards the end of your quest! Turn to 1732.

830

Dark elfs don't live the healthiest of lifestyles and tend to be weedy and fragile even by elf standards. Although you're badly outnumbered, you quickly clobber a couple of your distant cousins and the rest flee, scattering deeper into the cave network.

You can now loot the cave though you find the dark elfs live in wretched poverty and there's not a lot here to steal. Giving the foul-smelling contents of the cauldron a wide berth the only things worth taking are a Potion, some Extra Buckles and a copy of last month's Better Bones and Graveyards. You're not real excited to be picking through these losers' junk so you can take just one of these treasures before you find something gross and give up in disgust. As you go to leave you almost kick over a Bottle of Milk which you can also take should you wish.

Having concluded your post-victory looting you continue on your way upwards through the tunnels. Before long you begin to feel fresh air on your face and see natural light - dim, but far more wholesome than the phosphorescent fungus patches - through the tunnel ahead. The tunnel constricts as you move forward and you're forced to stoop and then crawl on your belly, but soon you emerge from the tight squeeze and find yourself emerging from a cave high up the side of a mountain. To your dismay you're still a long way from anywhere - the mountains stretch on endlessly ahead.

With nothing else for it you continue into the ranges. Turn to 955.

831

Despite the heavy armour the half elf moves with unbelievable speed and grace, and the reach of his sword is so great that you simply can't get near enough to him to land one of your puny attacks. All you can do is grit your teeth and try to block the rain of devastating blows - until a particularly hard strike jars the weapon out of your butterfingers and onto the road!

If you had a weapon equipped then remove it from your Adventure Scroll for the time being - you can retrieve it if you somehow win this battle. If you had no weapon equipped then lose 2 ÉLAN from your injuries as the greatsword clefts you nearly in twain!

If you live then fight on - should you win then recover your weapon and turn to 922. If you can't defeat this merciless enemy then turn to 165.

832

You leg it back the way you came through the crypt. Mercifully most of the undead are smashed and the few you see standing around are much too confused and slow to present any threat to you. Still if that Bestiary (available at ALL good bookstores) wasn't packed full of lies, shouldn't the undead legions disintegrate when their lich is slain?

Troubled by these thoughts you hurry back up the staircase out of the barrow. There's an exit on the southern side of the graveyard and a marker stone indicating that Bilgeton lies down a weedy, overgrown path running south from there. You follow the path, haunted by the moans and groans of the dead shamblers still roaming the dead woods along the thoroughfare. You're

not attacked by any more undead nasties and you make it safely to a paved road which runs east-west.

Pausing for breath you notice a signpost which indicates that Bilgeton is to the east so you set off once again, glad to be away from that awful crypt and that treacherous gang of ruffians.

Turn to 1802.

833

You take the guard completely by surprise and stab the sharpened toothbrush into his guts with all your strength. In other words the thin sliver of wood gets caught in his padded tunic and wrenched out of your fingers. The guard looks less than impressed with your effort and, not wanting to fill out the additional paperwork involved in beating you to death, simply punches you on the nose and leaves, taking your toothbrush with him. No amount of yelling will bring him or anyone else back to check on you. Praying that this attempted murder doesn't wind up getting added to your charge sheet all you can do is wait, counting the hours until your day in court - assuming one is ever coming.

Turn to 1411.

834

Despite your total inability to fit in (or maybe because of it) you've always been susceptible to peer pressure. You know it's a terrible idea but yet you walk over to the leering stump, pick up the potion and take a swig. You instantly begin to regret your decision...

You've imbibed a potion. While in most of your fantasy books and the likes this is usually a good idea, in the land of Nonce it's quite the opposite. Potions are nothing more than rancid herbs, funguses and critter parts dunked in the medieval equivalent of bath-tub moonshine. Chances are you've just poured something horrible into your face. You suffer -1 ÉLAN from the alcohol poisoning until you can rest, and must roll on the Potion Effects Table (which you can find on page 11 of the rules section at the front of the book). Resolve the effect and read on, if you survive:

Aside from the usual horrors that occur when you drink a potion nothing much happens for a while. You're beginning to feel like you got burned on this one when suddenly the forest explodes in a cacophony of lights, shapes and patterns. A rainbow road unfurls itself before you as cheerful high-pitched voices call you from the dark. A vision coalesces in front of the road before you, a tiny man in a swirl of colourful rags, a dancing explosion of jollity and chuckles.

"Come this way", he sings, "Come to the Glade. There's a wonderful treasure in store for you there".

He dances down the rainbow road as the leaves tinkle in harmony behind him.

If you follow then turn to 95. If you'd rather not then turn to 794.

835

By the time you've bound the half elf and gotten him onto the back of your steed the elf raiders have cleared off and the short road back is a lot easier. You order the caravan to wait for you on the road and steer your mount back down the warlock's driveway. Aggie notices your untimely return and comes down to meet you at the base of the tower. Weirdly she doesn't seem to be all that happy to see you.

"WHAT THE FUCKING PLOUGHING FUCK ARE YOU DOING BACK HERE? YOU HAVE A JOB TO DO YOU BLOODY BONE-BRAINED LACKWIT..." she shouts, her obscenities causing the toes of your shoes to curl up involuntarily.

You try to explain that you've captured the villain responsible for attacking your wagons and her expression softens a little.

"Didn't listen to a word the fucker said, did you?" she says somewhat suspiciously. "Never fucking mind. I knew you could bloody do it. You should have just slit the bugger's throat but since you brought the bugger back here I'll give him a home. THIGHBONE!"

The skeleton emerges from a nearby bush which he was engaged in pruning.

"Drag this ploughing waste of skin to the flenser", she orders curtly. Thighbone obeys, dragging the unresisting half elf into the tower. "Now bugger off and do your fucking job," she advises you.

With that the ungrateful warlock returns to the tower and you ride back to your caravan. Onwards to Bilgeton!

Turn to 937.

836

After a while the funds dry up - you're not getting any better at boxing, not that you really were all that good to begin with - and since you won't agree to fight for your title your sponsors withdraw from your endorsements one by one. Eventually you're down to the cologne deal and passers-by cease to be frightened by your taunts and start chasing you back into your house whenever they see you.

Eventually, to avoid losing the cologne deal, you finally agree to a title fight. You pick out the weakest-looking of the contenders who are slavering for your belt, but since you haven't been training while you've been barricaded up in your house (or ever, probably) the scrappy middle-aged hobo easily creams you. The legend of the Jabbing Jabroni dies ignominiously on that day but at least you still have thousands of unsold units of Eau d'Elf, which you use to form the cornerstone of a multi-level-marketing company, a greasy scam of your very own invention . Soon half of Bilgeton is selling the unbearable perfume to the other half, and although it mostly winds up tipped into the Bilge the profits all make their way to your pocket. Although you never do find your father or get revenge on Jeff, you manage to become moderately filthy rich and live to a ripe old age, at least until you die of a coughing fit after accidentally catching a whiff of your own horrible product.

837

You pay the agreed-upon sum. Oddler looks around to make sure no one's listening as he pockets your money.

"Right, excellent choice. Here's what you do. Leave the line and follow the walls around to the east for a few hours. You'll come to a little wooden door in the wall - this is the Guild's private entrance, allowed by the Count: for, as you know, Thieves' Guilds are tolerated and even considered honourable in these medieval fantasy settings. Make the secret knock: once hard, then two more times hard and finally thrice quickly. Now best of luck to ye".

As you're trying to memorise the secret knock, Oddler hobbles away to whatever bush he crept out of. For your part you decide to set out at once: turn to 376.

838

Whenever Jeff caught you micturating on his toothbrush he always informed you that you were a disgusting, rude, degenerate and vindictive slob. You never saw what he meant but today you're determined to prove him right. Even in dangerous situations like this the bladder has its own wants and needs, and yours is full. An impish urge overtakes you. You unstring your trews, remove your codpiece, sidle around the stalagmite and take aim, laughing maniacally as you spatter the Malrog with a foul-smelling golden stream.

This piddling flow is no match for the unstoppable fires of a being as huge and powerful as the Malrog, and its heat is such that most of your micturition disperses into steam before even reaching it. But the monster is taken aback by the unmitigated gall and sheer disrespect embodied by this uniquely disgusting assault. It can't believe what's happening to it. Its flames gutter, its heat dulls and it retreats before your assault on its dignity, half-rising and staggering back once, twice, three times... and suddenly it finds no ground beneath it. In its confusion and horror it has stepped into the chasm! The beast falls roaring into the bottomless pit, leaving nothing to mark its passing but a small, foul-smelling cloud which rapidly disperses.

Turn to 402.

839

You slip through, the iron bars barely presenting an obstacle to your bony form, and the current pulls you through the walls and into the city. Inside Bilgeton, the Bilge runs through a stone-walled canal which has sides far too tall and slimy to climb, but there are numerous docking points at water level for small boats and barges and the like. As soon as the current washes you against one of those you cling on for grim unlife and pull yourself out of the drink.

Unfortunately your exposure to the noxious Bilge has rotted away your clothes. Whether equipped or not any clothes you may have on your person are destroyed and must be removed from your Adventure Scroll. Despite your difficult sartorial situation you must still make a go of your debut in Bilgeton. After you've caught your breath and dripped at least a bit dry, you climb a narrow staircase leading away from the canal and onto the streets of the big city.

Turn to 1364.

840

Yep, it's an outhouse all right - a small booth made out of wood complete with rancid odour, crescent shape cut out of the door, human female inside...

A human female! As your peer through the cut out the woman whose privacy you've just invaded lets out a bloodcurdling shriek at the sight of your shifty, half elf eyes glancing through the hole in the door. Your attempts to calm her down are proven futile as, seconds later, the back door to the hovel flies open and out comes an ancient-looking farmer with a pitchfork. The rickety old man, nearly as dilapidated as the house he dwells in, comes charging across the field with his pitchfork lowered, ready to skewer you on its tines:

🔪**OL' ALDRECHT: DIFFICULTY 10**

If you prevail turn to 1381. If you surrender then turn to 60.

841

You point out the lonely peak you can see on the horizon.

"The Alp of Abandonment? Why would you want to go there? That weird drag... Well, whatever. It's your reward", he screeches.

With this the eagle flaps his wings and soars into the sky overhead. As you watch the enormous creature wheels around and swoops at you, seizing your arms with an iron grip and hauling you into the air. You scream in terror but the bird doesn't relent, and moments later you are flying higher and higher over the ceiling of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains and over the freezing Mist Steppes.

After a couple of hours of sailing over the featureless expanses of Northern Nonce and nearly freezing solid you finally arrive at your destination, a single huge snow-capped tooth rising out of the mists of the northern plains. The eagle slows his flight and begins the descent, flapping madly as you come close to the ground just before the mountain. The eagle releases his grip and you fall the final few feet, landing on the hard, frozen soil in front of the Alp of Abandonment. With that the eagle keens a farewell and soars back up into the sky. After watching him go for a moment you turn your attention to your current predicament - freezing to death at the base of another forbidding spire.

Turn to 791.

842

Seeing your easy ride starting to drive off without you fills you with panic. You drop to your knees, grab at whatever part of Hulagu's flowing silk robe you can reach and blurt out anything you can think of to convince the caravan owner to take you along.

BEGGING: DIFFICULTY 10

If you succeed to turn to 927. If you fail turn to 913.

843

You see no reason to stick around here and set off into the mountains, leaving the crap piled up in the river for someone else to deal with. If you were on a mission from Witold of Brunnenfeld you've failed it - make a note of this and turn to 955 to carry on through the mountain range.

844

The bartender groans as if he's been asked for the same bits of information thousands of times. In fact he hasn't - his appearance and demeanour are extremely off-putting to most people to the extent that they would ordinarily cross the road to avoid encountering him if they weren't forced to buy liquor off him. He quickly rattles off the standard answer he's memorised for the benefit of the four or five people who've bothered asking him about the place.

"There's nothing to do in Brunnenfeld except to move away to Bilgeton, if they'll accept my apprenticeship application in the Bilgeton Brewers Guild. Ahem. It's market day but the vendors only trade in bulk and mostly with each other. I've tried getting them to take me out of town but apparently I'm too cool for them. We have a church on the creatively-named Church Lane - take the left path in the market square. Or you can find supplies and some more... quirky... stuff on Trader's Lane to the right. At the very top of the town where the two streets join is Sir Witold's manor, but someone like you won't have an invitation to get in. If you're looking to leave town, and I hope you are, then you can go either through the south gates which leads to the trade road to Bilgeton or the north gates through the Big Rock Goblin Mountains. If I was you I'd personally go that way because if I were you I'd hate myself and want to die, but if you leave town to the south a mushroom farmer called Hurensohn will give you a lift straight to Bilgeton as soon as he's got his crops loaded, though I wouldn't go with him because I couldn't imagine anything more mortifying than beginning my brewing career by entering through the Trader's Gates on the back of a dung-covered farming dray."

With this he finally shuts his trap. Lose 1 EFFORT for having to listen to this uncharismatic fellow prattle on for this ungodsly length of time.

If you want to get on with your quest immediately you may leave the tavern and select the way you're going to take: turn to 1270. If you're inclined to ignore everything this preening git has wasted his time telling you, you can go see what the men in the bar are hitting each other about by turning to 186 or see what's upsetting the lady by turning to 1703. If you'd rather just sit down and order a drink then turn to 474.

845

You pay the agreed-upon sum. Oddler looks around to make sure no one's listening as he pockets your money.

"Right, excellent choice. Here's what you do. Leave the line and follow the walls around to the east for a few hours. You'll come to a little wooden door in the wall - this is the Guild's private entrance, allowed by the Count for as you know Thieves' Guilds are tolerated and even considered honourable in these settings. Make the secret knock: thrice quickly, twice hard, and thrice quickly again. Now best of luck to ye".

As you're trying to commit the secret knock to memory (write it down if you have to), Oddler hobbles away to whatever bush he crept out of. For your part you decide to set out at once, leaving these suckers to wait their turn in line.

Turn to 376.

846

Yeah, things got kind of dark there and you're not ready to deal with that lich when he wakes up in the morning. You get dressed quietly and try to sneak out.

In your white-hot passion you both threw your clothes everywhere and you don't spot Hardmod's bathrobe until you're stepping in it, directly on the two glowing lanterns which are concealed under the carelessly-tossed robe. They shatter underfoot with a horrible crunch and a sound like the wailing of souls escaping into the next life. Hardmod immediately wakes and sits upright, his eyes wide open.

"What... what have you done?" he rasps weakly. As you stare the lich's skin starts to slough away rapidly, and one of his arms detaches from his body and falls away. He looks like he's dying!

"My phylacteries... you've doomed me... all these years... all these lifetimes.... to end like this....."

With this the lich completely falls apart, reduced to little more than a small heap of dust and bones littering the chaise longue. You've accidentally rid the world of a terrifying evil! Not feeling particularly sentimental you have a quick rummage around the Lich's quarters and fill your boots with any items you find that you're reasonably certain aren't cursed - add 10 Guilders and you can take any two of the Twin Blades of Corruption, an issue of Better Bones and Graveyards, Ivory Wand or the Golden Crown.

Having looted to your heart's content you stagger out of Hardmod's chambers. Turn to 902.

847

Bessie's none too quick when it comes to pulling the cart and while Nilde's very pretty all she really wants to talk about is farming, and what farming must be like in Bilgeton. By evening time, after nearly a day of slowly trundling down the road to Bilgeton and listening to exciting stories of turnip production, the traditional uses of turnips in weddings and crop rotation (to better facilitate the growing of turnips), you're almost regretting that you agreed to spend your whole life with this lady. A wave of relief washes over you when you see a man-sized silhouette stumbling into the middle of the road ahead. Hoping it's a hitchhiker who might be more interested in the boring topics that you want to talk about than the boring topics your new wife wants to discuss, you whip the reigns to make Bessie hurry up towards this man. He's already lurching forwards to meet you, coming on in an unsteady manner, strips of his filthy and torn tunic fluttering behind him as he walks. It might just be the dying evening light but as you get closer you could swear that the fellow's flesh is rotting off and it looks like one of his eyeballs is dangling from its socket. Just as you come close enough to yell out a cheery hail, the strange man emits a loud moan and, raising his arms stiffly in front of him, lunges in your direction. You finally realise that this is no man, it's a shambler: a horrible, rotting, undead beast!

As you're puzzling this out, Nilde has already leapt out of the cart and attacked the undead horror, stabbing at it with a carving knife. She's incredibly brave! Still, shamblers are implacable enemies since they don't feel any pain and Nilde is struggling a little. This gives you a great and honourable idea - you could use the distraction to ditch her! If you want to do that turn to 384. If you'd prefer to just let nature take its course in hopes of at least keeping the horse and cart then turn to 1345. If you won't leave your wife to fight that monster on her own, turn to 1327.

848

Now that the trolls are asleep you're free to do whatever you want to their drinks without fear of getting your head smashed in. As soon as you're certain all the trolls are snoring you go around the circle, unstopping all the bottles and introducing a portion of the eagle's fluid to each flask before sealing them shut again. It takes a while and you're worried that one of the trolls might wake up and notice you, but fortunately they're too drunk to notice and you get the job done safely. Feeling particularly spiteful, you top up Kaspar's bottle with some fluid of your own. You then tip-toe over to the edge of the mesa and lower yourself down from the plateau, carefully climbing down the rockface to the ravine below. If you were on a mission from Witold of Brunnenfeld you've failed - make a note of this in your Adventure scroll.

Just as you think you've gotten clean away you hear the flapping of huge wings coming from behind you and turn to see one of the eagles from the nest landing awkwardly on the rocky path running around the spire.

"I saw the whole thing! You got every last one of them!", he squawks. "Can't wait for them to wake up and take their morning belt of liquor!"

Just as the eagle's finished screeching, one of the trolls, probably rustled from sleep by the noise, wakes up and takes a midnight swig from the nearest flask. Evidently, he or she doesn't find the taste appealing - there's a mountain-shaking roar which causes pebbles to cascade down the side of the mesa and a noise like a geyser erupting as the troll spits out a huge mouthful of contaminated booze. There's a general grinding noise as the other trolls awaken to this ruckus. The eagle cackles with birdy glee.

"Probably time to get out of here. You've earned your reward - do you want a lift some place or can I offer you a magical treasure instead?"

If you want a lift then turn to 1401. If you'd rather have the treasure then turn to 928.

849

Raising your weapon high in defiance, you give a rousing war cry and charge at Bilgeton's gates. You don't notice until too late that your mighty skeleton warband has fled, dispersing into the forest and leaving you to face the town's guard on your own. With no other targets at hand the crossbowmen on the walls practise their aim on you. Unfortunately for you their aim is already pretty good and you fall riddled with crossbow bolts long before you get close enough to the gates for the halberdiers to get a chance to work on their technique.

Your adventure ends here.

850

Without giving it a second thought you hurl the repulsive pixie bits into the room. The sack explodes on the bed, filling the air with the rancid smell of desiccated pixie. The warlock sits bolt upright with a gasp, taking an entire lungful of the stuff. As you're standing nearby and you neglected to shut the door, you breathe it in too...

The pixie kicks in almost immediately - the walls begin to shimmer into a kaleidoscope of colours before melting away into space, leaving you beneath iridescent stars. The warlock - it was a warlock, right? seems to have transformed into a bright yellow multi-headed bird, her robe becoming feathers and her hideous swearing becoming a series of indecipherable squawks and screeches. It lunges towards you, snapping its beaks and slashing away with its cruel talons, sparks striking off the rapidly-moving stones of the what once was the tower floor.

Remove the Pixie Bits from your inventory and temporarily deduct 1 ÉLAN from the effects of inhaling the vicious stuff. Now roll on the Potion Effect table, subtracting 1 from the result. If you survive you must fight:

🔪**NIGHTMARE BIRD : DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you defeat your adversary then turn to 620. If you lose then turn to 375.

851

You're finally inside the gatehouse - a long, narrow room lined with tables and guards who are checking over all the new entrants exhaustively before they're allowed into Bilgeton. You're instructed to empty the contents of your pack on one of the tables while a guard inspects you. Somewhat reluctantly, you agree. A heavily-armed militiaman goes through your inventory with unpleasant thoroughness, looking for any excuse to keep you out of the city.

If you have the Confessor's Shovel, have you committed any crimes of any kind since you were last Redeemed? If so the cursed thing rings out - turn to 444.

With that out of the way, do you have the Cut Purse in your inventory? If so turn to 1240. Are you wearing the Soiled Gambeson and the Dented Helm together? Then turn to 1410. If you're wearing only one or the other of those items or have either of them in your pack then turn to 230. Assuming you're still in the clear, are you hauling around a Bag of Child Bones, a Roast Leg of Person or Skellybones? Then turn to 236. Have you been bitten by a Shambler or are you suffering from the Plague? Then turn to 225. And do you have the mark of the Spectre on your face and haven't covered it up with the Giant Helm, the Frill Neck or the Manly Beard? Turn to 191 if this is the case.

Finally, did you take on a mission for Witold and fail to complete it? If so turn to 1441.

If none of these things apply to you then the guard either doesn't notice or isn't interested in the remaining contraband you've no doubt hidden somewhere about your person. He instructs you to pack up your possessions. As soon as you're done you head into the interview room.

Turn to 1549.

852

You come to lying on a huge pile of refuse in an alleyway outside the tavern. Of course, you've been robbed blind - remove all Guilders from your Adventure Scroll.

You're tempted to lie in this comfortable heap of filth until you recover from your beating but a nobold chef emerges from a side door leading to the kitchen and commences rummaging in the pile for ingredients. Seeing that you're still alive, the little lizardman hisses at you, extending its neck frill.

"Oy! No kipping in the tucker! Rack off you no-hoper or you'll wind up in the Dripping Wand's mystery bags," it says in a strange accent.

Although you don't have any idea what it's talking about, even in your groggy state you get the idea that it wants you to leave. In no condition to argue with this horrible little fellow you brush the filth off your clothes and stagger away, ready to find some other way to spend your time in Bilgeton.

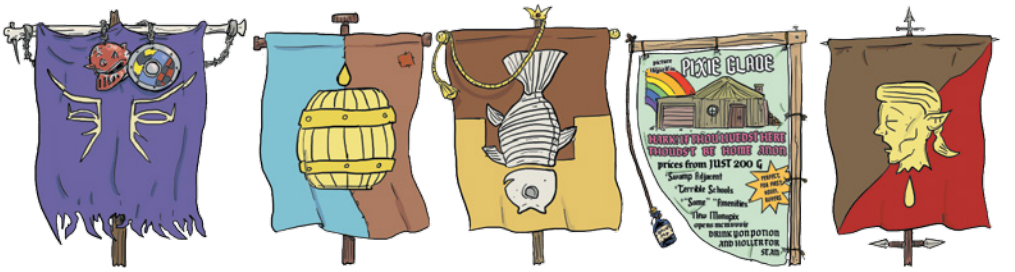
Turn to 827.

853

You walk down the tunnel making a merry crunching noise as you tromp along over a large number of desiccated bones. Soon up ahead you notice a light, dim at first but growing brighter and brighter as you proceed. Although you're happy to see a light that isn't your flint (you're getting calluses from banging the iron and flint together so much) what gives you pause is the bestial sound that you begin to hear echoing down the tunnel - it sounds like there are at least a few monsters of some type out there howling at each other in some kind of godsawful subterranean language. Although you're understandably worried about this development you hate maze sections enough that you're willing to press on. As you approach the end of the tunnel with trepidation you step in a particularly crunchy skull and the monsters realize you're about. One of them sticks its head around the corner - it's a large reptile of some kind with big black eyes. Improbably, it speaks:

"G'day, another bony yobbo is it? Well blow me down. Yeah, nah Stevo, don't get the padre, she'll be right. It's just some reffo. Come on mate, we don't bite".

Despite not understanding a word of this subterranean patois, you sense that the intention isn't overtly hostile and you stagger forward into the light. Restore 5 EFFORT at the relief of putting the maze section of this book behind you and turn to 524.



854

In for a groatfarther, in for a groat, as they say. Without missing a beat you charge forward, trampling three more of the frost sprites into a paste beneath your comparatively huge feet. By this time the remainder have recovered their wits and drawn their weapons, tiny little wands like icicles. Despite your huge size advantage you've angered them by treacherously murdering their friends and they're determined to punish you for your crime. You complacently lumber forward to grind them underfoot but receive a shock as they unleash a barrage of freezing cold beams from their wands. It seems this fight won't be so simple after all:

🔪**ICE SPRITES - DIFFICULTY 6* - FISTS 3* - TOUGHNESS 3**

Each time you reduce the Toughness of this swarm deduct 1 from its DIFFICULTY and FISTS.

These ice-cold beings won't accept your surrender - you must win or die here in the frozen wastes. Turn to 991 if you prevail.

855

Your debut into Bilgeton society, subsequent bravery and confirmation of your nobility by checking your details in the MCMLXXXIII edition of the Almanac of Palavan and Surrounding Realms Sovereign and Noble Houses has so impressed Isentrud that she's fallen head over heels in love with you. The very next morning you exchange your vows at the Bilgeton Synod and you attain the styles and title of His Lordship the Viscount of Southdock.

Turn to 155.

856

You look to your trusty travelling companion for help.

"Nie. Nie ma mowy. Nie zdarzy się", he mutters in his impenetrable language.

"Czekać!" shouts the dragon, but it's too late. The 10-Foot Pole flees the cave with lightning speed.

Will you run after the Pole? If so, turn to 1517. If not, he's gone: remove the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole from your Adventure Scroll. Now, will you trust in your martial prowess and attack this dragon (turn to 473), or will you try to talk your way out of this one (turn to 1537)?

857

You don the garb of The Spectre, thereby becoming the 22nd Spectre! The job comes with a sweet skull cave and food brought to you on the regular by local fay folk from the Mist Steppes who are eternally grateful that you get up off your arse and slam evil once in a while. Although you never made it to Bilgeton, met your father or got much more than one day's walk away from Jeff, you did find a place to crash and there's even a sword somewhere in the back in the cave so technically you've found one of the few endings which feature this book's titular item.

While the fay folk of the region believe The Spectre to be immortal, it's really just a family business. Each Spectre passes the purple spandex mantle onto a son or (at least once) a daughter. Because you're you there's no one interested in helping you make an heir, so you're the last of the line. As a half elf you live a long time compared to humans, but after a long life of half-heartedly slamming evil you pass away and The Spectre walks no more.

858

After all this hiking and the effort involved in getting in here, you feel like the famously tricky Mazyrinth is completely beyond you. As is your usual practice when faced with a situation you don't want to cope with you sit down on the ground and wail disconsolately.

A furry little head soon pokes out of the wall nearby to see what the fuss is - some gross caterpillar creature.

"Allo. What's..." it begins, but in your rage and grief a disgusting little worm is too much for you to handle so you smash it flat with your fist. This makes you feel a little better about yourself and you're able to pull yourself together enough to drag yourself back out of the Mazyrinth.

Turn to 1277.

859

You describe how you destroyed Aelfsburg and wiped out its population single-handedly, gracefully embellishing the part where it was mostly an accident. Still, the guard seems impressed.

"You've saved us a job - none of our patrols could find that village. We should be able to finally fix some of the roads around here without those nuisances pinching the stones. Bilgeton thanks you for your service."

After dotting all the is and crossing the ts, the guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink : you are now permitted to enter Bilgeton through the Trader's Gate in future adventures since you will always start with this item. With that done the guard escorts you out of the office and through to the other side of the gatehouse. You step through the exit and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

860

You watch a rock troll teeter and collapse on the other side of the circle with a thunderous crash, smashing the bottles around him as the alcohol gets right on top of him. You don't like your chances of surviving a drink of anything that can knock out a nine-foot tall rock monster.

Suddenly you get a reasonably smart idea- if you filter the liquid through some bread you can probably filter out most of the poisonous additives, leaving you with what should hopefully be pure alcohol. Rummaging around in your bag you find the Tasty Burg - or rather, what was a Tasty Burg. After being in your bag all this time the meat has gotten decided slimy and the bread stale. You chuck the rotten meat out and begin to filter the drink by pouring the liquid through the buns into one of the empty bottles lying around nearby.

Kaspars looks at you incredulously but you make up some bullshit about this being a drinking game among your people which he seems to buy. At the end of this process you have a bottle of pure alcohol and a couple of pieces of blue bread which you chuck aside. Discard the Tasty Burg and lift the booze to your lips…

Turn to 872.

861

Probably not the smartest move you've ever made, but who knows.

Roll one die on the Demonic Apparition Table below to see what you've summoned, then turn to the indicated page:

The Demonic Apparition Table

Roll	Summoned	Turn to
1-2	A Shiny Demon	1823
3-4	The Prince of Shards	1099
5-6	A Phalloknight	567

862

Your fear of humans wins out against your pretty much non-existent fear of not finishing something you started, so you take Biff's advice and flee into the forest. Unfortunately you lose Biff as you crash through the dense foliage, and in doing so lose your last chance of revenge.

You must have been spotted fleeing: you can hear the sounds of pursuit behind you. The humans clumsily bash their way through the undergrowth and yell to each other in some harsh, unknown tongue, inspiring you to move deeper and deeper into the woods. Although you're hardly more at home in the forest than these clumsy humans, you do have a large head start on them. You run on, leaving your pursuers far behind.

Turn to 961.

863

You follow the passage around and find yourself in another straight corridor which terminates once again at another corner. Since there's nothing to steal - just broken and rusty axe heads littering the floor for some reason - and no doors or turns to investigate, you can only continue onwards.

You trudge along for a long while but it's not until you've taken another couple of corners and encountered another couple of identical, nearly-featureless corridors that you realise what the wheeze it - it's not a maze, it's a godsdamned labyrinth. Your mother told you about these in one of the fairy stories she read you - it's just a low budget maze with no branching paths, but it has a large, angry beast in the middle. You always thought the fairies were drunk on dewshine when they wrote this stuff but now you can see they weren't entirely full of it. Now you're worried about the monster at the centre of the labyrinth. Still, Karol doesn't seem all that concerned - he's busily tapping away at the walls with a miniature pickaxe and scribbling his findings into a little notebook.

If you want to proceed, monster or no, turn to 727. If you've seen enough and have no wish to encounter some mythical beast then turn to 1339 to get out of here.

864

You handily defeat the gross cannibals and stomp right through their game without pausing. This air in this section of tunnel is so thick that you feel like you could chew it, though it'd definitely be inedible. Something hard crunches underfoot as you proceed. You quickly investigate by striking the flint a few times - it's a black substance, about half an inch thick with the texture of toenails.

Continuing, you soon find the source of the stench and the black stuff - the remains of a giant ant is curled up in a cul-de-sac at the end of the tunnel. Those chuds have probably been dining out on it for a while - the huge monster would probably stand at three times your height and the chuds have hollowed out about half of it. The goo inside would have been poisonous when fresh, but is definitely rancid now - if they'd been eating it, that might explain why those horrible little men were such a pushover.

Anyway, putting aside the troubling thought of what this monster is doing here and whether there are any more of Them! around, you can hold your nose and salvage a Flagon of Ant Goo from this rotting fiend. Add it to your Adventure Scroll. After that the smell becomes overpowering. Retching violently you turn back the way you came. Turn to 279 and choose some other way to go!

865

You press the small golden coin into the bum's hand. This represents more than a week's wages for a labourer and it's far more money than this guy has seen in one place at one time. If you were expecting gratitude, then you're disappointed - instead of thanking you he shoves you out of the way and runs for it before you change your mind or try to tell him about your religion or something.

They say generosity is its own reward, but you'd have preferred to be lavished with praise. Before you can punch the guy in the back of the head to force the gratitude out of him he's long gone, and with him your Guilder. Deduct 1 Guilder from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1019.

866

You rush at the priest, hoping to catch him before he can waddle away, but instead of fleeing he does something curious. He drops his bag and reaches into his cassock to withdraw a shining silver triangle. Brandishing this towards you he mutters a few words and you go flying back as though you'd been hit in the chest with a war hammer. You sit up just in time to be knocked flat again by a rain of old shoes, branches and debris which is coming down after being blasted up by the gust of force you were struck by. This isn't just some fat old man, it's a hateful old human priest and he's cast a stereotypical clerical spell called Smite!

While you roll around on the ground trying to get your breath back the priest makes good his escape. By the time you get up he and his sack of garbage is gone. Not really wanting to meet any more humans after such a bruising encounter, you decide to return to the forest verge and follow it uphill around the outside of the town. You keep the walls in sight so you can keep your bearings. After a while the going gets steeper and the town slips away out of sight in the foothills behind you. An hour's slog later and you find yourself at the start of a winding mountain trail at the very beginning of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains.

Turn to 521.

867

You decide after all that you're not interested and tell the little cretin to push off. He sneers at you, revealing his few remaining rotten teeth.

"You'll rue the day you crossed the Thieves' Guild! The Assassins' Association will hear of this! Watch your back, narc!" he screeches, hobbling away.

You pass the rest of the time in the queue worrying about your fate and wondering how the Thieves' Guild relates to the Assassins' Association, whether the Assassins' Association is a sub-chapter of the Guild or if it's its own entity with warm relations with the Guild, perhaps sharing a board or the like. Lose 5 EFFORT from all this agonising - but at least it keeps you busy. Before you know it you're at the head of the line and stepping through the narrow door into the gatehouse.

Turn to 851.

868

You're not going to side with a bunch of woodcutters who only seconds ago were trying to pummel you senseless, so you throw in your lot with these guys and rush back into the fray.

The lumberjacks put up a stout fight but with you skulking around braining people when their backs are turned and generally being a distracting nuisance the odds are tipped too far against them. While only the flamboyant leader of the attackers has any real skill, the rest make up for their lack of finesse with brutal violence and enthusiasm for plunder. The lumberjacks are hacked down without mercy and soon the only opponent remaining is the monster. Snarling with its human face, the monster rears up and kicks, nearly striking one of the rough-looking warriors. Your new comrades in arms beckon you over to help take this beast down:

🔪**REVERSE-TAURCENT: DIFFICULTY 6 FISTS 3**

If you have Enough Rope you can subdue this beast safely by fashioning a lasso and throwing it around Briggins' neck, automatically winning this battle. You reclaim the rope afterwards.

If you win, you do your part to sudue the beast. After you kick it particularly hard in the shins it collapses to the ground where one of the fighters finishes it off. Turn to 1439.

If you can't beat this monster or don't feel like trying, you simply wait for an opportune moment and nick off. Being preoccupied with what they're doing no one notices your going. You emerge from the wood and back onto the plains without any further hassles. Turn to 282.

869

Your inability to defeat a minor opponent, even when you've got the element of surprise, have the support of three experienced warriors and are attacking from the back of a huge bird monster all bodes extremely ill for the remainder of your quest. Biff, realising he's doomed and wanting to get one last round of bullying in before he checks out, grabs onto your leg and hauls you down off your steed, throwing up a huge cloud of dust as you slam into the ground. Biff then proceeds to tear open your shirt and administers the purplest nurple ever recorded in elfish history. You feel like your entire chest is about to explode. Just as it seems like the nurple's going to rip right off, you are spared by a caravan guard idly running Biff through with his spear. The elf gives your titty one more agonising twist and then he's off to the hells to bully the devils.

After the guards are done laughing at your worthlessness, they bandage up your ruined chest and prop you against a tree until the caravan arrives. As soon as the wagons roll in you sullenly slink into your spot in the rear carriage, your happiness at the death of your childhood nemesis overshadowed by the fact that Biff went out doing what he loved - bullying you mercilessly. While you're lost in such thoughts the caravan moves off again, the sound of the wheels on the cobblestone drowning out the laughter of the guards and drivers as they recount your deeds.

Turn to 1124.

870

You've come this far so you may as well go ahead and rob the place, you guess. Letting yourself in through the rear entrance of the church you find yourself in the priest's living quarters. It's a humble affair consisting of a pallet bed, a chest of drawers and a fireplace. After looting the joint thoroughly you find a few Bilgeton Guilders which you add to your pouch (roll a die and add that many Guilders to the cash section of your Adventure Scroll). In one of the corners of the room under a heap of supposedly holy books you also notice a huge cask of baptismal whiskey - if you wish you may take a belt, restoring 10 EFFORT at a cost of 1 ÉLAN until you can get some rest.

Leaving all this behind you enter the main hall of the church and find yourself standing behind the altar in a large stone-walled corridor lined with rows of uncomfortable-looking wooden benches. It's a dingy and smoke-filled room, lit only by the sunlight streaming in through a small window at the top of the high wall above the front doors. The walls all around you are decorated with numerous paintings, hooks from which the smoke-producing bronze censers are hanging, and decorative shields painted with various heraldic motifs. To your left you see a chair atop which is a half-eaten hunk of greasy meat on the bone. If you want to take this add Meat to your Adventure Scroll. You can also pinch one of the heraldic Knightly Shields if you wish.

You've now seen and stolen everything here worth half a damn, aside from that cask of whiskey. Maybe if you could find some way to lighten it a little you can take it with you on your quest? If so turn to 1208. If you'd prefer to just get out of here with your loot you can nonchalantly walk right through the front door and on up the lane - turn to 1236. On the other hand, you've beaten the priest and looted his church - why not go all the way and just ... burn the place down? Turn to 1611.

871

You carefully explain to the gruff bartender that you're with Eilika, who should have checked in here.

"Upstairs. Getting ready for the evening's entertainment", he says. You go to climb the staircase but he clears his throat aggressively.

"You're not getting up there without paying for a room," he snarls. "5 Guilders."

No amount of assuring him that you'll be right up and back again sways him - you'll have to pay up to drop off the bags! If you're willing to pay the outrageous fee then turn to 223. If you want to hazard haggling with this belligerent barkeep then turn to 278.

If neither option appeals then you ask him if you can leave the luggage with him to pass on to Eilika if she ever comes out of her room. He shrugs noncommittally, which is good enough for you given the horrible weight of this stuff. Remove the Heavy Pack from your Adventure Scroll.

With that complete you can now order a drink at the staggering price of 1 Guilder - turn to 1653 - or get out of here by turning to 192.

872

Bottoms up! Even with the cobalt filtered out, this stuff is still pretty dangerous to the human/elf physiology, being pure alcohol and all. You manage to down about half of the large bottle but you're beginning to get absolutely smashed. Deduct 2 ÉLAN from the effects of the booze (this will wear off when you next have a sleep).

The rock trolls seem impressed by your fortitude and their leader is a little more willing to talk now. Finally finding someone who's willing to converse with you at any length, you open up about your miserable story, skipping any bits which might make you look bad, and end at the point that you arrived at the henge. Kaspars listens, or at least appears to as he sways back and forth, pretty deep in his cups. He asks what you intend to do now.

If you're aiming to continue your quest to Bilgeton then turn to 1163. If you're on a mission from Witold of Brunnenfeld now might be the time to mention it - turn to 1248. If you've been given a job to do by the eagles of Eagle Rock and haven't somehow lost the item they gave you then turn to 1084.

873

You don't stand a chance against Brenda's bullying and you both know it. She laughs as you give up the fight.

"Gods, you really are a mark. Well, I'll be taking this", she says, relieving you of one of your hard-stolen possessions. Remove the first item or piece of equipment listed on your Adventure Scroll (or, if you're using cards, shuffle your item cards and remove the item on the top).

As you display your best sullen pout she continues.

"I guess this is goodbye, Bastard. I hope you're better at being a human being than you were as an elf, though these early signs aren't encouraging. Thanks for the grade and all the stuff!"

With that Brenda turns and walks off into the woods. Fearing another arse-kicking you don't pursue her but instead continue your trudge alongside the forest, now mercifully unbothered by brownies and thieving elf maidens.

Turn to 214.

874

You finally give Batu's fingers enough of a hammering that even his iron grip is softened. Hurt more emotionally than physically he lets go.

"Fine. More Batu will kill. See if Batu care", he says sniffily and runs off to join the battle. Weirdly, almost as soon as he's left you hear a whip of the reins and the loud squawking of birds along with the sensation of movement - the caravan is moving on! You can still hear the sounds of battle but as the caravan rounds the bend you can see the caravan guards being tied up and led away into captivity while poor old Batu, slightly late to the fight because of you, makes a desperate last stand against nearly a score of the beasts.

You reflect on how little any of this is your problem as the wagon rolls on, leaving this miserable scene behind. You lean up against a pile of stereotypical fantasy chests and relax as your ride continues its journey along the road to Bilgeton. In fact after such a hard day on the road you're soon fast asleep.

Turn to 1170 if you have the Elfish Cloak of Invisibility equipped, otherwise turn to 973.

875

The warlock charges down the stairs, swearing coarsely.

"WHAT SORT OF BLOODY SCROTUM-FOR-BRAINS FUCKING BREAKS INTO A WARLOCK'S TOWER? I'LL PLOUGH YOU WITHOUT TALLOW YOU PISSANT BLACKGUARD..."

Suddenly a furious-looking lady dressed in a loose yellow robe appears above you on the spiral staircase. If, based on the language, you were expecting a grizzled old wizard or perhaps some sort of pirate you were mistaken - this lady looks reasonably normal for a human of perhaps thirty years (though it's hard to tell with wizards at the like). She has long messy brown hair and a cranky, sleepy expression on her face as though she'd just been sleeping and some rude half elf had woken her up.

You don't really have time to take in all the details - you're in serious trouble. She begins some horrible incantation that will no doubt blast you into atoms or rip your soul out or do one of the many other effects that are commonly attached to doomsday spells.

🔪**AGGIE THE WARLOCK : DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

There'll be no mercy for you here - you'd better win or it's curtains. If you defeat the warlock then turn to 1361.

876

You approach the fighting pit just in time to see a tough-looking human being dragged away outside, leaving a trail of blood behind him as the senseless fighter is hurled out through the back doors of the inn. A goblin wearing unusually fine armour decorated with black and white stripes is looking around for more suckers when he spots you coming.

"Another challenger approaches! Dare you enter the ring against Krung? Five Guilders and the Championship Belt are yours if you can defeat our champion! Many have tried but none seem to have the... metal for it!". The announcer and the goblins standing around all laugh raucously at this statement, evidentally finding some humour in the nonsensical announcement.

If you'd like to give it a shot then turn to 85. If you didn't like the sound of whatever pun the announcer was trying to make you can leave now with all your teeth and most of your honour still intact by turning to 76.

877

You wisely back out of the cave without touching anything. While this isn't the bravest option it's the one most likely to keep you alive. On the way out you notice that someone has left a fresh bottle of milk in front of the heap of empties. If you don't want to leave completely empty handed you can take it: add the Bottle of Milk to your Adventure Scroll.

With that done you strike out across the tundra to the south in the general direction of Bilgeton.

Were you sent here on a mission from the Goblin King? If so you've let him down - turn to 114. Otherwise you're in the clear - turn to 889.

878

The huge wolf seems taken aback by your decision - prey isn't supposed to do that! - and it turns to flee, but trips over its oversized paws and slams into a nearby tree. You press your advantage:

🔪**DIRE WOLF : DIFFICULTY 8 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Despite its large size it's not much of a fighter and it's mainly looking to get away from the mad half elf it's been foolishly stalking. If you defeat the wolf you can deprive it of its fur, making a boss Dire Wolf Cloak. You can also carve off a big hunk of Meat for later. If you can't beat it or choose not to attack, it scurries away yelping into the wilderness, hopefully but probably not having learned its lesson.

Either way with this foe out of the way you're free to resume your journey - turn to 452.

879

You find the elfs where you left them, sitting around a small fire near the road. They're surprised to see you again and when they realise you didn't get rid of the warlock like you said you would they get real mean. The whole thing was an elf scam, as you probably suspected all along. Soon you find yourself completely surrounded by the gang of nasty-looking elfs, some of whom have knives out, and you don't manage to get away without parting with all your cash, steeds, rings, potions and any belts you have on your person. Remove these items from your Adventure Scroll. They don't want any of the rest of your junk, if you've got any, and they send you on your way, laughing at your gullibility.

Lose 5 EFFORT from the chagrin you feel at yet another humiliation at the hands of elfkind and turn to 294 to continue your trudge towards Bilgeton.

880

You sink deeper and deeper into the mattress and it closes around you as the bedsheets continue to skitter away. You feel a sharp pain in your sides and back - it feels as though the mattress is chewing on you.

This is definitely enough to shake you from your torpor - turn to 1809 to open your eyes. If you want to see where this mattress chewing dream is going then turn to 1513.

881

"Nothing is over! Nothing! You just don't close the book! It wasn't my adventure! You kicked me out, I didn't kick you out! And I did what I had to do to win, for somebody who wouldn't let me win!" you yell.

"It was a bad time for everyone, stepson. It's all in the past now" replies Jeff.

Somehow, Jeff has cut a deal with the Bilgeford militia to get you out of this mess - he probably sold all the stuff you left in your tower to bribe the guards, knowing that spiteful old asshole. The thought of him touching your stuff - let alone selling it! - makes you even more furious with Jeff than you were with the humans who've been hunting you all afternoon. As you're walking with him over the bridge on the way out of town you give him a hearty shove over the railing and he tumbles into the Bilge with a scream which is cut short by a loud splash. You watch Jeff struggling to keep his head above water as the swift current of the wide river bears him away towards Bilgeton. Like most full-blood elfs he's congenitally unable to swim. Soon he disappears from sight altogether.

With a smile on your face you turn around and cross back over the bridge, heading north out of town along the road to Bilgeton. Turn to 1732.

882

You think fast and tell the guard that the squeaking straps on the bag are starting to wear away at your sanity after days on the road. The two militiamen look at each other and then back at you.

"Mind if we take a look at it?" says the guard who spoke earlier. Have you been rumbled?

If you're willing to let them take a look then turn to 673. If it's not, they're going to get real suspicious. You'd better confess to everything before it's too late. Turn to 1717.

883

Not wanting anything to do with whatever emitted that slime you set off down the other passage. A couple of hours later your lantern gutters out and you chuck it aside, going back to your trusty flint. There aren't any more major forks and aside from tripping over a couple of piles of crushed cans no further dangers confront you. The trudge seems to take forever and you stop for a nap. Restore 10 EFFORT and turn to 1417.

884

The entire village seems to be abandoned. No sound intrudes but the gentle rustling of discarded lembas packets being blown across the glade by a gentle forest breeze. Even the birds are silent - the critters of the Schleimwald are mostly nocturnal after all. One of the large white letters spelling out the town name along the tree line creaks a little in the wind.

As you're taking advantage of the morning light to case out the joint properly, the silence is broken by the conspicuous tinkle of breaking glass. You look in the direction of the noise and see a man dressed all in white and wearing an odd little white cap leaping from the first floor of one of the better-maintained towers. He's carrying a large leather sachet full of bottles which clink against each other as he hits the ground with a roll and races off into the forest verge. There's something awfully familiar about this scene... As you watch in amazement you hear a faint sobbing sound coming from inside the tower from which he emerged.

If you want to get after the escapee then turn to 904. If you want to investigate the source of the sobbing then turn to 760. If you'd rather loot the village while no one's looking then turn to 107.

885

The goblin watches with some amusement as you try and fail to heft an extremely heavy metal kite shield.

"That used to belong to Tedbald of Bilgeford, until he...lost it. He dropped it in a hurry to get away from those 'rock goblins' in that pass just up ahead."

The goblin snorts in amusement. You ask why he's telling you this.

"Us non-humans have to stick together, right? Anyway, a skinny guy like you might just be able to lug that thing around but I think you'd be better off with one of these". With this the goblin points out a plain, lightweight leather targe hanging from a wall. You complain about the lack of paintwork so the goblin, rolling his eyes, goes out back and brings you another one painted with a series of brightly coloured concentric rings.

"It costs a fifth as much and will serve you a lot better", the shopkeep says as you lift the shield. It's light and easy for you to handle, and although the motif isn't as fancy as the baroque elf designs you're used to it's pleasant enough in a stark miminalist way. "Never used, either", the goblin continues, "It won't do you much good if someone chucks a boulder at you, but then again what will, am I right?"

You get down to talking turkey. The Target Targe will cost 1 Bilgeton Guilder and the Knightly Shield will cost 5 Guilders. If you purchase either (or both of these items, for whatever reason) then subtract the appropriate amount of Cash from your Adventure Scroll.

If you're short on Guilders then you can try to barter with your elfen currency, if you have any. Turn to 810 if you want to do this. Either way, shortly after your transaction a paying customer enters the shop and the goblin goes to try his sales routine on the new arrival. With nothing left to do here it's time to go. You step out of the store and back into the street: turn to 1543.

886

After giving you the once-over the elfs relax. Despite your racial infirmities you've aped elfish attire well enough that these people who don't know any better just assume you're an eccentric foreigner. After all, it's pretty common for elfs to drift around looking for an easy score. Deciding that you're one of them these elfs unwisely drop their guard.

"Hey, c'mere", says one of the elfs haughtily, beckoning you over. "I can see from your outfit that you're from Elfsdale Downs. We're all about to head out on a lorewardening excursion near the Warlock's tower and could use a grasswatcher. Want to come along?"

You briefly studied grasswatching at the famous Elfsdale Downs Grasswatching Academy - well, you enrolled at least, though you never set foot inside a classroom, and you were never initiated into the mysteries or even the gist of what the hells grasswatching is, or what the hells it has to do with lorewardening, or what the hells lorewardening is. Still, no time like the present to find out.

If you've got nothing else on and want to roll with it then you can agree - turn to 496. If you'd like a refresher on exactly what grasswatching entails first then turn to 1100. If you're not interested then the mood turns very sour. You decide to leave before there's any trouble - turn to 187.

887

Since you're not much (or any) of a musician you decide you'd rather just listen to the show. Following the crowds you descend down a dangerously frayed and overloaded rope ladder and pull up a boulder somewhere above the stage which lies at the bottom of the quarry. You've never seen so many people in one place - there must be five hundred humans here and a smattering of dwarfs, living skeletons and even a goblin down in the mosh pit right in front of the stage.

The first act is a minstrel show. Even by late medieval standards blackface is enough to make people uncomfortable with its racist overtones. A group of dwarfs near the stage start booing and one of them hurls a rock which strikes the crumhornist right between the eyes, knocking him senseless. The band is instantly disqualified to the applause of the crowd.

As the defeated minstrels slump off stage another troupe emerges - The Waits! These guys are already famous - according to your tourist map they're employed as a kind of municipal alarm clock for the city's workers - and they look incredibly cool in their matching red liveries and silver chains. As soon as the lead player launches into his blistering trademark shawm solo you involuntarily start moshing to the beat, swishing your long hair back and forth. Your greasy locks land right on the skull of a skeleton worker seated directly in front of you. He chitters crossly and points to the mosh pit down in the quarry, just before the stage.

If you'd like to head down there and rock out then turn to 1046. If you'd rather stay put and enjoy the show then turn to 679.

888

The river isn't particularly wide or deep and the ford is made up of stones large enough to allow loaded wagons to cross. Despite the ease of the crossing, you're still drunk enough that you immediately lose your footing on one of the damp stones and fall over into the stream. You're drenched, but at least the chilly water sobers you up a bit! If you're suffering from any ÉLAN penalties from alcohol or potions you can remove them now and recover the lost ÉLAN.

You stagger out the other side of the stream and approach the nearby mushroom farm.

Turn to 967.

889

You have no idea how far you've walked - it seems like an endless trudge through a cold, harsh and trackless wilderness - but eventually you arrive at a paved road which continues south, presumably towards Bilgeton. As luck would have it a group of dwarfs are parked up nearby, enjoying a picnic beside their tall covered wagon. A couple of oxen, still hitched to the vehicle, contentedly chew on some tough grass growing beside the road.

The dwarfs are occupied smoking and noodling around with their musical instruments so they don't notice you stumbling slowly out of the mists until you're nearly on top of them.

"A shambler!" shrieks one, leaping to his feet. One of the the lady dwarfs drops her lute and rushes to the back of the wagon. The rest stand and do their best to look threatening, wielding their musical instruments like weapons. As you're lumbering forward on your travel-sore legs and emitting a noise somewhere between a croak and a groan with your sore, frozen throat, the dwarf returns with an odd, tubular device. Bracing it against her shoulder she strikes a match against the fabric of her skirt and presses it to a pan at the back of the tube. There's a tremendous boom and a huge cloud of smoke! Something whizzes past your ear and you see the dwarf commence a complicated ritual involving a small paper cartridge full of powder, a curious metal ball and a metal rod as she readies the tube for another explosion:

GETTING SHOT AT: DIFFICULTY 12

If you overcome this challenge then turn to 1530. Otherwise you throw yourself on the terrified dwarfs' mercy, if they have any: turn to 381.

890

You don't want anything to do with what's going on in these woods. You consult your map and turn roughly northeast, striking out for the edge of the forest. The barrage of projectiles soon slackens off but never goes away completely, and by the time you're out of the trees you feel thoroughly harassed.

Turn to 932.

891

You describe the epic battle on the road to Bilgeton and your defeat of the Elf Bastard. The guard seems a bit incredulous about your exploits but enough of your story rings true and he decides to believe you.

"If you're such a great caravan guard, why are you here without the skeletons.... you know what, never mind. The Elf Bastard was the mastermind behind most of the elfen banditry along the Count's Road and now he's gone the elfs will be back to begging and starving to death. Well done. Bilgeton thanks you".

After dotting all the is and crossing the ts the guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink : you are now permitted to enter Bilgeton through the Trader's Gate in future adventures since you'll start each new game with this item. With that done the guard escorts you out of the office and through to the other side of the gatehouse. You step through the exit and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

892

You continue towards the spire, watching nervously as the dark shapes soar overhead, screeching and wheeling around the peak. You briefly wonder if they've spotted you and are answered immediately by a wet splat as a gigantic bird dropping plummets from the sky and explodes right on your shirt front. There's a momentary eclipse as the offending eagle passes between you and the sun, keening in what you believe is a birdy version of a snicker before turning about and soaring back up to the spire. As you watch the defecator's flight path you notice that the top of the peak isn't bare - a profusion of twigs and other stuff indicates the presence of a large nest up there. You wonder if this was a well-aimed warning shot : eagles probably don't like half elfs fossicking around near their nests.

If you've got a ranged weapon you can take a shot at the offending bird by turning to 1674. If agitating a huge bird of prey seems like a terrible idea, you can instead try to talk to the eagles by turning to 206. If you'd rather avoid any further contact with these raptors altogether, you can go around the base of the spire, giving it as wide a berth as possible by turning to 138.

893

There's nowhere really to hide out here so instead you flee screaming off the road, running pell-mell into the distant horizons of The Endless Plain of Fortune. The caravan rolls by, its drivers and guards laughing at the strange display of a gibbering half elf racing over the open fields.

You keep fleeing until the road and caravan are completely out of sight. Everything you've ever known is far, far behind you. There's nothing around you but rolling plains stretching to the horizon in all directions.

Turn to 939.

894

The demon seems to be irritated by your attempt to correct it on the finer points of the game.

"It is not my fault, vermin", tinkles the demon testily, "that your forebears taught you poorly. Stop trying to distract me this instant".

With this he takes a second turn in a row, moving a pawn three spaces forward to take one of your knights which was left in what you assumed was a safe spot. You're starting to run out of pieces.

If this is too much for you then you can accuse the demon of cheating by turning to 1724. If you're willing to play on to certain defeat then turn to 1184. If you're now absolutely certain this monster can't play the game and want to stake your life on this hypothesis then turn to 249.

895

You stupidly agree to be detained while the guards run a check on the owner of your steed. If you were expecting this to be done quickly you are sadly mistaken - you spend weeks locked up in one of the city's many oubliettes while they try to figure out the provenance of your mount.

If the mount was given to you legally then turn to 1380. If you found it or stole it turn to 1185.

896

Before your refusal to get involved has completely left your lips, Amelie screams for the guards. The Count sits bolt upright in bed as the guard you saw outside rushes into the tent, brandishing his halberd menacingly.

"What's the meaning of all this?" slurs the Count sleepily. You try to explain but you don't have time to utter anything convincing - the guard thumps you over the head with a mailed fist, knocking you to the ground, dazed and bloodied.

"This man is an imposter who was only pretending to be a noble so he could rob you and sully the honour of my lady Countess Amelie de Fraude. She caught him red handed, as your lordship can see". The guard points to the bag of coins that Amelie dropped earlier, which comes to rest damningly close to your half-busted head as the countess slyly kicks it over to you.

Count Hugues is too groggy even to notice that his fiancée's petticoats are bulging with purses and valuables stolen from the tent, but he's perfectly willing to accept your guilt.

"To think I shared a carriage with him. I won't sully my hands further: the Bilgeton magistrate can have him. Take him away!" he commands.

Amelie smirks at you unpleasantly as you're dragged outside by the guard. Waiting for you outside the tent are the rest of the guards in various stages of dress, but all heavily armed and seriously pissed off.

"You nearly ruined our action! Takes this!" shouts one, kicking you hard in the ribs. The other guards take turns giving you a beating until they grow tired, which is some time after they've managed to break several of your bones - lose 1 ELAN from the whupping. After this you are clapped in irons, stripped of all your possessions and hurled bodily into the back of an iron-barred prison wagon which is parked up nearby.

Turn to 227.

897

Ahead of you the road splits, heading southeast over undulating plains dotted with farms and cattle. It winds gently to the huge main gates of Bilgeton, several hours' travel away and yet still clearly visible due to their massive size. To the northeast the road turns to follow alongside the forest, sloping down towards a ford over the wide Bilge River where a small human settlement squats over the water. You can see the smoke rising from chimneys and, more threateningly, the sun reflecting off steel helmets and blades in a couple of watch towers. An obelisk set beside the road indicates that the southeast road is to Bilgeton via the Noble Gate, and the northwest is also to the same place but via Bilgeford and the Trader's Gate.

If you'd like to head straight for the Noble Gate then turn to 1005. If you'd prefer to take the slightly more roundabout route via Bilgeford to the Trader's Gate then turn to 678.

898

The mountain passes beyond Skull Mountain are narrow and winding but apparently The Spectre's been using them a fair bit for his regular evil-slamming patrols - they're clear of debris and tangling weeds. You don't have much difficulty leaving the disturbing-looking mountain behind.

Turn to 955.

899

If you've got the Skeleton Hand then turn at once to 558. Otherwise the nobolds do their level best to kick the living hells out of you as punishment for being a "dero". Luckily they're only a few feet tall, their reptilian feet aren't made for kicking, their excessive frills get in the way and they're not really trying to kill you so they don't use their tools, but the beating is still very embarrassing. Lose 5 EFFORT from the chagrin. Eventually a distant whistle blows and the nobolds seem to consider this a signal to get back to work. They each give you a final flappy little reptile kick and dump you in a pile of quartz tailings where you pass out for a while.

When you've finally come to your senses after the booting you clamber free of the quartz heap and have a look around. The nobolds seem to have moved on, leaving you alone in the tunnel. You instinctively have a rummage around in the quartz pile and find a tiny gold nugget which the nobolds must have missed - add 1 Guilder to your Adventure Scroll. With this windfall taking some of the sting off your defeat you decide to move on deeper into the tunnels. Turn to 811.

900

Fighting's for chumps! You evade a ghoul, slip out of the desperate melee and crawl across the floor until you chance upon a rotten old barrel that you can hide in. Only too late do you find out that it contains an ancient decroded skeleton who takes exception to you leaping into what passes for its torso. Chittering wildly, it flails about with its one remaining good arm, trying to stab at you with its rusty dagger!

🔪**DECRODED SKELETON: DIFFICULTY 4 - FISTS 1**

Deduct 1 from all your FIST rolls thanks to the restricted space inside this barrel.

If you win then you subdue the old skeleton: turn to 1130. If you lose or aren't willing to fight to the death over a rotten old barrel then turn to 221.

901

Ready to take on the Mazyrinth, you stride purposefully in through the gate and almost slam right into a huge stone wall directly ahead of you. Instead of having lots of exciting junctions and traps and puzzles and such, the maze simply splits to the left and right. Both directions look the same - high stone walls on both sides of you, weedy and cracked concrete and some slimy substance coating nearly everything. There's no clue as to which way to go.

If you want to go left then turn to 106. If you want to go right, turn to 1238. If you want to give up immediately then turn to 858.

902

With the lich permanently destroyed, the legions of the undead he raised have gone to the grave with him. You're glad not to have to tangle with a bunch of shamblers and ghouls but the same magic which animated those nasties and kept time from ravaging the ancient lich also protected the barrow, which is now rapidly collapsing under the weight of centuries! You come out into the hallway in time to see great stones falling over the stairs leading out of the crypt, and the walls and floor begin to shake violently. With no other hope you cram your new possessions into your backpack and run deeper into the crypt, hoping to get clear before the barrow completely folds in on itself. At the end of the hall you come to a stone wall which has been smashed open and you step through to find yourself in a natural stone cavern. The limited light shining through the hole behind you goes out as the crypt crashes in with a terrible boom, buried away forever under hundreds of tons of rock.

Since the crypt is destroyed you will not be able to come back this way - if in the future you're offered a chance to return via the crypt you may not take it because that would ruin the continuity of this adventure. This is a limitation of the choose your own adventure format - in future microcomputers may be able to keep track of that kind of thing for you and make adjustments on your behalf, but that's just some science fiction craziness for now (and if you want some real science fiction craziness please pick up a copy of Star Bastards from Two-Fisted Fantasy, available in two or three locations across the entire southern United Kingdom excluding Wales and Kent).

Now turn to 625 to begin a loathsome maze section.

903

You try to change the subject to something you care at all about, like how much longer it's going to take this winged beast to get you to Bilgeton, noting that you may as well have walked. You also manage to insinuate that the dragon's low air speed might have something to do with its sizeable paunch. Bhad immediately becomes incandescent with rage.

"I KNEW IT! YOU WERE JUST USING ME! AND YOU DON'T FIND ME ATTRACTIVE!" it roars. "WHAT'S IN BILGETON? ONE OF YOUR HUMAN FLOOZIES? I'VE BEEN ALIVE SINCE BEFORE HUMANKIND SWUNG OUT OF THE TREES...I...oh gods I'm so old… no wonder you don't want me...."

You make no attempt to console the dragon so it switches back from self-pitying to furious.

"I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT I THINK OF YOUR PRECIOUS HUMANS!"

Bhad is flying low now, and approaching a human settlement straddling the large river which flows towards Bilgeton. With a mighty roar it descends on the fortified town. You can hear shouts coming from below as the humans hurriedly race around trying to organise a defence and a few guards even manage to get a couple of arrows off, but it's all in vain: Bhad swoops down and ignites the two dozen or so thatched-roof huts and towers clustered around the wooden bridge with a mighty blast of blue flame. The fires spread and despite the efforts of the survivors to beat out the flames the fires rage out of control and the bridge collapses into the river. The town of Bilgeford is eradicated.

Bhad is flying low and slow as it tries to regain its breath and is about to pass over the river. If you'd like to take this opportunity to leap off the enraged beast then turn to 127. If you don't like your chances of surviving the drop then turn to 1534.

904

There's something strangely familiar about that man, though you have no idea where you might have seen the strange white tunic and cap before. Without giving it much thought you give chase, following the sounds of clinking into the forest to the east.

After a short while it becomes evident that you can't keep up: your elfen belts and accessories keep getting tangled on the twisted branches and roots of the Schleimwald foliage and you're way too fussy about stepping in mud. The clinking recedes into the distance, leaving you alone in the near-silent forest.

You can't be bothered backtracking to the elf village so you continue on, hoping to reach the end of your quest sooner rather than later. As you proceed you find a Bottle of Milk lying on the forest floor - could the fugitive have dropped this in his haste? Add the item to your Adventure Scroll.

You walk on for a while and soon enough you make your way clear of the forest, emerging on a patchy, half-paved road. Bilgeton, its walls looming large, lies just a few miles down the road to the south east.

Turn to 1732.

905

Probably a wise choice. Turn to 883.

906

If you've got a Skeleton Hand then turn to 518. Otherwise you point to the VB logo.

"Righto, tinny of VB it is", replies Bruce. The nobold reaches into the esky, pulls out a cannister with the corresponding colour scheme, rips off the top and hands it over. Sheila, sitting nearby, calls out , "Who opened their lunch?" and the rest of the nobolds cackle at this bizarre question as though it's the funniest joke they'd ever heard.

Bruce ignores the others. "Here ya go, mate. Get that inna ya", he says before downing the entire contents of his cannister in a single swig.

You look at the thin metal tin you hold in your hands. It's full of a flat, sour-smelling liquid the precise colour of piss with a vague, incongruous hint of sweetcorn.

VB - DIFFICULTY 10

If you manage to get it down then turn to 1275. Otherwise turn to 1042.

907

You guess what they say is true: you can't go home again, especially not immediately after leaving and if you're not willing to put any effort into it. Since there's no reason to hang around here any longer you resolve to get moving.

If you'd like to flee into the forest, weeping and crying at the horror of it all, turn to 785. If you're as calm and collected as you're pretending to be, you can head for the road out of here by turning to 643.

908

You cave in to the priest's pestering and get Redeemed. Brother Chlothar goes to the back room of the church and drags out a huge barrel of whiskey, which he places next to the altar and opens with a triangular prying tool.

"This is baptismal whiskey. I'm going to say a quick prayer and dunk you in it. You take a big gulp and I'm going to pull you out. Then you'll be Redeemed in the eyes of The K-NG and man and all your sins will be washed away. Not any curses though. You'll need to see someone higher up the holy beanpole than me about that, sorry".

True to his word Chlothar mumbles a quick prayer, "Our K-NG, fill this guy with the holy essence and receive him into the heredity of your church, that he may walk with us in the way of The K-NG, forsaking all other gods, deities and large rocks, and that he may grow in the knowledge of your boundless tolerance". He then grabs you by the back of your head and submerges your face in the cask. You take a huge gulp of whiskey - enough to get you pretty hammered. Lose 1 ÉLAN until the next time you get a chance to rest. Just as you're pretty sure you're about to pass out either from lack of air or too much booze the priest pulls your head out of the barrel.

"There you go, brother, welcome to the Kingdom of The K-NG. All your crimes have been forgiven and if anyone's looking for you the essence of The K-NG will be upon them: they'll have given up looking for you. I now charge you with a holy pilgrimage - you must journey to the Bilgeton Synod where you must notify Bishop Bedüdelt that I've met my Redemption quota for the season. In return I'll let you out of the tithe and you'll probably get something cool when you get to Bilgeton"

Chlothar's enthusiasm is infectious and you drunkenly slur your assent to this plan.

"Now go, bro! Time is of the essence! I can't take my holidays until the Synod has my KPIs!"

Giving the priest an unsteady thumbs up, you stumble out of the church and onto the street. Make a note that you've been Redeemed. If you want to lurch up the hill towards the end of the road then turn to 1236. If you'd prefer to stumble down the hill and leave town via the gates in the market square then turn to 338. If you've entered town through the side door and you have not yet been to the market square yet, you can instead slither down the hill to visit there by turning to 16.

909

The rusty old sword sails through the air and the hand reaches out to catch it neatly by the hilt. Gripping the weapon tightly the hand raises it slightly higher out of the water before plunging down and disappearing under the water without leaving som uch as a ripple. Remove Excalibur from your Adventure Scroll.

You're outraged at this scam - Excalibur might have been a rusty, dinged-up old relic, but it was yours (sort of), godsdamnit! Do you want to wade in to the water to get your rightfully-looted blade back? If so then turn to 633. If you don't care enough to get yourself wet then turn to 414.

910

As the skeleton approaches you hurl yourself to the ground and lie still. Although your acting isn't all that convincing, the skeleton has a selection of live elfs to hack away at. It ambles past, striding right over your body to get at one of the unfortunate beggars who's managed to get herself stuck in a nearby thicket.

Soon you find yourself alone in the clearing, aside from the elfs who were hacked down by the skeletal surprise attack. This might be an opportune moment to creep off - turn to 1424. Otherwise you decide to start looting the corpses while the skeletons are away - turn to 429.

911

The guard snorts. "You're out of uniform then, 'soldier', unless Bilgeford has updated its branding since Tedbald disappeared".

You try to explain the discrepancy between your outfit and what the constabulary of Bilgeford wears but it's no use. Your adventure ends with you hung above the city gates in a gibbet cage as a warning to all those who would try this crazy stunt themselves.

912

Deduct 1 Guilder from the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll as you drop one of the tiny gold coins on top of the altar. This is a colossal tithe, especially from one who looks as beat-up and bedraggled as you do after a day on the road - it's about a week's wages for a labourer in Bilgeton, or two weeks out here in the sticks.

Chlothar is suitably grateful for this ludicrous donation and asks his god to bless you on your journeys. The K-NG heeds his prayer! Restore 10 EFFORT immediately, and from now on during this adventure whenever you roll a 6 on any FIST dice you will regain 1 EFFORT. If you roll two sixes you will regain 2 EFFORT, and so on.

Feeling pretty good about yourself even if you've unwittingly spent a fortune, you skip out of the church and head up the hill to the end of the lane. Turn to 1236.

913

You're so afraid of possibly having to walk anywhere that you fail to make any case for yourself as a useful being. Instead, you degenerate into a sobbing wreck, tears and snot running down your face and soaking the hem of Hulagu's robes. Between wracking sobs you manage to articulate a pleading, moaning sound to the effect that you'll do anything.

Hulagu seems more intrigued than disgusted by this pathetic display and patiently waits for your tantrum to peter out before speaking again.

"I see you have no spine at all, and that's a profitable quality in a lackey. Very well. You will feed and water the rukhs", he says, gesturing at the birds, "clean their droppings off the carts and shine the men's shoes. In return we will employ you as far as Bilgeton."

Having nothing to bring to the table other than abject servility you dry your tears and clamber aboard the rear wagon. Just as you take your seat the driver cracks the reins and the caravan begins rolling along down the road to Bilgeton. Make a note that you're employed as a lackey and turn to 482.

914

Putting the horrors of the Glade of Pixies behind you, you stride purposefully along the pixie track heading due east. The land becomes firmer as you get further from the swamp and by mid-morning you've emerged from the forest altogether. You find yourself out under open skies at last - your night in the woods has become a pleasant, sunny day. Though you're exhausted from a whole day of adventuring, still strung out on potion and sore from all that walking, at least you've managed to survive your first day away from home. Kudos! Nonetheless, this is no time to celebrate - you have to keep moving otherwise you're liable to spend another night out here. After a very brief rest (restore 5 EFFORT, but don't remove the effects of booze or potions), you carry on.

Turn to 268.

915

The priest seems a bit disappointed with your choice but he takes it in his stride. When he sees you're not following he closes the hidden entrance behind him and locks it shut with a loud thud.

Not really wanting to encounter more humans you decide to return to the forest verge and follow it uphill around the outside of the town. After a while the going gets steeper and the walled town slips away out of sight in the foothills behind you. Another hour's slog later and you find yourself at the start of a winding mountain trail. at the very beginning of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains.

Turn to 521.

916

If you're riding a Noble Steed then turn to 118. If you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes then turn to 125. Otherwise, your stupid and/or stubborn mount just doesn't understand what you're demanding of it in your panicked state. No matter how much you kick, yell and beg the creature turns at far too leisurely a pace for these dangerous circumstances. The ballista fires again and this time is dead on target. Its spear-like projectile slams through both you and your steed and pins you together against a nearby tree like a disgusting roadside shish kebab. Your adventure ends here.

917

You point out that you're somehow already the holder of a Residency Scroll. The guard checks your details and then, looking a bit deflated, lets you out of the interview room. As you're leaving the guardhouse he asks sheepishly for a tip - a Guilder or even a groat would go a long way on a guardsman's salary.

You invite him to plough himself and step out into the busy streets of Bilgeton.

Turn to 1364.

918

You slither straight back up the garden path to what was your front door and give it a good hammering. You shortly see Jeff's horrible scrunched-up face scowling at you through the side light set next to the door frame.

"Piss off", sneers the bespectacled ruiner of all the hopes and dreams of your short life while you hammer away. But you won't give up at this second hurdle after giving up so quickly at the first.

LET ME IN!: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then turn to 1344.

If you do in fact fall at this second hurdle then turn to 907.

919

You remember, probably too late, the Goblin King's quest. You might not have been able to order him his codpiece, but you hold what might be the finest example of the men's accessory ever made in your hands. The light reflects off the countless jewels on the loin-girder and the grimacing face jutting out of the front is lovingly worked with consummate skill. Perhaps this would suffice... if you can bear to part with it.

To take the codpiece back to the Goblin King, turn to 531. If you can't bear to think of this priceless treasure adorning any crotch but your own then turn to 114.

920

Shoving the ornately embroidered flap to one side, you enter the Count's hunting tent.

You are momentarily taken aback by the sheer opulence of the place - the tent is by far the nicest structure you've ever been able to get inside - but your sense of wonder takes a distant second place to your cupidity and you start shoving whatever you can reach into your bag. You can take two items from this area if it's the first place you've visited in the camp or one if you've been anywhere else.

The items in plain sight that are particularly tempting are: Dapper Garb, Mighty Codpiece, Heirloom Sword, +3 Loaded Dice of "The Mark", the Signet Ring, a bottle of Eau De Bilge and a pouch containing 50 Bilgeton Guilders. You've got time to take two: record whatever you've stolen in the appropriate section of your Adventure Scroll.

Your plundering quickly comes to an end though - as you are filling your boots you see motion at the entrance to the tent. A guard, his nerve restored, is charging at you with a drawn sword:

🔪**COUNT'S GUARD: DIFFICULTY 11 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you do not win the fight within two rounds more guards arrive. You are quickly overpowered, apprehended, clapped in irons and loaded into a waiting prison cart. Turn to 227.

If you win quickly, you strike terror into the heart of the already badly-rattled guard. Throwing his weapon down, he slumps to his knees. You tell your thwarted opponent, "I, Jeff the Shittiest Elf of Elfsdale Downs, send my scant regards to your pitiful liege". You then hustle out of the tent and leap onto the back of a noble stallion, making an escape worthy of your growing legend.

Turn to 1187.

921

You defeat the hideous creature and, leaping out of the boat, drag its corpse ashore for some looting. As a naked semi-magical animal, the monstrosity isn't equipped with pockets which would contain handy loot: the only part of the manticore that might be of interest to you is the Manticore Tail. You can hack this off and take it with you should you wish.

As soon as you've finished picking over the beast and taken a rest you have a look around. In contrast to the tunnels you've been wandering through for gods know how long this night time scene is reasonably well-lit by the moon hanging high in the sky overhead. You're in some godforsaken wilderness - behind you to the south are the hills which rise up in the distance into mountains, and to the north is a long and open plain, dotted with scrub and not a lot else. In the very far distance you can see the snowy peaks of the huge Skytrap Mountains shining white under the glow of the moon.

Just up ahead you can see where the creek you were following branches off from a wide, fast-moving river which is descending from the hills behind you and winding away to the north.

Would you like to paddle upstream to join the main river? If so turn to 1169. If you'd rather head towards Bilgeton then you'll need to find some way overland - turn to 889.

922

Although you could barely hold a weapon a couple of days ago, you somehow manage to defend yourself against the finest swords-half-man in the entire kingdom of Palaver, if not the continent. As surprised to find himself losing as you are about winning, the half elf launches a desperate but devastating attack - running forward he steps into a pirouette and leaps, slicing his sword downwards in a great arc that would have cut you clean in two if the half elf didn't stumble right into his greasy companion and trip over, smacking his armoured head into the ground with all the force that would have gone into the attack. Knocked senseless, the half elf is at your dubious mercy!

You must now decide - if you wish to do the honourable thing and spare your defeated enemy, turn to 27. If you'd prefer to kick him while he's down, turn instead to 537.

923

You're well-practiced in furtive movements around the waistband area so when the giant comes in close you're able to quickly retrieve your shank from its hiding place and stab him several times in the vitals before he can even react. He staggers back, eyes wide in horror and shock as the crowd jeer at your poor sportsmanship. Just stay out of his range and this fight is yours!

🔪**FISTFACE: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 3 - TOUGHNESS 3**

The fighter is enfeebled by your treachery but he still hits like a train - each time you lose or draw a round you take an injury costing 1 ÉLAN. Each time you reduce his TOUGHNESS you may also reduce his DIFFICULTY and FISTS by 1 to reflect his ebbing strength.

If you defeat your opponent turn to 1242. If you still can't win then even in his weakened state the reigning champion of the county is more than a match for you, and he manages to knock your lights out long before he runs out of blood: turn to 852.

924

Have you already destroyed Aethelcruel? If so then this is a good time to mention it to the captain of the Merry Men: turn to 511.

Otherwise you agree to join and are welcomed to the band: heartily by Rouge-Gorge and significantly less so by the men. They seem somewhat disappointed that you, a newcomer, will reduce their share of the loot. But they soon cheer up and become far more friendly when, during the trudge back towards the witch's cottage, they figure out a plan for doing away with you.

They needn't have bothered, because your merry band of monster hunters has bitten off far more than it can chew with Aethelcruel. You're hardly within sight of the cottage before you're all struck with half a dozen plagues and hexes, a rain of poisonous frogs and a blast of black lightning that strikes Rouge-Gorge in the chest, bursting him like a blood balloon. You hardly have time to grab his humungous hat as it floats gently back to the ground before a second and third strike hits, blasting the men on either side of you. You run for your life and by some miracle manage to get away unexploded. The boils and scabs from the various plagues you've contracted itch something fierce, though.

Make a note that you've developed the Scabrous Plague. Deduct 10 maximum EFFORT due to the debilitating effects of the disease. If your current EFFORT is higher than the maximum you must lower it to reflect your weakened state. From now on you will regain 5 EFFORT less whenever you rest or sleep thanks to the plague. At least you have the Foppish Hat - add this to your Adventure Scroll- and haven't been blown to pieces by a terrifying witch.

Cursing and scratching at your boils and sloughing skin, you retrace your steps, finally reaching the road to Bilgeton around evening time.

Turn to 1445.

925

The wolf snaps, snarls and worries at you until you're reduced to a terrified, crying ball of tears huddled up against the side of the mountain. You're stuck in this humiliating position, too scared to move, until The Spectre recovers from his unexpected shovelling and comes over to get his dog off you.

Extremely grateful for the rescue you immediately surrender, babbling a torrent of implausible excuses for working the superhero over with your shovel. The Spectre responds by punching you extremely hard in the jaw with that ring of his. There's a flash of light as his fist connects with your cranium and then everything goes black. Turn to 137 if you haven't already resolved the effect of losing a round of combat to The Spectre at some point in the past and then turn to 1571.

926

After a strong start, the giant moth dimly realises it's beginning to lose and attempts to flee. The poor monster flies straight upwards in its desperation to get away from the beating you're giving it and winds up shredding its fragile wings on the tree branches. It falls and collapses heavily to the forest floor where you finish the monster off.

You can, if you wish, tear off a delicious moth leg to go - add the Leg of Moth to your Adventure Scroll if you want.

With this crepuscular challenge overcome you continue walking to the south. It's a long hike and night finds you still making your way through the woods, but no further misfortunes befall you. Eventually you break clear of the forest and onto the paved surface of the Count's Road.

Turn to 1715.

927

You somehow manage to make a decent showing for yourself. Hulagu strokes his chin as you inform him in strident terms that skill with weapons, experience, physical fitness, bravery, willpower, cunning and ability to follow basic instructions are not the only qualities to look for in a caravan guard, and that you have some other undefinable quality that would make you, if not any good, at least not completely unemployable.

Unfortunately for you, Hulagu hires caravan guards for a living and knows a goldbrick when he sees one. Amused, he waits until you're done bragging about yourself before laughing derisively at your attempt at self-promotion. He wipes a mirthful tear from his eye and whips the reigns hard. The giant birds start pulling and the wagons move off, forcing you to move aside or be run over. Turn to 799.

928

You demand a treasure. The eagle screeches its assent and, as soon as it's landed you at a safe distance from the trolls, comes good on its word.

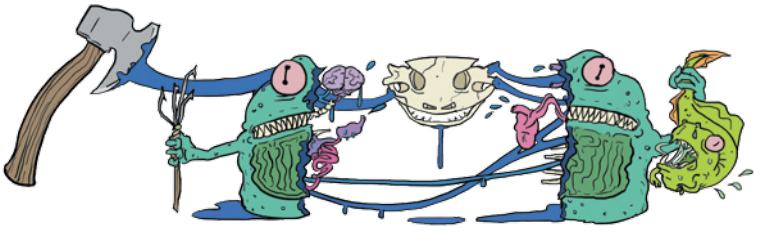
Reaching its great beak behind its back it wrenches out one of its tail feathers with which it proudly presents you, its eyes watering with pain. Add the Great Feather to your Adventure Scroll.

As you're waving the greatsword-sized feather around, trying to ascertain whether it has any magical properties, the eagle takes flight once more. Keening a thank you screech, it wings away to its nest, leaving you to climb delicately down from the crag atop which it placed you. Just about managing that without injurt, you continue on with your hike. Turn to 955.

929

As the fight against this tough gnome wears on you find yourself getting angrier and angrier. Getting picked on in an elfish village - it reminds you of home, but it's even more humiliating somehow. At least you had your ways of getting your petty revenge on Jeff, even if it was mostly just rubbing your genitals on his personal effects. Jeff... JEFF! Thinking about that homewrecker gets you even more angry and soon you're screaming obscenities as you lay into the gnome who is barely managing to protect his vitals from your furious assault.

After enduring a few minutes of your screaming and pummelling the gnome realises that he might have bitten off more than he can chew. Deciding that he doesn't like this place enough to die for it, he steps back and tries to flee. Your histrionic outburst has allowed you to let off some steam and you've cooled down a little: if you like you can let him go by turning to 1083. Otherwise it's time to finish this: turn to 1819.



930

As you leap off the donkey in anticipation of the barbecue that's about to take place, the useless scroll of dispel you've picked up flutters out of your pack. The donkey spots it instantly, realises what it is and starts reading it aloud in a very un-donkey-like manner. There's a bright flash of light and standing in front of you in place of the donkey is an impressively-moustached fellow in a grey robe and hat. He sneers at you for a second before quickly muttering something portentious. A wall of light springs up between him and the dragon, and just in time, too - the monster lets rip with a searing jet of blue flame which would probably have scorched the donkey to cinders but which instead splashes harmlessly off the wizard's barrier spell.

"Fly, you fool!" he snarls over his shoulder at you. "Because as soon as I'm done with the Blacksmith I'll be coming for you, you donkey-hitting bastard!"

The dragon screeches in rage as the wizard sprays it with a volley of magical missiles. He retaliates with another jet of flame which the wizard deflects with some effort, spraying you with embers. It's time to beat it! But before you go you remember to shout out the Goblin King's order. The dragon takes a second from its deadly battle to respond: "Yes, I have his measurements. It'll be ready next Tuesday". Scarcely has the dragon gotten these words out of its mouth before the wizard blasts it with a cone of cold, probably knocking a few hit points off and freezing one of its wings. Still, there's plenty of fight in the thing. This could go on all day.

With your obligations to the Goblin King met, there's no reason to stick around. Ignoring the wizard's suggestion and at great risk to yourself you quickly loot the cave. Take one of: treasures worth 20 Guilders, a Full Harness of Steel Plate, a Palavan Army Knife, or a bizarre Rubber Club.

Before you can loot the cave more thoroughly an errant magic missile explodes against a wall near your head, showering you with stone chips and red-hot coins. It's time to get the hells out! Leaving the two combatants locked in a battle to the death you run for it - out the exit and back outside.

Since you're at the edge of the game map there's no content written for the Skytrap Mountains to the north or the Dwarfen Kingdoms to the east. The only way you can think to head is south in the direction of Bilgeton so you set off that way : turn to 889.

931

Karol sighs. "Bierzesz za dużo za granit", he says in his inscrutable language before kicking a hole right through the wall in front of you. It's another wooden wall, even thinner than the last!

A little head pokes out of the wall next to the smashed stage prop.

"Allo! Y'coulda knocked y'know", it says. The head belongs to a furry little caterpillar creature of some kind. "Ah well", it continues, "Happens more often than you'd expect. Never mind - why don't you come inside and meet the missus?"

If you'd like to go inside, whatever it means by that then turn to 1215. If you're in a hurry or don't want to meet any missuses, you can politely refuse by turning to 1775.

932

The barrage from the forest intensifies as you continue to pick your way east, but you never quite make out what's attacking you. Luckily the range of their little arrows isn't all that far so you avoid getting hit by walking just a little further from the edge of the woods. The grassy ground is free of obstacles and slightly downhill so you make good time.

As the sun begins to sink low in the sky, suffusing everything with a warm orange glow, you notice the ground sloping back up as the mountains loom closer and closer. The edge of the forest twists to the northeast as if to lead you up into the foothills of the range. You're not sure this is the right way to go. You stop to think about your options.

Just as you're thinking of cutting through the forest to avoid heading up into a mountain range, you hear the tinkle of armour, the chattering of high-pitched voices and the rattling of toy cart wheels. Your assailants finally emerge from the forest - tiny figures pushing miniature crossbows on wheels, a formation of little armoured folk wielding lances and riding on adorable dormice and, flitting out from the top branches of the trees, a wing of wee men with javelins riding atop sparrows. They look like brownies, miserable two-inch-tall parasites that usually live in human towns with poor pest control departments. What are they doing out here in the middle of nowhere?

With alarming speed the sparrow riders start circling around you, the dormouse knights arrange themselves in a wedge with lances lowered and the artillery crews unlimber their wagons and load their pieces. The tiny figure at the head of the knights yells up at you, a barely audible squeaking sound completely muffled by his metal helm. Without further preamble the miniature horde attacks.

Did you part on good terms with Brenda a little earlier in the adventure? If so, turn to 1734. Otherwise treat this encounter as a Multiple Hassle:

🔪**DORMOUSE KNIGHTS: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**DARTILLERY WAGONS: DIFFICULTY 9**
🔪**SPARROW PELTASTS: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 2**

Until the Peltasts are overcome you fight with -1 ÉLAN thanks to their distracting tactics.

If you win, turn to 1766. If you can't beat these little freaks or don't want to try then turn to 334.

933

This incredible ring gives you the power to understand and command animals telepathically. Using its magic you learn that Satan the wolf is hungry: there's not a lot of prey out here and will o' the wisps aren't very filling. You point out that his owner is made of meat and is currently distracted by you. You offer to divvy him up - you get the possessions and the wolf gets the chow.

The Spectre isn't aware of this telepathic conversation but he swiftly discovers the results - Satan leaps onto his back and, snarling and snapping at his neck, bears him to the ground where the wolf proceeds to maul the screaming crimefighter. Shouting in pain he half-crawls, half-staggers down into the mists and out of sight, Satan snapping and worrying at him the whole way. That's the last anyone will ever see of The Spectre, a completely original Two-Fisted Fantasy character.

With the vigilante out of the way you could enter his skull cave to see if there's anything worth stealing in there by turning to 978. If you'd rather just move on then you put this strange mountain behind you. To continue out of the mountain range and into the shifting vapours of the relatively flat Mist Steppes, turn to 1812. If you'd rather get closer to Bilgeton rather than much further away then you can head through the mountain passes to the south-east by turning to 898.

934

It'd take a real belligerent oaf to lay the smack-down on a beggar for a perceived slight, and here you are!

🔪**BEGGARING BELIEF: DIFFICULTY 3 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 1**

If you fail to defeat the beggar in the first round he manages to get up and gains 4 DIFFICULTY and 1 TOUGHNESS.

If you win you kick his arse up and down the road until your foot gets tired and you let him crawl off. As he's a beggar he doesn't drop much loot but you can take his Stale Loaf if you wish before continuing on your way. Turn to 1019.

If you lose or give up turn to 1506.

935

You're pretty sure he's coming on to you. You respond in the negative. Radabastard gives you a completely blank look.

"Well, then, like, happy trails man", says the wizard by way of farewell.

With no further reason to hang around you decide to get on with your quest. Turn to 1623.

936

The guard smiles.

"Well done. We've been trying to get rid of Hardmod for years. Sir Tedbald had him on the list but never got around to it, K-NG bless his soul. I guess we don't need to fear his army of the undead any longer, and the roads should be free of feral ghouls at last. You've done Bilgeton a great service".

After dotting all the is and crossing the ts the guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink: you are now permitted to enter Bilgeton through the Trader's Gate in future adventures. You may now start each new game with this item in your inventory. With that done the guard escorts you out of the office and through to the other side of the gatehouse. You step through the exit and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

937

With the elfs out of the way the road is peaceful to the point of monotony. You manage to get a chance to rest and recuperate at least - restore up to 20 EFFORT. At mid-morning the next day the road passes through the last of the forest and you catch sight of the mighty walls of Bilgeton over the rolling plains, still half a day's drive distant.

Ahead of you the road splits, heading southeast over undulating plains dotted with farms and cattle. It winds gently to the huge main gates of Bilgeton, at least several hours' travel away yet still clearly visible due to their great size. To the northeast the road turns to follow alongside the forest, sloping down towards a ford over the wide Bilge River where a small human settlement squats over the water. You can see the smoke rising from chimneys and, more threateningly, the sun reflecting off steel in a couple of watch towers. An obelisk set beside the road indicates that the southeast road is to Bilgeton via the Noble Gate, and the northwest is also to the same place but via Bilgeford and the Trader's Gate. The skeletons seem to vastly prefer the idea of going via Bilgeford but perhaps you don't take your orders from a bunch of bone bags.

If you'd like to take the southeast path and head straight for Bilgeton through the Noble Gate turn to 1162. If heading through the Trader's Gate sounds more like the kind of place you'd be expected to go with a skeleton caravan then turn to 619.

938

You've never liked goblins (or at least what you've heard about them from when your mom used to read you your racist childhood fairy stories) but you do like the look of these adventurers. They seem really cool and awesome and you desperately want to impress them. The rogue in his hooded cloak is closest to you and currently fending off way more goblins that he can handle, so you decide to go to his aid and steel yourself for battle.

Seconds later you charge into the fray screeching a reedy war cry. A couple of the goblins towards the back of the fracas turn and give you a concerned look.

🔪**GOBLINS: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

As the fight drags on more goblins realise you're not going away and begin to turn on you as well - if you lose a round of combat the battle counts as a Multiple Hassle from then on.

If you win then turn to 1079. If you lose then you just can't break through the goblin lines - turn to 250.

939

The Endless Plain of Fortune has never been crossed by any Palavan who's made it back to tell the story (or sell the charts). With almost no equipment, supplies or common sense you're even less likely to make it than most. Your brave journey into the terra incognita off the edge of the map is likely to end in the same way as that of all the other explorers - nothing but rumours and presumably skeletonisation at the beaks of the carrion birds.

If you've got a Scrying Orb with at least one charge left then you can use it to find your way back to safety - turn to 1640. Otherwise you strike out into the Endless Plain. never to return. Your adventure may continue (though probably not, as stated above), but as far as the reader, Jeff and anyone else who may have met you are concerned, your story ends here.

940

Turning to face the oncoming farmers, you steel yourself to do battle with the human oppressor. The horse, noticing your back is turned and sensing your nervousness, decides to take advantage of your distraction by kicking you unbelievably hard in the buttocks. You stumble forward and fall to the ground outside the shed where you writhe in agony.

The old farmer and the lady aren't quite sure what to do with you. They're uncertain whether you'll live or die, so after a terse discussion about the cost of nursing a half elf back to health and the poor harvest they had last year they decide to do the only decent thing: haul you a couple of miles up the road and ditch you in a large bramble bush. The searing pain from the injury to your coccyx and the lacerations from the thorny bed you've been hurled into keep you up for quite a while, but eventually sleep claims you.

You wake up some time in the mid-morning and find you're able to move again, though not without some considerable discomfort. Lose 1 ÉLAN. At least the slumber has done you a little good - restore up to 10 EFFORT. You extricate yourself from the bush and waddle painfully away from the scene of your latest humiliation, setting out in the direction of Bilgeton.

Turn to 1446.

941

Rather than getting plastered, you decide to take a turn about the city. Bilgeton is almost inconceivably large - it would take you weeks to explore this place completely, and that's not including the time you'd need to spend at the apothecary getting patched up after the numerous stabbings you'd receive wandering the docks after dark. You focus your attention on the central market square which sits on the junction of the Drudgers', Noble and Merchant quarters. There's a good selection of stuff there ranging from worthless bootleg junk favoured by the city's poor to the worthless overpriced tat treasured by the city's well-to-do.

You pick your way through the market. Amid the bustle of the huge square - the press of bodies looking for bargains, the vendors' stalls and the ramshackle buildings selling food and wares around the perimeter of the market - you can see several structures that look to be a bit more permanent than the merchants' stalls. On the north side of the market, nearest to the Trader's Gate, you can see a row of shop buildings - the most interesting of which are the busy Reynfrid's Music Exchange and a particularly noisy Silvermane's Sundries franchise (some kind of pet store, judging by the incessant howling, screeching and baying coming from that direction). In the north-eastern corner of the market, hard up among the weatherboard "99 clippings", "Groat Converters" and begging supplies superstores you can see an incongruous brick building with a sign out front identifying it as the "Skeleton Workers Union" office - perhaps worth a visit if you have any business there. There's also a really cheap-looking brothel in that general area. Finally, and most impressively, the southern side of the market is dominated by the enormous Bilgeton Synod, the seat of worship for the religion of The K-NG throughout the entire county. Beyond that lie other impressive structures - the Count of Bilgeton's Court, the City Keep and, further away against the city walls, the imposing Bilgeton Guard Barracks, but it's outside the scope of this adventure to visit those so I apologise for mentioning them and getting your hopes up.

Anyway, your eyes boggle at these and many other sights. As a simple forest half elf you've never seen so many things in one place and it's left you a bit stunned. You make a conscious effort to firm up your slack jaw before deciding where you're going to begin.

If you'd like to take this last opportunity to buy and sell inventory items at the various market stalls then turn to 168. If you have business at Reynfrid's Music Exchange then turn to 1216. If you want to visit the Silvermane's Sundries then turn to 63. If you have some reason to visit the Skeleton Workers Union (assuming you haven't been there already) then turn to 1156. If you want to get your "needs" seen to you can visit the brothel, if you must - turn to 418. If your needs are more spiritual and less sleazy then you can check out the Synod by turning to 495.

942

You tell the bishop that you've been sent on a holy pilgrimage. Bedüdelt rolls his eyes.

"He's always...hic.... sending the new converts to run his errands. Is this about his blasted KPIs? I bet he wouldn't shut up about his vacation. Next time tell that fat fuck to deliver his own reports", he slurs.

Seeing that you look a bit crestfallen the bishop alters his tone.

"I suppose you deserve a reward for your faith. You thought you were braving the dangerous road to Bilgeton for The K-NG and not some lazy cleric". The bishop waves his hands around and mumbles some woo:

"Oh K-NG, shine your moderate generosity upon your loyal subject, this brother. I respectfully beg you to forgive him his crimes, cure him of his ills and/or release him from this season's produce quotas. Amen".

After a moment the bishop continues.

"The K-NG says you have to drink to seal the deal". He dips a huge gold ladle into a barrel of whisky he keeps behind the altar for this kind of occasion and, after taking a slurp himself, proffers it to you. You down it in one go! Lose 1 ÉLAN temporarily from the effects of this burning booze, but along with the burning you feel better somehow.

You have been permanently Blessed by The K-NG! Make a note of this on your Adventure Scroll in ink. From now on cursed items will no longer stick to you - you can equip or unequip any items at will or throw them away without consequence. You also find yourself cured of any curses, hexes, plagues or shambler bites with which you are currently afflicted - remove these from your Adventure Scroll. Finally, you may also restore 1 ÉLAN if you've lost any ÉLAN through injuries.

Feeling a lot better, you bid the bishop farewell and stagger drunkenly out of the Synod.

With that complete will you revisit the market - turn to 244 - or will you simply get on with whatever you came to Bilgeton to do? If so turn to 827.

943

Bidding the dragon a hasty farewell and ignoring the slightly hurt expression it adopts as you refuse its hospitality, you make for the cave exit.

"Please, stay... I'm so lonely...", calls the dragon after you in a tone of voice which sends chills up your spine and causes you to redouble your pace. You don't dare to look back until you're a safe distance from the Alp, and when you turn around you swear you can see the yellow eyes of the dragon staring at you from within the darkness of the cave.

Shuddering in a combination of horror and the chilly air of the frozen tundra, you get a wiggle on in the general direction of Bilgeton. Turn to 889.

944

Well, it beats The Sparrows.

Turn to 1747.

945

Hulagu seems all too willing to believe that you don't know what you're talking about. Nevertheless the map is valuable to him as it identifies towns and pitfalls previously unknown to his people.

"Very well", he says, rolling up the map and sliding it into a fold in his robes, "in exchange for your map we will take you as far as Bilgeton as a passenger. Please take a seat if the offer pleases you". He gestures to the rear wagon.

Since he already has the map you suppose you may as well take the ride! You walk back to the rear carriage, climb aboard and sit down inside. Shortly afterwards the driver cracks the reins and the wagon train is away!

Remove the Feewald Map from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 482.

946

"Phwoar! What a stench! This one's a real rotter!" shouts the guard. "But hang on", he continues, "This one's been dead for a fortnight, you say? He doesn't look that far gone. In fact, he's bloody breathing!"

You've been rumbled! You open your eyes to find the business end of a halberd pointed at your throat and a furious guard behind it, looming over you.

"You're nicked. Well, you wanted to come inside, so in you come".

While the undertaker starts counting out a bribe to the other gatehouse guards you're dragged out of the coffin and into the gatehouse where you're booked before being lead in through the guardroom. There you are strip searched and all your gear is confiscated. You watch it being secured in a wooden evidence chest at the back of the room (keep it on your Adventure Scroll for now, but none of it's available for you to use). Finally, you're given your Prisoner of the Count starter kit - a couple of filthy sackcloth tunics, a toothbrush with only one bristle left and a pot to piss in (don't bother adding these loathsome items to your Adventure Scroll). Now that you've been formally inducted into the Bilgeton prison system a couple of the surly prison guards march you down a narrow spiral staircase to your new home.

Turn to 49.

947

While there are myriad dangers on this road to Bilgeton, most of them aren't all that threatening to a noble hunting party with an armed guard so you avoid the various undead, elfen, human and other threats that line this road for less-protected travellers. Eventually you arrive at the great walls of Bilgeton. Since you're with the Count you proceed through the Noble Gate without incident. You soon find yourself within the mind-bogglingly busy environs of the capital!

The Count, politely ignoring your open-mouthed gawping, orders the driver to stop the carriage before addressing you.

"Perhaps you would like to retire to your abode and prepare for the Grand Ball. It will be at the Countess Amelie's Manse on the corner of Tent Avenue and Fort Lane - give those details to your manservant", he says. With this, one of the guards opens the door of the carriage so you can alight. Sensing that you're about to say something stupid about your lack of manservants or abodes, Amelie gives you a hard prod which causes you to stagger out of the carriage, artlessly and painfully tumbling into the filthy street.

The Count is gracious enough to stick around to ensure that you're not seriously hurt before ordering his carriage on. You are left alone within the walls of the great city, your adventure already nearing its final destination.

Turn to 1364.

948

You're groggy, but you're not so slow that you can't outrun a pair of armoured guards. In fact they don't even bother chasing you - you look like a vagrant, hardly the type to have either a price on your head or a decent bribe to hand. Not noticing the lack of pursuit, you flee headlong in utter panic. Very soon you've charged right out of the forest and into an open plain somewhere to the south of Brunnenfeld.

Turn to 268.

949

The crowd groans. The nobold looks frustrated.

"Pig's arse! Any of you mob a solicitor? Nah? Bloody hell."

He consults with the nobolds for a moment before turning back to you.

"Righto. We were all hoping you'd plead guilty since we've all got jobs to do and can't stand around yabbering all day, but I guess there's Buckley's you'd want to do it the easy way."

You shrug. The nobold becomes visibly angry.

"Mate, I'm ropable. Well since you won't fess up and we don't have all arvo I'm sentencing you to the Boot. And if I catch you before this court again I'll cut your nuts off". The nobold turns back to the crowd and shouts, "Give him the Boot!"

You're dragged up the side of the eponymous busted hill by half the town where you behold the terrible device which the nobolds call "the Boot". Standing at the very top of the hill is what looks like a terrible siege engine: a huge clockwork contraption featuring a long vertical wooden shaft with a massive, heavy-looking hobnailed boot on the top end, held in place with a metal pin attached to a long rope. You are hauled into position in front of the dreadful machine.

To loud cheers from the assembled crowd, a large nobold yanks the rope hard, whipping the pin out of the machine. With a groan the boot begins its descent, swinging down and around in a great arc and catching you hard in the buttocks. There's a godawful crack as your coccyx gives way and you're hurled with incredible force through the air, flying clear of the hole in the cavern ceiling and out into the night. Just as you think you'll continue to soar up into the stars above your ascent slows then reverses. You find yourself coming down hard: twigs and branches catch at you and tear at your skin and clothes, then a tree trunk fills your entire view for a moment. There's a sickening crunch and all goes black.

Turn to 68.

950

Karol Myśliwiec, the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole, has been of very little use in your adventure. He has so far been content to watch you blunder into dangerous situation after dangerous situation, preferring to stand back with his arms crossed and an expression of disappointment mixed with contempt on his face while you risk your life for the good of all.

Now, however, he seems motivated to help out. As the guard charges back into the tent to apprehend you, Karol unexpectedly bellows, "Kurwa no nie! Nie idę z powrotem do pierdolonym więzienia!" and barrels at the soldier, his fists swinging wildly. The guard is completely horrified, barely able to mount a defence against the enraged, elongated Polish professor. You decide to press your advantage the only way you know how: creeping up on a distracted adversary and hacking at them while they're not looking.

🔪**DISTRACTED GUARD : DIFFICULTY 8**

If you do not win the fight within two rounds, more guards arrive. You are quickly overpowered, apprehended, clapped in irons and loaded into a waiting prison cart. Turn to 227.

Assuming you defeat your outnumbered foe, Karol claps you on the shoulder and says, "Na razie. Spójrz na mnie w The Dribbling Wand w Bilgeton". Exiting the tent, he leaps onto the back of a nearby horse and races off into the woods, with several guards in hot pursuit. It seems he has bought you at least a few more minutes for looting before you too must get away. Remove the 10-foot Dungeoneering Pole from your Adventure Scroll.

You have time to pocket three items from the loot pile: Dapper Garb, Mighty Codpiece, Heirloom Sword, +3 Loaded Dice of "The Mark", the Signet Ring, a small bottle of Eau de Bilge and a pouch bulging with 50 Bilgeton Guilders. As you re-emerge from the tent you notice that your erstwhile companion has bought you some breathing space - most of the remaining guards are chasing after him.

If you'd like to follow his example and steal a horse for a quick getaway, turn to 79.
If, like your elfen half-brethren, you don't trust the critters, then you can walk: turn to 954.

951

After a long walk you arrive at a dead end. Swearing, you double back, heading south to the cavern where you took a break. Since there's no other way to go from here you then retrace your footsteps through the southeast tunnel. Return to 266 and pick some other way to go.

952

The walls have caught fire. The children have stopped yelling and started screeching as the roof above the cage caves in. You can barely see through the smoke and your lungs are burning from the heat of the air, which is now hot enough to cause the paper scrolls to combust, adding to the inferno. Lose 5 EFFORT.

A barrage of exploding potions, detonating in the heat, knocks you to the ground, where you crawl around trying to find stuff to steal. The following things come to hand - you can pick one (assuming you haven't already taken it):

Roast Leg of Person, Healthy Poultice, Bottle of Milk, 10 Bilgeton Guilders.

Perceiving that it's too late to save the kids, will you now crawl for the exit (turn to 83) or will you continue picking the place clean (turn to 410)?

953

Getting half of the wagons to Bilgeton would be an outstanding success rate for you, though you doubt Aggie's going to see it that way. Then again you never claimed to be much of a caravan guard. If anything, it's her fault for relying on you. She should be grateful for two.

Occupied with these thoughts, you yell at your remaining drivers to hurry up and follow you. Ignoring the panicked chittering of the skeletons in the other two wagons you lead the fortunate survivors down the road. The elfs move in for the kill but they're wary enough of you now not to try to chase you down. They'll have to be satisfied with half a caravan instead of the whole thing.

You now have 2 WAGONS and at most 2 GUARDS - make a note of this on your Adventure Scroll. Now turn to 382 to make your getaway!

954

You actually make it most of the way back across the clearing to the road before anything goes wrong, though when it goes wrong it goes seriously wrong. A crossbow bolt flies wildly through the air, thudding into a tree trunk about ten feet away from you. You turn around and see a trio of guards emerging from the woods on the other side of the clearing. Two of them are armed with halberds and are too far away and too slow to catch you, but the third is armed with a crossbow which he's already winching another bolt into. He'll only have time for one or two more shots before you get clean away. You make a break for it:

CROSSBOW GUARD: DIFFICULTY 10 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you succeed you successfully duck and dodge your way back to the road: turn to 1445.
If you give up or otherwise fail, roll a dice - on 1-3 turn to 1366. On 4-6 turn to 788.

955

The mountain passes heading towards Bilgeton are long and winding but it seems you've passed the high point of the range. You sleep when it gets dark, take breaks when you feel like it and generally make consistent, if slow, progress across the Big Rock Goblin Mountains. While there are still some ups there are more downs and the going is generally easier thanks to what you assume are smooth goblin roads hewed along the mountainsides. As you walk along you catch sight of a bunch of goblin mining sites - all shuttered, but the growing number of them is a sign that you're approaching the goblin city of Gobholme. Restore up to 10 EFFORT and remove any temporary effects of booze and potions on ÉLAN if you are suffering from intoxication.

You've been walking for a day, or maybe more, when some time in the morning you come to a fork in the road. The trail climbs to the south and falls to the north and east. A smaller trail branches to the west.

Suddenly you encounter a cyclops! The cyclops screams with fury! The cyclops swings his fist at Bastard's chest.

🔪**CYCLOPS: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you win turn to 99. If you can't defeat it you can try to run for it - turn to 1768 - or beg this one-eyed brute for mercy by turning to 392.

956

The teller puts up a little sign which says "Out for Lunch" and disappears. You wait for what feels like a week before she returns. Someone in the line behind you coughs violently.

Roll another die and lose that amount of EFFORT. If you're still alive then turn to 59 to keep waiting or turn to 827 to get out of here at long last.

957

The guards, grateful for a spot of target practice to break up a dull day of guarding the rarely-used gate, fire their crossbows. As promised, they don't miss. Your bolt-riddled corpse is knocked clean off your ship and into the foul rivers of the Bilge.

Your adventure ends here.

958

The law frowns on naked half elfs screaming heresies from a terrifying book of Unknowable Secrets, so your surrender isn't accepted as graciously as it could be. One of the guards clobbers you over the head with the stock of his crossbow, then you are swiftly clapped in irons and loaded into an iron-barred jail cart, ready for the short trip onwards to Bilgeton.

Turn to 227.

959

You plunge into the forest, hoping that your defeated foes will lead you to wherever they're keeping all their treasures. However, terror has given them wings and the tiny creeps give you the slip in the gathering gloom. You search for a while, walking in the direction that you last saw them heading, but you don't pick up their trail again. You're still wandering through the trackless forest when night sets in.

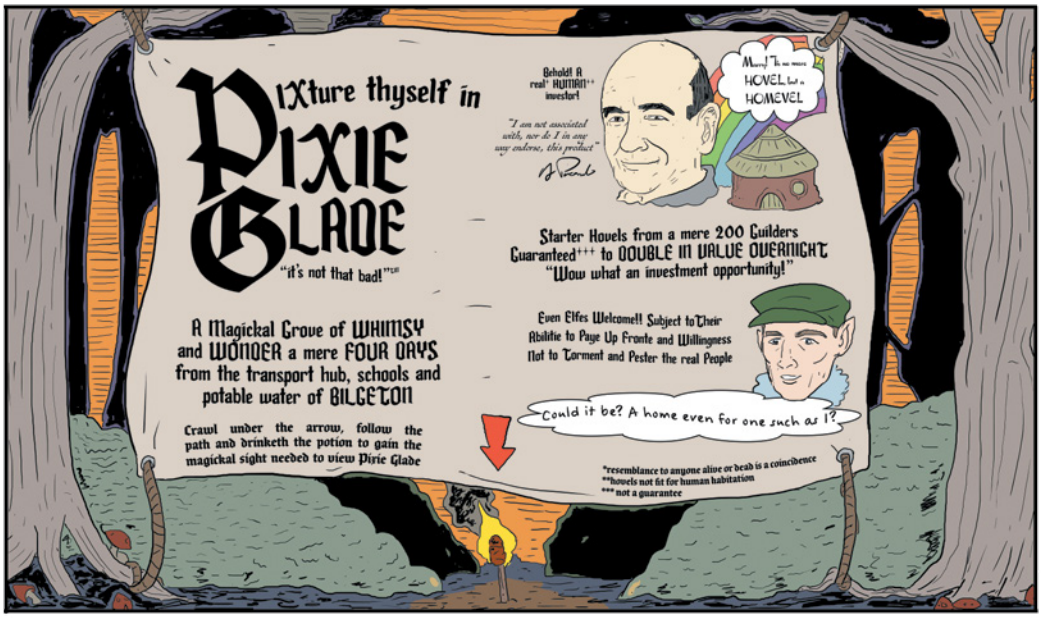
You begin to get seriously tired. If you'd like to find somewhere relatively safe to take a load off then turn to 1720. If you'd rather not spend the night out here then you press on: turn to 527.

960

You tell the priest to cram it and walk right out the doors at the front of the church while he's still dragging the baptismal whiskey out of the back room for your Redemption ceremony.

If you were expecting a final climactic showdown with Greenbones you're about to be sorely disappointed. The skeleton worker isn't waiting for you - he's on the other side of the churchyard cutting some grass away from an overgrown grave. You leave the church grounds without incident and carry on up the way. Turn to 1236.

961



Once you're sure that the humans aren't following you any more, you stop to catch your breath at last. You've barely left home and you've already gotten into a brawl, been shot at and had a good amount of your skin and clothing ripped up by branches and brambles. And now, it occurs to you, you're hopelessly lost in the deep woods.

You roam around for hours looking for some kind of way out, but all you see are trees which all look pretty much alike to you. As evening sets in you're about to give up all hope of not spending your first night in the woods when you spy an odd glow through the trees somewhere ahead of you. With nothing to lose you go take a look. Soon you're beholding a huge tapestry hung between a pair of stout branches, directing visitors to invest their money in a property in the nearby Glade of the Pixies (located conveniently adjacent to the Count's Road for the commuting forest sprite). The glow you've been following comes from a torch set in the ground under the tapestry, presumably set there to illuminate the advert and to mark the start of a thin trail scratched into the ground and winding through the forest. Even this promotional tapestry doesn't make it look like a great place but at least you might find some hospitality there, or at least some directions.

If you'd like to head for the Glade of the Pixies then turn to 520. If you'd rather take your chances out here in the woods then turn to 23. If you'd like to do something really petty then turn to 1404.

962

Theft is pretty rare in the fancy uphill section of Brunnenfeld, but it's not completely unknown. The proprietors of Silvermane's Sundries keep a huge two-handed war hammer behind the counter for just such an occurrence, and you've angered them beyond reason by trying to rob them, then ignoring them, then trashing the store and finally menacing their pet fox. As you're figuring out how to sidle past the little monster without getting bitten, Mr. Silvermane sneaks up behind you and brains you with the deadly weapon.

963

You crrep up to the northern gate and try to get out without whoever's in the guardhouse noticing you. Unfortunately you're up against Goodman Fettwanst, a member of the militia who's bought the license to operate the rarely-used northern gate. He uses this arrangement as an excuse to sit on his buttocks all day in the guardhouse, laying aside this peaceful state of affairs only to shake down anyone he spies trying to get out of town. You don't stand a chance of getting out unhassled. Fettwanst spots you coming through a crack in the wall of the guardhouse and before you reach the gate he waddles out, dragging a heavy iron mace with him. Though only the height of a normal man, he's nearly as wide as the guardhouse itself and you don't think you're going to get past him by force. The huge guard sizes you up with a gimlet eye and, with an expertise verging on the magical, assesses exactly how much you can afford to pay.

He speaks slowly, knowing he's got your full attention, "Well, trying to leave be ye? Well, that'll be..."

If you've got the Confessor's Shovel and have committed any crimes since you were last Redeemed then turn to 1733. Otherwise divide the number of Guilders you have by 2, rounding up to the nearest whole Guilder. If this comes to at least 1 Guilder and you can afford to part with the amount, turn to 1672.
If you don't have the needful and want to try to pay with elfen currency (assuming you have any) then turn to 1643.
If you can't (or won't) spare any of your currency and would like to fly into a berserk rage in an attempt to bash your way through this guard then turn to 416.
If you'd rather not cause a scene then you double back the way you came and leave town through the southern gate. Turn to 338.

If you've read through all this without making a kneejerk decision then you've displayed an ability to stay calm in the face of a massive annoyance. You may have an answer: if you have the Azari PCS With 4000-in-1 Games Cartridge then you think Fettwanst will enjoy it even more than you do. Turn to 1036 to offer this object as a bribe.

964

You've pushed your luck too far. The dragon, usually a reasonably good-tempered monster, is angered by your constant attempts to flick sharp objects into its eyes and decides to retaliate with a ranged attack of its own. Turning sharply it flicks its tree-trunk-sized tail about, hammering you across the chest with the force of a battering ram. You're dead long before you hit the ground.

965

You've impressed the priest with your timely display of sword ownership. He lowers his knife.

"I can see you've played knifey-knifey before!" says the padre. "Well mate, I'll be stuffed. I took you for a wuss but you've got the makings of a dinky-di, true blue nobold. I'll put a good word in for you with the mayor and get you squared away with a job and a sleepout. If you don't need to up sticks right away, that is".

It takes a while but you come to understand that the priest is offering to let you stay in Busted Hill on a more or less permanent basis. While spending the rest of your days in the middle of nowhere with a bunch of weird lizards wasn't something you were planning on, it probably beats dying outside. If you want to take the priest up on his offer then turn to 403. Otherwise you tell him to cram it with walnuts and stagger out of his church.

If you'd like to keep drinking then you can visit the tavern - turn to 458 - otherwise if you're in a hurry to get on you can try to find some way out of this town by turning to 591.

966

Trusting to your silver tongue and unflappable demeanour to blag your way through this impasse, you ignore the town guard's order and confidently stride forward. Another crossbow bolt whistles past your ear, and - true more to your character than to the plan - you emit an inarticulate squeal and throw yourself behind the nearest bush. As you quiver in fright amidst the shrubbery you hear the heavy footsteps of a group of armoured soldiers approaching.

Do you have a Manly Beard as well as at least two of the following items: Full Harness of Steel Plate, Noble Steed and the Knightly Shield? If so turn to 1261.

If you lack the beard, two of those items or anything asked for above, are you a noble of the realm, with a crest recorded on your Adventure Scroll? If so turn to 419.

If neither of these apply then your attempt to convince the guards of your right to be here has failed. Turn to 174.

967

Hurensohn's farm is a run-down old hovel set on a plot of heavily-churned dark earth next to the creek. You find the man- a burly peasant who you guess in his forties based on his lack of teeth and leathery, wrinkled skin - loading a heavy wagon cart with stacks of enormous mushrooms.

You approach and ask what the deal is here.

"Hurensohn's the name, lad. Just got through with the harvest, and as soon as I'm done loading up I'm selling my 'shrooms at the Bilgeton Market, same as I do every couple of months. What can I do you fer?"

You tell him you're going that way and ask about a ride.

"Well, you're not from round here, are you? Who sent you?"

How do you reply?

"Some merchant" - turn to 323
"The local barkeep" - turn to 152
"The militia" - turn to 1016
If no one sent you then turn to 1330.

968

"New challenger!", shouts the announcer, "The Jabbing Jabroni will fight the Brunnenfeld Brute for his title!"

You gulp. Not only are you facing off against a guy a head taller than you and twice as wide, you've picked up another terrible nickname. The Brute cracks his knuckles and puts up his unreasonably large dukes.

🔪**IGNATZ : DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you throw in the towel, turn to 1762.

Otherwise while wincing and cowering and trying not to get hit you accidentally manage to land your signature Jabroni Jab right on the tip of the Brunnenfeld Brute's nose, which explodes into a torrent of blood. Seizing the initiative you boot the boxer hard in the yarbles and follow through by picking up a barstool and smashing it over his head. The Brute slides to the ground for the count.

The announcer is stunned at your victory. "The Jabbing Jabroni wins by knockout!" he yells before collecting a lot of money in losing bets from his hapless audience. He hands you your cut - the princely sum of 5 Guilders (add these to the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll) and leaves you to retrieve your Brunnenfeld Championship Belt which you may also add to your Adventure Scroll.

Since the lady has left and your display of might has inspired the bartender to cower pitifully behind the bar there's nothing more to accomplish in The Goblin's Bugbear. Turn to 54.

969

The tunnel must have been an outlet - once you're clear of the pull of the exit the creek becomes a bit wider and a little harder to row against. Raised as a forest elf, you're not accustomed to being underground, being on the water or doing anything like hard work, but the thought of giving up and being washed back to Busted Hill is even more unbearable to you. Lose your choice of 5 EFFORT or 1 ÉLAN, reflecting the effects of the long and miserable underground voyage on your fragile psyche and puny, stick-thin arms.

Eventually, after a very long and increasingly difficult paddle, you hear an odd splashing noise coming from ahead. This noise is accompanied by another glow, this time far brighter and from above, illuminating a circle of water in the stream. Outlined in that light is the strangest thing you've ever seen - hundreds of hands protruding from the tunnel walls and up a shaft leading probably a hundred feet or more up to the surface! The hands are passing empty buckets down, lowering them into the stream and passing them back up from one hand to another.

The current is going to drag you right through the light, and these hands. If you stick right to the middle of the stream you don't think they'll be able to reach you as you pass by- turn to 724 to slip on past. If you think you can use these hands to get a lift out of here then turn to 1225.

Go!

970

Since you don't have a place, the best you can offer is the medieval equivalent of a motel - the cheapest room available at the Dribbling Wand down on the docks. Most women would be horrified at being invited to such a rat-infested sleazehole - mainly frequented by unsavoury adventurers about to set off on their pointless and generally illegal quests - and the Viscountess is no exception at all. Your suggestion goes down like a lead balloon and in a huff she slams the door to her coach in your face as you're trying to climb aboard.

As you watch the meal ticket of your life drive away you reflect that you'll need to find some place to crash. Disdaining to spend the night at the rotten waterfront dive you suggested you decide instead to go in search of your father and his couch.

Turn to 1793.

971

A couple of years from now there will be a wave of nostalgia for the hardy days of the frontier and all the lords and ladies of the realm will at least temporarily be dressed in your styles, but for now your odd decision to wear something so grotesque and foul-smelling to the Grand Ball is treated with the disgust it deserves. Whenever you approach anyone to ask them to dance they move to the other side of the room to avoid you. Granted, this is normal behaviour for women who have to deal with you, but you could have lived without the hurtful comments about your foul stench and the impolite observations about the gore trail your dripping cloak is leaving all over the dance floor. Needless to say, you do not score.

Turn to 13.

972

You pocket the item without incident and thoughtfully kick the barely-moving remnants of your skeletal adversary into the grave pit you've just dug up. Since you're feeling uncharacteristically generous, you even heap a couple of shovelfuls of dirt on top of the twitching bones.

You're sick of digging and fighting skeletons, which presumably is all this graveyard offers. Will you now try to enter the church (turn to 140), or do you want to vacate the premises before anything horrible befalls you? If so you continue up the lane, leaving this holy madness behind you. Turn to 1236.

973

At some point the wagon stops for the night. You're exhausted after a difficult first day away from home and you sleep right through. You're not much of an early riser either so you sleep right through the morning as well. Restore up to 20 EFFORT for the snooze.

The driver of your wagon is more of a morning person, though. As he's inspecting his wagon in preparation for setting out he hears your fitful snoring coming from the inside. You are rudely awoken by a furious driver prodding at you with his curved dagger as he hunches forward through the opening at the back of the carriage.

"OY!" he shouts, "THAT USELESS PALAVAN IS STILL HERE!"

Momentarily forgetting that you're inside a cramped space thanks to this unpleasant start to your day, you attempt to leap to your feet and manage to upend just about everything inside the packed carriage. Boxes of assorted junk topple all around you. As you flail helplessly in the mess you've just created a chest full of semi-valuable trinkets goes sailing out the back of the wagon, strikes the driver and knocks him back out of the exit. He lands flat on his back with a thud.

Never one to let a free getaway get away, you leap out after the chest and hit the ground running before the rest of the caravan (or at least what remains of it without the guards) can respond to the kerfuffle. As luck would have it you're hard by a wooded area and you soon ditch any potential pursuers among the trees.

The humans aren't all that keen to pursue you anyway, not least because they just ditched all their guards and don't want to leave their stuff unattended just to chase down some straggler who's overstayed his welcome. By the time you return to the road they've packed up the mess you've made and are long gone.

Well, time to get hiking you suppose. Turn to 1445.

974

As you finish there's a moment of complete silence. The audience has never heard anything like what you've just played, and neither has Seed Drille, the members of which have been staring at you slack jawed for the past few minutes. Finally the flautist breaks the silence by commencing a slow clap and the crowd takes over, roaring in applause loudly enough for rocks to shake themselves loose and cascade down the edges of the quarry. You have won the Battle of the Bards, and Queynte is now considered the finest band in Bilgeton! This of course comes with no cash prizes but plenty of exposure. Since you can't eat exposure you need to look for a way of turning your chops into pay.

Turn to 1061.

975

You tell the bartender that you'd like to have a piss. He gives you a weird look but eventually figures out what you're after.

"Righto. First one's on the house for you swagman types", he says.

The nobold reaches under the counter, retrieves a tin of something called "Westerned Draught" and opens it with a loud crack before pouring into into a chipped mug. He slides the foamy, foul-smelling brew across the bar to you. For reasons best known to yourself you pick it up and prepare to bring the booze up to your lips...

WESTERNED DRAUGHT: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1

If you've already tried and failed to drink one of these, it has DIFFICULTY 8 and FISTS 2.

Should you manage to keep the piss down turn to 373. If not, a spasm of disgust causes you to spit out a mouthful of the stuff, spraying the bar and bartender liberally. The bartender roars out a furious "strewth!" and the patrons laugh heartily as you storm out, humiliated yet again. Turn to 591.

976

Your crapulence and rage knowing no bounds, you feast on the corpse of the nearest pixie. Although you intend to eat the whole thing, it weighs about 30 pounds so you're forced to settle for its head and a shoulder.

You immediately begin to feel a bit... twisted. What you probably didn't know before you decided to chow down is that pixie meat is a strong hallucinogen due to their drinking water being runoff from a psychoactive mushroom farm somewhere upstream. You have effectively drunk a random potion - temporarily deduct 1 ÉLAN and roll on the Potion Effects table. If you survive, turn to 333.

977

The guard takes your money. Deduct it from your Adventure Scroll.

"And of course the crossbow winchage fee, can't forget that. 3 Guilders".

He just about managed to say that with a straight face.

If you've got 3 more Guilders then turn to 648. If you're not going to play this game any longer then turn to 327.

978

The place looks impressive from the outside but when you step inside it turns out that it's just a large cave with a simple pallet bed, a pewter bowl (labelled "SATAN") full of water and a bunch of hay in the corner which serves as the cave's latrine judging by the smell. There are a couple of shelves carved into the cave wall holding a small assortment of pots and pans and a little pouch full of trail mix, which you scarf down (restore 5 EFFORT). A fire burns in the middle, illuminating this pitiful scene. A lit torch in a brazier at the other end of the room is reaching the end of its useful life and is currently throwing out a lot more smoke than light, but there doesn't seem to be much at that side of the cave worth lighting up anyway.

A couple of narrow passages continue deeper into the cave with signs helpfully affixed above the entrances - to the left is the Major Treasure Room and to the right is the Minor Treasure Room. Given how this guy lives you don't hold out much hope for anything special in there, but who knows. Maybe he's a hoarder.

The tunnels are tight and dark - going in will necessitate relying on the feeble light of that dying torch. If you want to check out the Major Treasure Room then turn to 1224. If you'd prefer to check out the Minor Treasure Room then turn to 668. If you'd prefer not to bother with this unpromising cave at all then turn to 1738 to step outside.

979

This would be a good plan if the windows were the type that opened, but, alas, these ones are just bits of glass mounted in the wall. Your frantic attempts to force the jamb fail with the sound of shattering glass. Panicking, you leap out of the window. You miraculously avoid getting cut by the thick pieces of broken glass but you don't escape the witch's attention. As you flee across the field and away from the cottage she leans out the window and casts a horrible incantation of Witherdick at you!

You've survived - but at a terrible cost! The Witherdick Hex does what it says on the tin: your manhood, never the pride of Elfsdale Downs, has become even more shrivelled, and the pitiful size of the bulge in your tunic is likely to detract from any big impressions you were hoping to make in Bilgeton! Additionally, your confidence has taken a serious blow - from now on whenever you roll FIST dice you must re-roll any 6s. The second roll stands, even if it's a 6.

Feeling suitably cursed you run on, trying to put as much distance between you and this shameful incident as possible.

Turn to 1581.

980

The nobolds might be a bit thick and pretty drunk, but they eventually realise that the half elf drifter covered in lizard gore might have had something to do with the work team that never made it home after their last shift. You are arrested at spearpoint, given a summary trial and hung by the neck from the veranda of the Deadset Doovalacky. Maybe next time if you're going to wander around slaughtering trash mobs don't try to buddy up with them afterwards.

Your adventure ends here.

981

"No", you say. "It's somewhere else completely".

The merchant shrugs. Looks like he bought it, or doesn't care.

"Well, half elf warrior, what is your business with me? We are bound for Bilgeton with a rich cargo and I would rather not tarry on these bandit and elf-infested roads for a moment longer than necessary."

You've been raised to fear and be condescending towards humans in roughly equal measure but the possibility of avoiding a long trek has put that far to the back of your mind. If you can hitch with these guys you wouldn't have to put one foot in front of the other all the way to Bilgeton.

If you want to abandon your plans of going west in favour of an easy ride then turn to 1607. Otherwise you're set on wandering beyond the distant horizon in search of riches or whatever else you think you're going to find out there. If you want to ask for more information about the road ahead then turn to 1167.

982

At no point in the entire three-hour duration of the song can you get a note in edgeways, nor can you escape the certainty that you would be lynched by the audience for trying to wreck up Seed Drille's set. Finally, the verbose and very popular band wraps up its utter domination of the contest.

"Oh, ooooooh...AQUALUNG" finishes the flautist, blowing a final blast right in your face. Utterly gobsmacked by the intricate and layered yet accessibly folksy and unpretentious performance (and quite stiff from standing more or less motionless as the band dunked on you over and over again for several hours), there's nothing more for you to do but shuffle off the stage as Seed Drille immediately begins an encore, The New Horse-Houghing Husbandry's equally-lengthy sequel, "A supplement to the essay on horse-hoing husbandry. Containing explanations and additions both in theory and practice. Wherein all the objections against that husbandry, which are come to the author's knowledge are consider'd and answer'd. By Jethro Tull".

With your dreams of musical stardom shattered and lacking the patience for another multi-hour saga about heavy horses you decide to beat it. It's late and it's probably time to wrap up this quest by finding your father and that place to crash. Returning to the rickety staircase, you climb back out of the quarry.

Turn to 1793.

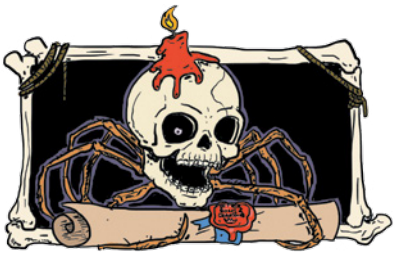
983

You knock down the taurcent and look around for the next victim of your martial prowess. There seem to be an awful lot of targets to pick from - aside from you, the rest of the guards are lying on the ground defeated, or in the process of surrendering to these horse monsters. You see the largest of the taurcents give an awkward thumbs up to Hulagu atop his wagon. The merchant whips the reins and your bird-drawn ride to Bilgeton starts rolling off down the road.

You've got other problems though. Somehow the last half-man standing on the battlefield, you're surrounded by steppe men-horses, a few of which are advancing on you with their spears, tridents and other stabbing implements at the ready. Before you can do anything you might instantly regret, one of them hurls a weighted net over you, pinning you to the ground.

Several of the taurcents tower over you. They neigh and flap their lips at one another, seemingly confused by your presence. You can see the other guards being tied to a single rope by their wrists and being led away towards the plains while these horsemen bicker over you.

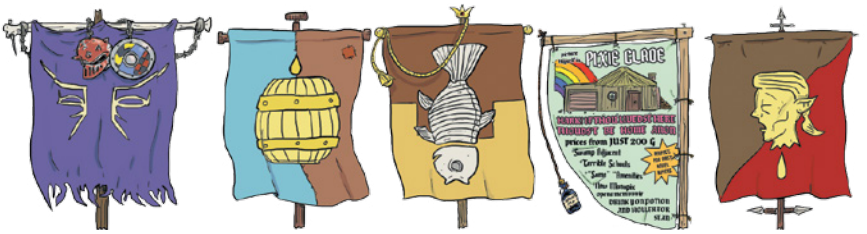
The net's made of sturdy rope and you're horribly outnumbered, but maybe if some deity intervenes you can fight your way out of this. Turn to 184 to attempt to rend the nets and kick the hells out of these taurcents. If you'd prefer to beg for mercy then turn to 1739.



984

You make your way cautiously down the path, listening out for the horse or the sound of Nilde calling out for you. Hearing nothing but the usual cacophony of night time woodland and miscellaneous medieval fantasy noises along with a troubling groaning sound coming from a little further up the track to your rear, you decide to just step out onto the road.

There's nothing there - no sign of Nilde, the horse or the cart. You briefly wonder if she's alive or dead before remembering that it's not your problem any more. Putting the cherished memories of your marriage behind you, you strike out alone down the road towards Bilgeton. Turn to 1802.



985

The nobolds might be little but when they're liquored up and in large numbers they can be quite dangerous. During the fight you slip and fall. This costs you the battle as you bash your head on the corner of a table on the way down.

Completely beaten, you can't do anything to resist as the nobolds drag you out of the tavern and into the thoroughfare where you receive a thrashing from most of the town's residents. Lose 1 ÉLAN from the injuries and shame of it all. As you drift in and out of consciousness the nobolds drag you along the ground and into the tunnels where, after a long trek, they hurl you into a huge puddle of slime and empty tinnies. Laughing, they turn back for the town, leaving you alone in the dark where you soon pass out.

Turn to 1417.

986

The Spectre responds to your surrender by punching you extremely hard in the jaw with that ring of his. There's a flash of light as his fist connects with your cranium and then everything goes black. Turn to 137 if you haven't already resolved the effect of losing a round of combat to The Spectre and when you're done with that, turn to 1571.

987

You both throw the sign of the rock. Kaspars sighs.

"Draw. Again."

If you want to throw rock again then turn to 200. If you want to throw scissors then turn to 590. If you'd like to throw paper then turn to 1807.

988

You're not popular around town for a bunch of reasons but one of them is that you're a huge boor. Within half an hour you've drunk a prodigious amount of aelfwine and belligerently picked three fights, individually hit on every single lady elf at the party one after the other, fallen through a table and thrown up in a pan flute. All this despite the fact that aelfwine has absolutely no effect on you at all. The party ruined, it disperses.

In their haste to get away from you the partygoers left the flute which you despoiled. You can take it with you as a souvenir: add the Pukey Pan Flute to your Adventure Scroll if you wish.

Your work here is complete. If you reckon you've killed enough time you can retrace your steps and try your luck at your place: turn to 918. Otherwise you could waste a more respectable amount of time by roaming around the old town a bit more: turn to 1284.

989

The hours drag by as you hew at the stone, but eventually the grey light of pre-dawn begins to light the horrid little town and you hear a whistle blast sharply behind you. Your fellow workers down tools and trudge off towards the inn, and you follow suit. As you do so, the scumbag pixie who's been exploiting you all evening inspects your work.

Did you gather 20 or more STONE? If so you're given the OK to stay at the inn - turn to 1748. Otherwise the pixie looks at you with undisguised contempt.

"I could have dug out more than this. You're a complete time waster, you know that? Serves me right for expecting anything out of an elf. Get the hells out of here before we give you another kicking, you bum."

Pixies like to get up early to commute to their wretched dead-end jobs, so the streets of the Glade are completely gridlocked with compact carts. The only uncongested road is a thin track winding through the trees to the east, so you head that way rather than risk another thrashing at the hands and feet of these minuscule bullies.

Turn to 914.

990

You're in no condition to climb anywhere, let alone face the rock trolls at the top. No, best to head on. You only hope the passages through the mountains become a little easier. Thankfully the Big Rock Goblin mesa is just past the high point of the range and the mountain passes do get a little easier to traverse from here on out.

If you were sent on a mission from Witold of Brunnenfeld you've failed it - make a note of this and turn to 955 to continue your adventure.

991

You finish crushing the tundra sprites. Being small fay folk they don't really have a lot of valuable stuff on them, but they were gambling with miniature gemstones and gold nuggets worth roughly 5 Guilders (add this to the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll). If you feel like it you can probably also collect up all their little drinks - it adds up to one Potion should you choose to take them. Their little fairy corpses have no market value so you smear them into the ice with the heel of your shoe once you're done plundering.

Having concluded this somewhat disgusting chapter of the adventure you press on.
Turn to 1803.

992

You wake just after dawn (restore 10 EFFORT). You've washed up on the southern shore of a small lake just outside the woods, feeling like you've had your head stomped on by hundreds of tiny little boots. Sleeping on what looks to be a tightly-packed dirt path hasn't been all that refreshing, and your stomach is giving you all kinds of hells after almost an entire day without stopping for a home-cooked meal.

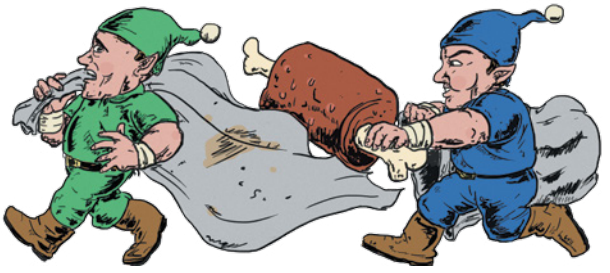
You don't have time to do much about your hunger pangs, but you can do something about your urgent need to take a leak. You wander over to the lake, drop trou and begin a satisfying tinkle. Suddenly the sound of heavy footsteps behind you and a hoarse shout put a stop to your morning micturition.

"Ahoy, vagrant! Stay where ye be! The Susswasser shores be the property of Sir Witold of Brunnenfeld, and ye be befouling them with yer flow!"

After decades of your mother bursting in on your indecent scrying orb viewing sessions you've become quite practiced in quickly pulling up your trousers when you're caught in the act. In one swift move you bend over, pull up your tights and spin to see the source of the yelling, a smarmy grin fixed on your face. It's a pair of human warriors, armed with halberds and bows and wearing metal helmets that gleam in the sun. Everything you've ever been told about humans leads you to believe they're bad news, especially if they're armed and have the drop on you. These two are heavily armed and they've literally caught you with your pants down!

If you want to make a break for it in whatever direction presents itself then you tear away through the forest to the south - turn to 948.

If you're ready to make a stand against these human oppressors then turn to 725. If you think you can talk your way out of this one then turn to 1535.

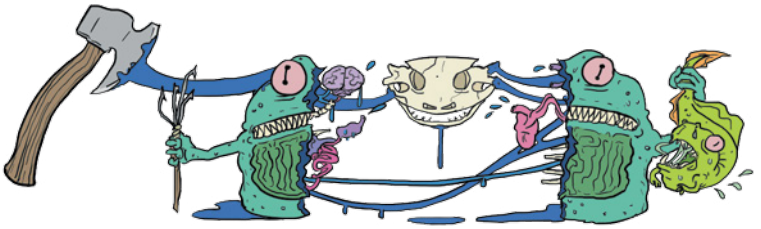


993

Emilie gestures around at the chaos surrounding both of you.

"Isn't it a bit weird for a customer to try to sell things to a store instead of buying stuff? Whatever! I'm a bit overwhelmed to take on any new stock. Maybe if you help me out I'll look at what you're selling?"

You sigh at this unwelcome barrier to trade. If you have the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes and are supposed to hand it over then turn to 1144. If you don't have it or would prefer to help out the old-fashioned way then turn to 361. If you can't be bothered you could just wait until she's occupied and raid the till by turning to 1385. Otherwise you can just leave her to it - turn to 1475.



994

Tonight the city is hosting a Grand Ball to celebrate the engagement of Count Hugues of Bilgeton and Countess Amelie de Fraude. Attendance at such an event would be a fantastic way to insinuate yourself into Bilgeton high society. You will cut a dashing figure as you make your debut among the lords and ladies of the realm before sweeping some lucky damsel off her feet and marrying into her wealthy family before she figures you out. The only problem is that you have no idea how to find the place - the society section of the map doesn't list the address, probably to keep the riff-raff away.

If you know where the ball is to be held then remove the final letter from the street names, read them aloud and multiply the results together. Turn to that paragraph number. If the page you turned to doesn't make sense or you have no idea where to look then turn instead to 1556.

995

A bit of do-it-yourself necromancy never hurt anyone, aside from the thousands of apprentice necromancers who've had their souls sucked clean out of their bodies thanks to messing with arcane forces that straddle the profane barrier between life and death. Luckily this isn't your fate as you cram the console into the golem's jaw where the rest of the skull should sit. Instead, as the system powers on, you find you've got yourself a skeletal monster that you can control with your Azari console joystick! Remove the Azari PCS With 4000-in-1 Games Cartridge from your Adventure Scroll and replace it with the Golem Entertainment System.

Pleased with your acquisition of a mindless companion you curl up and go back to sleep, rising the next morning feeling relatively refreshed for someone who's spent the night curled up on gravel and fighting for his life against undead monsters. Restore up to 15 EFFORT.

You brush the gravel off and strike off into the mountain passes, golem in tow. Turn to 521.

996

The Zwarte Piets are embarrassing even for you, a rusticated half elf, but the sight of a bunch of humans in blackface sends your dwarfen companions into a rage. Although dwarfs are usually highly cultured and vastly prefer using their words over their fists, once they get riled up there's no calming them down. Harman and Giselle each pull a book out from their inventories - the notorious Book of Grudges each adult dwarf carries at all times - and scribbles the band's name down on its pages with an ink and quill kept on their persons for this purpose. Pausing only to replace the books the duo rushes out onto the stage and assaults the band in the middle of its set, lambasting the minstrels with their fists, boots and anything else that comes to hand. As Giselle chases the last member of the troupe off, beating him wildly with his own crumhorn to the loud applause of the audience, you stride out onto the stage and belt out a tune.

Turn to 746.

997

You might not know this, but rooting around in graves is considered somewhat taboo in human circles. Someone must have ratted you out because while you're still scrabbling your way through the topsoil above some guy's corpse you hear the stomping of heavy boots and the rattling of armour. You look up to see a pair of militia men running towards you, probably intent on some combination of stomping your guts out, arresting you and maybe killing you. One of them yells, almost breathlessly as he charges uphill, "Stop in the name of the King!"

Just as you're scrambling to your feet and the militiamen are about to clobber you with their halberds, the church door bursts open and a fat, balding man wearing the loose-fitting brown cassock of a priest comes wobbling out.

"Stop! Stop! In the name The K-NG!" he shouts. The guards relent from murdering you for a minute while they parlay with the priest.

"Brother Chlothar, this vagrant be disturbing the resting places of the dead", says one of the guards, pointing his halberd in the direction of the miserable scratches you made on a few of the graves, "And there be witnesses, too". A small crowd of disgusted-looking locals are peering at you over the low church wall. You guess they've been there the whole time.

"He's my gardener. He's standing in for Greenbones while he takes a break. Isn't that right, bro?" says Chlothar, winking at you conspiratorially.

If that's right then turn to 1546. If that's wrong then turn to 1313.

998

You've got the upper hand but Brenda nimbly dives out of the way of your clumsy finishing blow and makes a break for the forest. She's much faster than you but in the unlikely event that you're more determined to find her than she is to get away you could pick up her trail, follow her to wherever she makes camp and get your revenge.

If you'd like to get after her then turn to 645. If you'd rather console yourself by looting the battlefield you give up the hunt and turn your attention to the dead brownies: turn to 1009.

999

You reach into your pouch and retrieve an elfish twig, which you ostentatiously flourish so that all may see your generosity before you place in in the beggar's hand. Far from being pleased, the beggar splutters in outrage.

"What the hell is this? I can't pay my rent with sticks!"

Such ingratitude! You demand your money back but the beggar throws it into the street where it's trampled underfoot by passing shoppers. Deduct 5 Elfen Leaves from your inventory.

If you're not going to take that from the one person you've ever met who you think might be lower than you on the totem pole then turn to 934. If you'd prefer to be the bigger man here despite being physically smaller and probably weaker than the beggar then you take a deep breath and walk away - turn to 1019.

1000

You sharpen up the toothbrush against the stone walls of the cell and, gripping the makeshift weapon behind your back, call for a guard. It takes a very long time of carrying on to get anyone to come, but after what seems like an eternity of hooting and hollering the door creaks open and a guard stands before you dressed in the kettle helm and padded armour that's all the rage among human military types in this part of the world.

"What the hell do you want, prisoner?" bellows the guard, angered at having to do anything at all other than sit on his arse in the cosy guard room. You think that in any other circumstance you'd have some kind of bond over this shared surly laziness, but right now it's stabbing time! You pull the shank out from behind your back and lunge at the jailer:

🔪**JAIL BREAK: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1**

If you succeed, turn to 833. If you fail to overcome the guard then turn to 1336.

1001

This is a test! Using every ounce of your thieving skills you stealthily smash the guard over the back of the head with a large rock. He crumples to the ground and you're able to retrieve his key and a cool Class Ring which you wrench off his finger (add this to your Adventure Scroll) - and not a moment too soon! You hear a shout from behind you - two more guards are approaching from down the path! You unlock the door to the Thieves' Guild and let yourself in!

You find yourself in a tiny, dark room which smells exactly like a sewer. As you close and latch the door shut your eyes begin to adjust to the darkness. In the tiny sliver of light which comes in through the door you see a hole in the floor, about as wide as a normal person. It's coated in a foul slime which glistens in the darkness. As you consider your options you hear a loud hammering at the door: the guards have arrived and are shouting for you to come out of the john.

It looks like it might be a tight squeeze but you may be able to get into that hole - if you can stand the smell, that is. Turn to 1610 to try this. Otherwise there's no way out - you'll have to surrender. Turn to 562.

1002

The rest of the trip is uneventful - the skeletons chatter pleasantly among themselves and you don't encounter any more stragglers or bandits or the like. Before too long the walls of Bilgeton hove into view. The city must be massive!

After a couple of hours of trundling along a road lined with farmers' huts and minuscule hamlets you finally approach the great Trader's Gate of Bilgeton. This is the main entrance to the city and is extremely busy as merchants from all over the realm have arrived to hawk their wares or pick up something to sell to the rubes back home. Guards check over the caravans and tick boxes on forms while the merchants mostly wait impatiently near their vehicles. You and your skeletons join the scrum of merchants and a finely-dressed guard captain comes over to converse with you while a couple of other guards check your caravan.

"Good day, sir. Captain Otto of the Bilgeton Guard at your service", he introduces himself in a clipped military tone, his impressive grey moustache twitching. "Another load of skeleton workers for Bilgeton? Very good. All their papers are in order, but yours... You don't seem to have any papers".

You begin to look flustered and try to explain that you need to get in to meet with the agent to collect your pay. The guard smiles unpleasantly.

"I'd be happy to escort those skeleton workers myself. Of course, you wouldn't get your bounty if I did that. On the other hand if you had a Residency Scroll..."

If you want to enquire about the scroll then turn to 1569. If you know enough about humans to know where this is going then turn to 362 to tell Otto to bugger off. If you somehow already have a Residency Scroll then the guard grudgingly gives up his grift and allows you to roll into the city unhindered: turn to 717.

1003

The Prince of Shards is lightning quick, but fortunately for you its foot blades are sunk to what would ordinarily be considered ankle depth. As furious as your departure makes it, it's not able to free itself quickly enough to prevent you turning and fleeing into the undergrowth. Still, you hear the tinkle of shattering glass behind you for what seems like hours as you race in horror through the woods, and it's only when the sound has completely gone that you allow yourself to catch your breath. You then realise that your back is wet and you realise that you have several neat slices across the back of your neck - at some point during the chase the demon must have been close enough to slash at you with its glassy hand! Lose 10 EFFORT from the wild chase. If you fled with the devil's coin it's worth the lordly sum of 5 Guilders - add this to the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll if applicable.

After catching your breath you find that you've gotten a bit lost, but after a couple of hours of stumbling around in the wilderness you find the edge of the forest. Still paranoid that you might somehow be being followed, you listen out for the sounds of tinkling glass. Eventually satisfied that you're no longer in immediate danger of being ripped to pieces by a demon, you skulk out of the tree line and emerge onto a wide open and brightly sunlit field. Now turn to 268.

1004

Your patented full-blown tantrums used to work wonders on your mom until that scumbag JEFF moved in: he was impervious to them probably because he's a flint-hearted monster who'd rather you headbutted yourself silly against a wall than give you whatever unimportant crap you were carrying on about. These guards seem to lean more towards being Jeff sorts than mom types - they watch with some amusement as you yell inarticulately and crawl around on the floor, dropping to your belly to hammer the ground with your fists ineffectually from time to time.

After a little while it gets old so they simply pick you up and roughly hurl you back into your cell. As they lock your door shut once again the blonde moustache guard turns to speak with his comrade,

"Gervas, run up to the manor and tell Sir Witold that this moron's turned out to be one of those elf beggars. He could be, I mean look at his ears and that stupid outfit. If that doesn't get him a few days in the stocks, tell the knight he was resisting arrest or something."

With that the guard called Gervas runs out the door, and with him your hopes of freedom.

Turn to 233.

1005

Bilgeton, the only large metropolis in the region, lies before you and you intend to make a lasting impression. Ignoring the Trader's Road leading to the authorised entrance you roll straight to the main gates, a passage reserved only for the nobility. Nothing much happens as you stride down the banner-lined road until you're in bow range of the city walls, at which point a crossbow bolt sails from somewhere high up above the gate. The projectile falls short, landing on the road several yards short of you, but that doesn't stop you jumping nearly two feet into the air and shrieking as if you had been hit. A guard hollers an ultimatum from atop the walls:

"Halt, varlet! This gate is out of bounds to your ilk and you are trespassing on the ground of those whose feet you are barely fit to be kicked by. Render yourself up for arrest at once or be cut down where you stand". You must decide how to proceed. If, despite the warnings, you want to rush the gates then turn to 1146. If you think it'd be safer to turn yourself in, turn to 174. Alternatively you might try to talk your way past the guards by turning to 966. If none of these options seem like a good idea you can turn tail and run by turning to 1296.

1006

Getting hit by drunk nobles is an occupational hazard in Bilgeton, especially for those employed in household security. The guard will sleep this one off and you can even dock his pay for napping on the job. The late Tedbald used to insist that he wouldn't hire skeleton workers for his Bilgeton abode because his profession of monster hunter wouldn't allow him to employ something that was technically a monster, but the real reason was because he enjoyed treating his staff like garbage and didn't want to have to deal with the surprisingly assertive Skeleton Workers Union every time he knocked out a scullery maid or plundered a groomsman's salary.

Anyhow you stride over the unconscious guard, being sure to swipe the book he was reading off the table. Add Star Bastards to your Adventure scroll. If you have the Signet Ring then turn to 1777. If you do not then turn to 789.

1007

You wander up the path for half an hour, during which time the weeds grow thicker and the smell of rotting flesh stronger. No one's come this way for at least a couple of years. You soon find out why when you find yourself approaching a couple of shamblers standing in the path, lit up in the baleful moonlight. These undead beasties are grotesque parodies of the living who exist only to devour flesh, spread their vile curse of undeath and critique consumerism. The shamblers, spotting a living humanoid, groan and shamble (of course) in your direction, arms outstretched before them as they advance. Treat this as a Multiple Hassle:

🔪**SHAMBLING SHAMBLER: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**GROANING SHAMBLER: DIFFICULTY 4 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Shamblers might be slow but they can easily back a panicking opponent into a corner - each time you lose a round against either of these two lose 1 ÉLAN for the remainder of this page.

If you win then you manage to bash your way through and continue on to the graveyard - turn to 412. If you lose then roll two dice and add them up- if the total's lower than your current ÉLAN (including losses from the fight) then turn to 1576. If it's equal or higher, turn to 1047.

1008

Fantasy books usually have at least something going on to fill in the time as the party slogs from one destination to another, but there's not a lot going on out here in the north-eastern expanses of Nonce, and even if you're accompanied by party members they're really more inventory items than friends you actually want to know anything about. Not to put too fine a point on it the walk is long, dull and exhausting.

You eventually stumble across a road which heads south and after an entire day's worth of hiking (slowed somewhat as you pass a murky and menacing wood where the flagstones on the road have all been ripped up) you eventually see before you the great walls of Bilgeton looming up on the horizon like an exhaustion-fuelled mirage. Finally the end is in sight! Cold, hungry, physically exhausted and bored, you stagger on towards the nearest gates of the huge town.

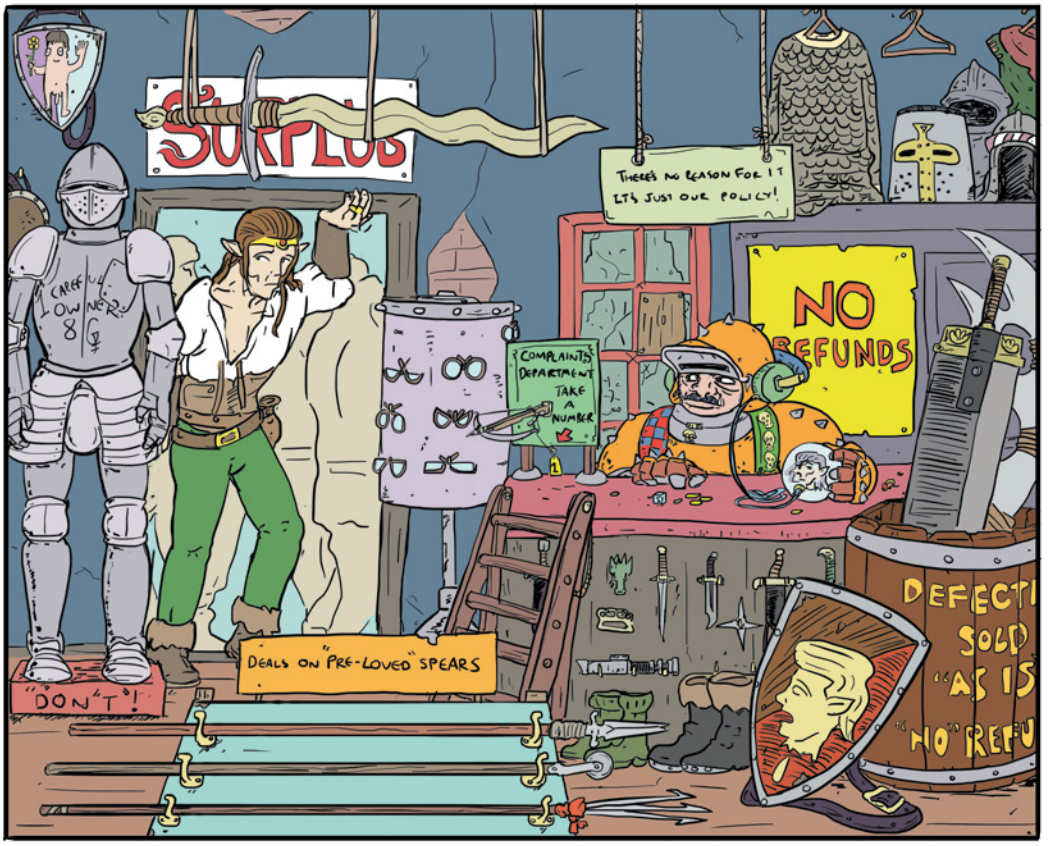
Turn to 681.

1009

You pick over the disgusting little corpses but don't find much worth stealing. The armour is mostly smushed up and not worth a damn to anyone but collectors, and no one wants bird parts or mouse bits. You don't want to leave empty-handed so in the end you disconsolately pick up a few discarded darts from the mushed-up artillery wagons. Add the Pub Darts to your Adventure Scroll.

Since the fleeing brownies are long gone and the sun's going down, there's nothing to gain from trying to hack through the forest. You continue following along the outskirts of the woods, now free to enjoy the evening stroll in the absence of those pesky brownie guerrillas. Turn to 214.

1010



You step in through the door to the weapon shop, ducking under the signboard swinging from the door frame which reads, "Militia Surplus". It's a dingy little store packed with piles of dented helms, scuffed armour, chipped halberds and re-sharpened swords in barrels. The town weaponsmith, a goblin bedecked in the usual full harness of spiked steel plate which passes for casual wear among his folk, turns to face you with a metallic grinding sound as you enter.

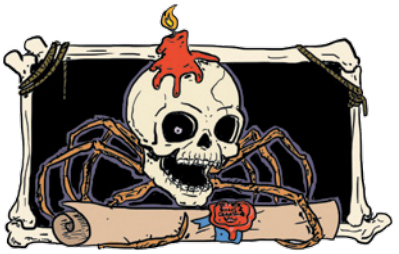
"What can I do you for?" he says.

If you're mostly in the market for a shield turn to 885. If you're mostly impressed by the huge two-handed sword suspended from the ceiling by ropes turn to 1722. If you're here to get fitted for some armour then turn to 39.

1011

You charge towards the final group of elfen raiders. Though they're rattled by your surprising string of victories, only a few flee before you - the rest either raise their weapons or nock arrows to their bows, ready to fight you off.

Suddenly the source of that ominous noise comes into the view as several green-clad elfs push it out from the trees along the road - they've somehow gotten their mitts on a ballista, a kind of giant crossbow which the humans use as a siege engine for knocking over towers and gates and the like. Before you can figure out how the hells they managed to filch that there's an almighty twang and the huge weapon releases a bolt the size of a small tree trunk with deadly accuracy and unbelievable force. Both you and your steed are skewered together like a shish kebab and launched clean across the road where the bolt pins you both half way up an oak tree. Your adventure ends here.



1012

The Boots of Elfish Stomping work extremely well from the back of a rampaging steed. The strangely well-disciplined raiders hold firm as you approach but their resolve wavers and then breaks as you kick the first elf you encounter right in the head with the magical boots. The anti-elf, sorcery-reinforced steel toe channels the all the force of a magic missile directly into the unlucky elf's face, causing the entire upper half of the raider to detonate in a shower of blood and innards. Unsurprisingly very few of the elfs want to fight you after that and they abandon the hard-pressed wagon. Turn to 309.

1013

You're murderously uncool but you really want the lift. You're also very susceptible to peer pressure, even if that peer is a revolting human dirt farmer. You take the slice of mushroom and gobble it down. It tastes a bit strange and makes your throat tingle, but otherwise there's no effect. Hurensohn eats a slice as well, whether out of solidarity or a perverse taste for the stuff.

Hurensohn grins. "You'd better help me load up and get up on that wagon. We've got about three quarters of an hour to get out of here before everything goes to hell."

Instead of helping you just hang around chatting and kicking the wheels while Hurensohn does nearly all the work, but he's as good at loading wagons as you are useless so it doesn't take long. You're soon seated on the front board of the dray next to the farmer. He whips the reins and the pair of dun workhorses pull the wagon away from the farm and down the dirt road to the south.

Turn to 713.

1014

With reflexes honed by years of fleeing Jeff's wrath after destroying or stealing his possessions, you don't even flinch when the monster roars and lunges towards you. Instead, you continue running without pause, reaching the other side of the bridge moments before the Malrog rips the ropes clear on his side of the abyss with a swipe of a gigantic flaming fist. Safely separated from the beast by a now-impassable gap you take the time to mock the colossal creature, remarking on its smell, misshapen appearance and its apparent lack of friends. It's only when the Malrog, driven to insanity by its fury, starts ripping off red-hot chunks of itself and hurling them towards you with frightening accuracy that you decide to depart. Putting this chamber and its terrifying denizen behind you, you continue deeper into the mines.

Turn to 1347.

1015

Fistface bellows in rage as you keep dancing, staying well out of range of his attacks and refusing to throw any punches of your own! The crowd boos as it grows frustrated with your antics.

You're not all that fit and are starting to slow down a little. And maybe even feel a little sick.

Did you eat an eye earlier today? If so then turn to 1519. If not then all you can do is either keep running (turn to 1032) or finally close in for the fight: turn to 1157.

1016

You hear Hurensohn hiss through gritted teeth. You feel like you've failed a test somehow.

"I don't ride with narcs", he says through gritted teeth. "Get the hell off my property".

Nothing you say convinces him that your intentions are any good and he's starting to show signs of impatience with your miserable whining. You really need that ride though, otherwise you might have to walk to Bilgeton!

If you're prepared to take what you need by force then turn to 388. Otherwise there's nothing to do but move on: turn to 268.

1017

Despite being partially submerged in almost-freezing water, you manage to slay the tentacle beast. It floats to the surface and lays upside down, a disgusting eyeless mass of suction-cup covered limbs. If you're not too squeamish you can hack off a Large Calamari and the horrible monster's Ink Pouch as trophies.

With your looting complete you wade back ashore, freezing cold and soaked to your skin but glad not to be a meal for a hideous lake monster. Hopefully you'll dry up as you walk.

Turn to 1632.

1018

The guards groan loudly as you settle in for another hand. You briefly worry you might have made a mistake - surely the Count's been leading you on. After a couple of strange wagers and dropped cards, it becomes clear that he isn't playing any better than before, so you guess his long con was just incompetence. He drops his entire hand just before the final round of betting, revealing that he has absolutely nothing.

HIGHEST STAKES - DIFFICULTY 4 - FISTS 1

Each time you lose a round the DIFFICULTY increases by 1.

If you win then turn to 1647. If you lose or throw the game turn to 368.

1019

You're reaching the end of the road. The lord's manor, a tasteless stone mansion behind a tall white wall, dominates the view ahead of you. Just as you're about to turn onto the road that runs alongside this eyesore you hear a yip. You turn to see a small fox sitting in front of a charming green storefront - some shop called Silvermane's Sundries. There's something untrustworthy about the fox - it doesn't seem unfriendly but there's just something a little too intelligent in its gaze and the way it's just patiently sitting there, wagging its fluffy tail whenever you look at the store entrance and stopping whenever you look away.

If you'd like to do what this fox is painfully obviously demanding of you then turn to 1259. If you'd like to ignore this vulpine envoy and carry on then turn to 1236.

1020

You ask if the vendor's heading to Bilgeton any time soon.

"Look, I'm going to tell you the same thing I tell all of you adventuring weirdos. We're traders, not couriers. If we've got any spare room on our carts we use it to haul stuff we can sell, not itinerant vagrants who won't pay us. Anyway, it's market day so no one's leaving for a while."

Noticing your disappointment he thinks for a second.

"You know, Hurensohn's just completed a harvest and he usually takes passengers in exchange for their company on the road to Bilgeton. He runs the mushroom farm just south of town. Can't miss him, just head out the gates and follow your nose to all the dung and rotting fungus".

You thank the merchant and head out of town through the gates. The farm is clearly visible only half a mile away near a wide dirt path that leads away from Brunnenfeld. You arrive there easily, only getting a little bit wet fording the brook that crosses over the track.

Turn to 967.

1021

The guard sneers.

"You can't pull one over on Amaliric. I've seen the kind of cheap elf junk ye be hauling about. If ye be a diplomat or roisterer I'm a manticore. Get out of here or I'll chuck you back behind bars for being a creep".

His colleague cracks his knuckles and grins menacingly.

If, on second thought, this seems like a fair and equitable arrangement, you grab your stuff and head out of the hoosegow into the main square of Brunnenfeld - turn to 16. If you intend to dig your feet in on this issue then turn to 1004.

1022

The trail has lain unused for at least as long as the mine has been abandoned. It's completely choked with weeds and riddled with dangerous fissures. After such a nasty fall it's very slow going indeed, but at least it's allowed you to avoid whatever unpleasantness was waiting for you under the earth. Instead you begin to hear a different kind of unpleasantness - a booming noise rolling through the mountains, echoing among the peaks and valleys. Your path seems to be leading towards the source of this sound, but there's no way you're going back down after all the effort it took to get up here. You press on.

Turn to 190.

1023

Scaling the walls of the knight's manor in broad daylight is one of those horrible ideas that people sometimes have but rarely put into practice. You scrabble atop the wall, but before you can get a good look around you hear a twang and immediately feel a crossbow bolt part your hair right down the middle. The projectile lands with a resounding thud in a house wall behind you. Before you even know it you find yourself back on the ground, cured of all notion of getting over that wall.

You're probably not welcome in that manor anymore, even if you were before. Having seen and/or ruined everything Brunnenfeld has to offer there's very little reason to stick around. If you'd like to proceed down the road and leave by the northern gate then turn to 963. If you'd prefer to backtrack through town and leave via the southern gates then turn to 338.

1024

You head north for what seems like a very long time. In truth it's hard to tell how far you've gone because the air becomes choked with mist and you soon can no longer see the forest behind you no matter how hard you squint through the fog. Even the sun's light becomes obscured, replaced with a gentle diffused glow which gets dimmer and dimmer as the sun (presumably) sets.

Just as you're mentally preparing yourself to spend your first night away from home out in the plains you luck out and stumble into a ruins - a cluster of ancient stone houses, obviously unoccupied for years, if not decades. Though you have difficulty getting a clear view of the wreckage in the mist it seems that at least a few of the houses still have intact roofs and relatively solid doors, even if the tough steppe grass is growing through the floorboards of most of the places. Weirdly it appears that the grass has been trampled and the dust on the floor has been disturbed recently, as if someone was walking through there, but despite this there are no other signs of habitation at all.

If you want to stay in one of the houses then turn to 778. If this is all too creepy you can take your chances out on the open plain -turn to 1493.

1025

You've had an awful night which came hot on the heels of an awful day and this rudeness is the final straw. Tears running down your cheeks, you boot the pixie hard into a nearby house, smashing him through the front facade of the building hard enough to cause it to topple and partially block the cramped lane with rubble. Regrettably the pre-dawn is when most pixies get up to begin their commutes to whatever wretched mischief they have planned for the day and the resultant traffic jam as carts are forced to back up due to your actions drives them into a towering rage. Dozens of pixies leap from their tiny little carts and others rush out of their houses to deal with the source of their frustrations:

🔪**FURIOUS PIXIES : DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**
🔪**ANGRY PIXIES : DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**
Treat this as a Multiple Hassle.

If you defeat the pixies turn to 1305. If you're overwhelmed then turn to 1416.

1026

You say sorry to the man. He responds by looking you right in the eye and slowly pouring his drink all over your boots.

You're not going to take this lying down! Turn to 154.

If you've managed to restrain yourself this far then you succeed in keeping your cool. He laughs at you and goes to find someone with a spine to murder. You're glad to have gotten out of that unscathed but the close call has put you off this place. Time to settle up and get out of here.

Turn to 502.

1027

"It's a long way", squawks the eagle. "How about a nice gift instead?"

Seeing that he's failed to change your mind the bird sighs, a weird keening sound when it comes from a large bird of prey.

"Fine. Bilgeton. But I'll need to rest up first. We'll leave first thing in the morning".

You spend the night nestled up against the feathery giant eagle - a surprisingly comfortable place to sleep! Restore 20 EFFORT. The next morning the eagle is ready to go. You go to climb on its back but the huge bird notices your intention and shakes its beaked head.

"My wings are back there. You know, the things I use to fly? I'll have to carry you. Lucky I've been working on my guns lately" he says, flexing a leg. He does look pretty swole for an eagle and you tell him so. His cruelly curved beak cracks open in an eagly smile at this compliment.

With this the eagle flaps his wings and soars into the sky overhead. As you watch the enormous creature wheels around and swoops at you, seizing your arms with an iron grip and hauling you into the air. You scream in terror but the bird eventually calms you down, pointing out that the noise and your struggling makes it harder for him not to drop you. Thus pacified, you soar directly towards Bilgeton!

Turn to 1398.

1028

You start hooting and hollering but your base jackassery fails to cause the expected chaos. The skeleton guards are far too professional to leave their posts to come beat you and the nobles and wealthy merchants in the queue are Bilgeton residents so have seen almost every kind of foolishness known to man. Your crude insults and your leaping and cavorting draw nothing but cold stares and some gentle tutting. You're going to have to step this up a notch if you really want to create a scene.

If you have any Pixie Bits on you then you could find a use for them here - turn to 551. Otherwise you could always try to shock these tightly-wound human prudes the old-fashioned way - turn to 1206.

1029

The padre laughs and calls you "chickenshit" as you flee the church crying and screaming. Luckily he doesn't pursue you out of the church where you continue your weeping in the street, much to the annoyance of the few nobold passers-by taking the air in the little town.

You hate this place and its irritating inhabitants too much to stick around, but if you can pull yourself together for a minute you can dust yourself off and begin looking for a way out of here. Turn to 591. If you'd prefer to continue having a pathetic tantrum out in the thoroughfare then turn to 1145.

1030

You're tired and cranky beyond reason and the last thing you want to do is stare at a bunch of stupid reptiles that just won't let you sleep! Practically insane from sleep deprivation you launch yourself into the revellers, swinging whatever weapon comes to hand. Not expecting this kind of brutality during a regular post-work drinks session, most of the nobolds flee back out into the cavern, but a few local toughs stand and fight:

🔪**NOBOLD DRUNKS: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

Once their TOUGHNESS is reduced to 1 they lose 1 FIST as well to reflect the number of nobolds you've knocked on their arses.

If you win you can either get the hells out of town before the nobolds recover and try to get revenge for their fallen friends - turn to 591 - or, if you're not satisfied with this limited rampage, you can leave the tavern and really step it up a notch by turning to 1450.

If, on the other hand, you can't overcome these boozy lizards then turn to 985.

1031

This seemingly-sensible option is not without its dangers, not least because just a hour's walk downstream the river enters an extension of that dark forest you saw earlier. Soon the river banks rise and become more treacherous and the twisted and gnarled trees grow denser and denser, their roots protruding from the surface and interlocking with one another. As the trees drink deep from the filthy water of the Bilge they grow slimier and stranger, and holding onto them as you attempt to follow the treacherous riverbank becomes a far harder prospect. The toxic fumes of the river begin to make your head spin and your eyes water and, unable to see where you're going, you step on a root which turns out to be a Bilge serpent! The beast hisses and slithers away, but not before you recoil in shock! It's going to take everything you've got to avoid falling into the drink:

KEEPING DRY: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you succeed then turn to 431. If you fail or can't muster the effort just to stay in some snake-filled slime forest then turn to 1551.

1032

You keep dancing, but you're quickly running out of steam. Lose 5 EFFORT. The ogre keeps at you, taking quick punches at you whenever there's even a chance they could connect. You're pretty sure that any one of these love taps would knock you out.

If you've had enough you could take a dive - turn to 1334. Or you could close in for the fight - turn to 1157. If you just got to keep moving then turn to 1263.

1033

With some difficulty, you manage to to restrain yourself from hitting the wizard in the face. Instead you instruct him to go jump in the Bilge before storming out of the joint. You'll take your valuable custom elsewhere.

Turn to 827.

1034

You accept the offer. You guess you can always blow them off if you don't want to go through with whatever they want, but a free ride does sound appealing.

One of the eagles, who's been standing suspiciously close to the side of the nest with its back to you the whole time, finishes whatever it's doing and turns around. It flicks you a brown leather flask which lands at your feet with a wet squelch. You pick it up - the foul-smelling little bag is stopped with a little cork and feels unpleasantly warm in your hand. Add the Suspicious Canteen to your Adventure Scroll.

"If you can get that into their drink", says the first eagle, barely suppressing a laugh, "you'll have the eternal gratitude of the great eagles of the Eagle Rocks. Now go! We'll be watching!"

You ask them to give you a lift to the rock troll village but they don't even offer to fly you down from the nest. Cursing, you climb all the way back down the spire and continue onwards, the sound of the eagles' screeching laughter ringing in your ears.

Turn to 190.

1035

Bhad seems relieved that you're not ditching it. As soon as you're dressed it asks you to accompany it outside and get up on his back. Taking advantage of this rare privilege, you clamber up onto the fat dragon's back and with a flap of its mighty black wings it lifts you both into the crisp morning air of the Mist Steppes.

After an interminably long flight during which Bhad won't shut the hells up about its feelings for even a moment, you finally see Bilgeton on the horizon. This huge human town - capital of Nonce and rumoured to be one of the largest cities in all the human kingdoms - dominates the land around it for miles. Behind its tall stone walls you can see the spires of awesome towers, the great steeple of the Synod and more rooftops than you can count. It makes Elfsdale Downs look like a pokey little dump.

Bhad coughs angrily.

"Please answer me when I talk to you! I'm pouring out my heart here and all you can do is say, 'ahuh', and 'yep'. I sometimes think you aren't listening to me at all", it whines.

If you'd like to blow Bhad off then turn to 903. If you want to apologise to the dragon and listen to all its stories then turn to 584.

1036

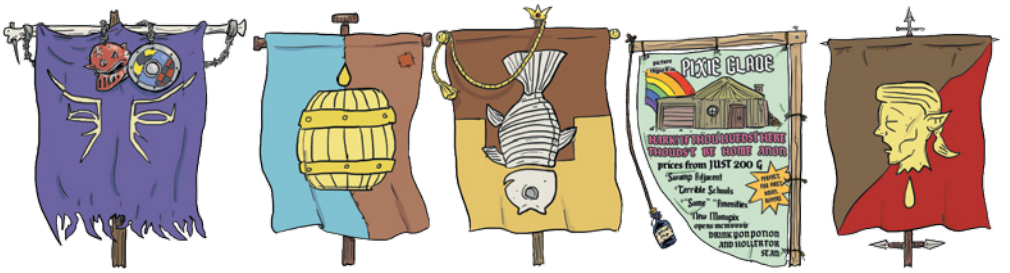
You've found just about the only person in Nonce who'd get more use out of this cutting-edge children's toy than you. The gripping action contained in the 4000-in-1 games cartridge will really help Fettwanst degenerate even further into a completely sedentary, immobile blob of a man. But that's a problem for another time and another person - you hand the console over and he takes it from you with an noncommittal grunt, though he waves you through the gate as soon as you help him get the thing hooked up in his shack. Soon you've put Brunnenfeld to your back and are beginning to steady ascent into the passes of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains.

Remove the Azari PCS With 4000-in-1 games Cartridge from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1698.

1037

You take a swing at the guard, a trained professional wearing armour and wielding a pole axe longer than you are tall. This terrible mistake is rewarded by a ferocious beating which is only brought to an end by the other guards coming to your aid to stop you being stomped into jelly. After stopping their comrade in arms from cutting you in half they join him in giving you a final desultory kicking before hurling your thoroughly-thrashed person into the back of a nearby iron-barred prison wagon.

Turn to 227.



1038

You somehow manage not to mess everything up. After a couple of failed attempts you sail the rock with the attached rope right through your narrow bedroom window right up the top of the tower. Trusting your weight to this makeshift grappling line you clamber up and squeeze through your window. You're back into your room!

Turn to 743.

1039

If you have business at Reynfrid's Music Exchange then turn to 1216. If you want to visit the Silvermane's Sundries then turn to 63. If you have some reason to visit the Skeleton Workers Union (and haven't been already) then turn to 1156. If you want to go check out the Synod then turn to 495.

1040

You notice that the guard doesn't lower his crossbow.

"Funny, yer don't look like no diplomat", says the guard. You do your best to reassure this simple rube as to your diplomatic credentials.

"Well then, since yer so high 'n mighty the fee's gone up. 5 Guilders."

This is an extortionate sum, but since he's extorting you at bow-point you don't have much choice. Cursing your lack of dress sense, you give up your diplomatic purse. The guardsman counts his coins before proffering an exaggerated bow and gesturing along the ravine, allowing you to pass.

Turn to 395.

1041

Your irritating banter raises a lot of hackles but one man in particular takes a special interest in your provocations. A rough looking giant of a man, easily a head taller than you, with his bare arms and torso completely covered in amateur tattoos, steps out of the line and points at you threateningly.

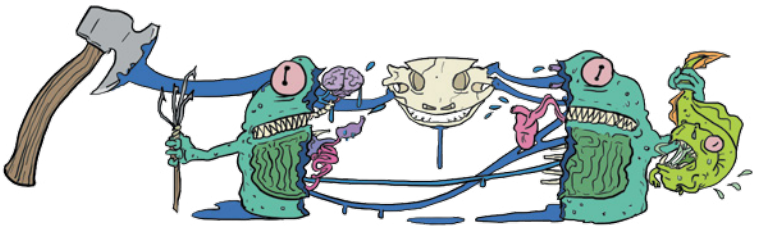
"You! You're the Jabbing Jabroni! I've heard of you. You must be here for the championship tourney at the Dribbling Wand. Well, so am I, so I may as well knock your lights out here and take your titles right now. It'll save us both some time later".

You try to refuse this polite offer but there's no way out of it: the huge man has put up his dukes and is coming right for you!

🔪**BOXING BRUTE: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you win turn to 1583. If you lose or attempt to take a dive, the huge man hits you with an uppercut to the jaw that sends you flying, stars whirling around your head as you collapse limply into the dust of the road. Before you can regain your wits he stands over you and wrenches your championship belts off you! Remove any of Championship Belts from your Adventure Scroll. He waves his plunder above his head to the loud applause of the others in the line who are all pleased that you got what was coming to you.

By the time you've picked yourself up you find that some treacherous human has taken your spot! Not willing to go all the way to the back of the line or risk another beating like that you decide to go check out the wagons for another way in - turn to 586.



1042

You take a tentative swig of the horrible domestic lager, causing your face to twist in disgust moments before you spit the mouthful out in a wide spray. The nobolds find this display hilarious, slapping their knees and hooting and hollering with laughter and weird underworld slang. You find yourself getting angrier and angrier - you didn't come all this way and go so far under the ground to be treated with exactly the same kind of disrespect you got back home. Ignorant of your mounting rage the nobolds keep laughing and calling you things like "wally", "galah" and "big girl's blouse", but before you boil over completely a whistle blows from somewhere deep in the tunnels. This is the signal for these nobolds to get back to work. Wiping the tears of laughter from their reptilian eyes they slam down the tins they're holding, chuck them on the cave floor, pick up their tools and split up to head back to their respective bits of the rockface. Bruce speaks to you as he leaves:

"Fair go, mate, don't be a sook. We were just having a lend of you, lairing it up. Anyways, Busted Hill's within a couple of cooees of here if you're in town for the B&S next week. It'll be a real ripper. Easiest way to get there's to follow the chunder trail. Ooroo!". With that Bruce turns his back on you.

It's been humiliation after humiliation for you since the moment you left home and as you stand here in this cave listening to some idiotic reptile blather absolute gibberish after ritually humiliating you, you realise that you've never been this angry in your life, not even at Jeff when he stole your mother from you and ruined your beautiful home.

If you'd like to take out all your rage on this nobold then turn to 269. If you'd rather leave without causing any more of a scene then turn to 811.

1043

The guards resent your lack of cooperation and your rude and haughty tone. In response they decide to teach you a lesson with their fists and boots:

🔪**SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS : DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you prevail you worm out of their grip without taking any severe damage. Should you not be able to overcome this assault they give you a serious battering, breaking a couple of bones before finally leaving off: lose 1 ÉLAN.

Assuming you've survived this rough handling you get back up on your feet and brush yourself off. If you'd like to get on your way without any more trouble then turn to 817. If you'd like to get revenge you can bravely and/or suicidally rush the guards by turning to 1495.

1044

One thing leads to another and you're soon doing the stoop of shame as you make your way out of the caterpillars' home and back into the Mazyrinth, forsaking both tea and good manners on the way out. Granted, you left the lady worm only moderately dissatisfied, but you couldn't shake the feeling that the first caterpillar you met was watching the entire revolting display from just inside the darkened kitchen doorway the whole time.

Desperate to put this horrible depravity behind you, you continue into the Mazyrinth. Stepping through the portal you made earlier and finding once again two directions that look basically the same you just pick one arbitrarily. From behind you somewhere you hear the male caterpillar shout, "No, wait! Never go that way!"

This kind of makes you want to hurry along - to put this worm and his crappy advice behind you turn to 571. If you're not too proud to take advice from a worm you can't look in the eye anymore then you mumble your thanks and turn around, taking the other path through the Mazyrinth - turn to 823.

1045

You throw the sword down and slump to your knees. You can't fight Jeff - not like this. Jeff grins as he steps around you and into your house.

Your stepdad is pretty taken with your mansion and it seems he's not inclined to go anywhere, setting up a permanent camp in your living room and generally disturbing all your stuff. With force having failed none of your other methods - whining, crying, scrubbing your anus with his toothbrush - have any effect on Jeff. Having ruined one of your homes he has followed you across the realm only to ruin another, better home!

After a while you despair of ever dislodging this unwanted guest and abandon Bilgeton in horror, settling in your smaller country manse in Bilgeford. It's draughty and unpleasantly close to the rotten odours of the Bilge, there's no grocery delivery service so you have to go outside sometimes and it regularly gets overrun with giant bat men, shamblers, elfs, pixies, and other forest dreck. Still, it's preferable to living with Jeff.

Your journey ends here, with the foul Bilgeford wind blowing through your rustic country home.

1046

Seeking a more suitable venue for releasing your pent-up energy and newly-discovered enthusiasm for live music, you shove your way through the crowd to the mosh pit right before the stage where you commence to head-banging. The Waits are pretty good but as soon as they're done playing their hit song, Alta Capella, the next band strides out - Seed Drille! As they launch into their three hour-long epic ballad, "The new horse-houghing husbandry, or, An essay on the principles of tillage and vegetation wherein is shewn, a method of introducing a sort of vine-yard-culture into the corn-fields, to increase their product, and diminish the common expence, by the use of instruments lately invented by Jethro Tull" the mosh pit goes absolutely insane. As a slight, bony half elf you're not able to stay upright among the far beefier human rowdies in the pit, and after a bruising few minutes you go to make your escape. Unfortunately as you're making your way back out of the pit, stooping to protect your dome from the flying skulls of your fellow music-lovers, you have a literal head-on collision with the goblin you saw earlier. Since this goblin, like all other goblins, is heavily armoured, it's like slamming into a brick wall. You collapse to the ground, seeing stars. Unless you're wearing a helmet, lose 1 ÉLAN from the concussion.

Do you have the Milkman's Calling Card? If so turn to 1811. If not turn to 541.

1047

You manage to tear yourself away from the shamblers - but not before they tear away a piece of you! You've lost a chunk of flesh from a bite to the back of your sword hand - deduct 1 ÉLAN from this disgusting and debilitating injury!

You run down the path clutching at your mangled paw and only stop when you've arrived at the relative safety of the paved Count's Road. Feeling dizzy you check to see that the shamblers are no longer on your tail before you allow yourself to inspect your injury. It's a nasty, raw wound and already showing every sign of wanting to infect. You cover it as best you can and carry on, though suddenly you feel as though your feet are made of lead. You put this down to your general lack of fitness after a hard night but in reality the shambler's deadly poison is working its way through your blood stream.

Make a note on your Adventure Scroll that you've received a Shambler Bite. From now on whenever you lose EFFORT for any reason you'll lose 1 extra EFFORT. For now though you just continue on your way as best you can, hoping to put as much distance between you and the shamblers as half-humanly possible. Turn to 1802.

1048

Not wanting any part of whatever greasy scam these guards are trying to involve you in, you demand to speak to the Count at once. If you have some kind of noble heritage in the form of a Noble Crest drawn in ink on your Adventure Scroll then turn to 101. Otherwise the guards aren't best pleased with your ordering them around and decide to take their revenge on you for your haughtiness - turn to 1043.

1049

"Have it your way". The guard says. "Men!"

The guards spring into action, stomping towards you and the caravan with halberds lowered. You look up to the guard tower and see that the man up there has his crossbow aimed right at you.

Having defeated the elfs you might feel like taking on the humans - turn to 1498 if you want to make a spirited defence of the wagons. Otherwise there's not a lot you can do: turn to 1131 to take whatever's coming to you.

1050

You murmur out some half-hearted mea culpa and continue onwards, forcing a couple more of the sprites to leap aside as you crush their toadstools underfoot. The look of shock on the sprites' faces turns to outright hostility, though you can't see why. They're just fairies, it's not like they're not making them anymore.

While it's true enough that fairies are generally untrustworthy, lazy little crooks - even by elf standards - they also quite often have horrible powers at their disposal, especially those wee folk who dwell in the frozen gloom of the Mist Steppes. Taking exception at your worthless apology they brandish their tiny little ice wands and cast a devastating curse on your rapidly-disappearing back.

At first you don't notice and it's only after a little while that you realise that all your extremities (all of them!) start to sting ferociously! You've been struck with a Curse of Frostnip! Until it's lifted the deathly cold of the deep Mist Steppes will never leave you, chilling you to the bone and covering your fingers, toes and other protuberances with a painful rash and searing pain whenever you manage to get them warm.

Until the curse is lifted you lose 1 ÉLAN, and whenever you roll a 1 on any FIST dice the chill in your fingers causes you to fumble with whatever weapon or item you have equipped in your hands, causing you to drop it. You will automatically lose that round and your item will stay unequipped for the rest of the Hassle! From now on you will also regain 5 less EFFORT from rest, down to a minimum of 0.

Suffering mightily from the Frostnip you press on into the mist. Turn to 1803.

1051

You scramble to your feet just in time to avoid the grasping hands of the guard, then you leg it down the road. The guard pursues you for a little while, but he gives up the chase once he's satisfied that you're gone and not coming back. You're soon alone on the road once again, winded but grateful to have avoided whatever unpleasantness awaited you.

Only then do you notice that your pack has come open during your daring escape: all your elfen currency and vittles have fallen out during the chase. Remove any remaining Elfen Leaves and Elfen Rations from your Adventure Scroll.

Cursing, you carry on. Turn to 1445.

1052

With the fool out of the way you could try to crack a few jokes to entertain the crowd. Excusing yourself from the bar, you take the stage and prepare to lay down a corker. After staring blankly at the crowd for a moment you remember a good one.

"Why are dwarfs so popular? Because they can suck a cock standing up!". This merry quip instantly earns you a well-aimed flagon to the face. Blood streams everywhere as you realise that your nose is broken! Lose 1 ÉLAN. Before you can recover the dwarfish bridal party, incensed beyond the restraints of dwarfish gentility, are clambering up onto the stage to tear you limb from limb:

🔪**GRUMPY DWARFS: EFFORT 10 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you win turn to 797. If you say uncle, turn to 1435.

1053

As soon as you're nearly level with the rooftops you leap off. Fortunately you land on a thatched roof instead of one of those slate ones: instead of breaking every bone in your body you just tear through the straw and into the house below.

A trio of sorry-looking humans are enjoying their repast when you plummet through the ceiling and land flat on their table. The filthy beggars look at you in shock as you stand up, mumble an apology and go down the rickety wooden stairs. As you're letting yourself out the humans recover and start hollering for the guards, but the militia is temporarily occupied with the huge dead dragon which has just crashed messily into the barracks up against the wall on the far side of town. You leave the house without further mishap and find yourself at long last inside the walls of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

1054

All this talking has given you a mighty thirst: turn to 1497 to go get hammered at the cheapest, most violent-looking tavern, or 606 to get unbelievably merry at the fanciest, most expensive inn. If you'd rather go take a look around or complete some errand or another you've been given then turn to 941 to do that.

On the other hand, if the half elf gave you some directions you could cut out a lot of late game content and go do what he said by turning to 226.

1055

You go on picking through the pile of casks, wooden planks and derelict mining supplies. There's nothing of value here but you soon assemble enough wood to make a pretty respectable raft. Jeff always said you were a lazy, good-for-nothing who'd never learn a trade, but if he could see you making a boat he'd eat his words!

BOAT BUILDING : DIFFICULTY 12

If you've got Enough Rope you can use it to automatically overcome this hassle, but you must remove the rope from your inventory as you'll need to use it all for this craft project.

If you succeed you defy all of Jeff's putative expectations and make a wonderful raft! Add the Glorious Vessel to your Adventure Scroll.

If you fail at this task, you give up just like Jeff would have expected. Luckily while you're taking a final disconsolate poke around the scrap heap you find a relatively intact mead barrel you can climb inside! Assuming you don't already have one, add the Barrel to your Adventure Scroll as Equipment (it counts as an outfit so remove any other equipped clothes or armour). If you already have a Barrel then equip it now.

Now provisioned with a ride befitting its owner you're ready to push off downstream! Climbing aboard (or into) your vessel, you shove off from the shore and let the stream carry you away! Turn to 1488.

1056

Elfs, for all their woo about being at one with nature, aren't particularly good at creeping around in the woods. You clearly see four elfs crouched in the undergrowth alongside the road just a little ways ahead, fixing the caravan with avaricious eyes. You pull yourself upright and look again - it's Biff, the town bully, and his gang of single-gimmick henchelfs whose names you never learned despite growing up with them.

The first carriage is just about to go past them. If you'd like to wave a fond farewell to Biff then turn to 1598. If you'd rather give him the cold shoulder then turn to 1451.

1057

You give the door three more gentle taps and wait. Although you're nearly confident that you got the code right and an honourable-looking fellow like Oddler wouldn't deceive you especially after you'd paid him, there's no action at all from the inside. Putting your ear to the door there's nothing but silence within.

Perhaps the Thieves' Guild is testing you. If you'd like to wait for a reply then turn to 735. If you know when you've been scorched then turn to 1531.

1058

Almost no one survives the deadly drop of the Drop Bear but you're about to be one of the very few exceptions. The poor creature only wanted an easy feed but instead it lands on the sharp end of your polearm and slides down to the ground, stone dead.

The halberd is stuck deep inside the creature and you can't dig it out- remove it from your Adventure Scroll. Regrettably this joke encounter doesn't yield anything cool but if you have a strong stomach you can carve a Meat out of the Greater Drop Bear (add this to your Adventure Scroll if you want).

Since the tree is now empty you climb back up and lay down on the branch, drifting off into a pleasant sleep only slightly troubled by the screaming, hissing and bellowing of this nightmare forest's inhabitants. You wake to find daylight filtering dimly through the canopy of the woods. Restore 15 EFFORT. Now the sun's up you can mostly see where you're going and none of the nocturnal nasties are still awake to bother you. You set off and in just a few hours you emerge from the forest and back out onto a patchy, half-paved highway. The great city of Bilgeton, its walls looming large, lies just a few miles down the road to the south east.

Turn to 1732.

1059

The turns are very frequent now and the corridors shorter and shorter. It's getting hard to walk what with the increasing numbers of rusted axe heads laying on the floor and heaped up against the walls. You see a skeleton, still wearing its rotted armour, laying haphazardly in one of the heaps. You go to loot its stuff but the ancient gear turns to dust and scraps in your grasp.

The monster's noises grow louder and louder - surely it will be upon you if you continue any further. This is your last chance to turn back.

To heed the warnings and get out of here, turn to 1339. To bravely sally forth to your destiny turn to 424.

1060

"I SAID GET OUT!" roars the dragon. In its emotional state this roar is accompanied by a blast of searing blue flame. If you have a shield and it's equipped either in your hands or on your back then you're quick-witted enough to hunker down behind it. The shield is burned to a worthless, molten crisp but it protects you from most of the damage - lose 5 EFFORT, remove the shield from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 508.

If you don't have a shield equipped then I'm afraid it's curtains for you. Your adventure ends here.

1061

Battle or no battle, in medieval times the livelihood of musicians depends either on working a regular job like The Waits or the patronage of some noble or another. Since you'd rather die than work as a glorified alarm clock, you go in search of employment with the local court. Unhappily, it seems that Count Hugues "The Mark" of Bilgeton has gained his affectionate nickname from his tendency to get routinely fleeced at games at chance and not for his skill at hunting: he has no money to hire you and the taxes he's levied on the nobles to cover his debts means they have precious little to hire you with either.

It seems that, despite its glorious victory, Queynte is destined to break up but you're saved by the Dribbling Wand, a nasty but lively dockside tavern. In return for playing a couple of times a week you're given board in the cheapest, draughtiest room, unlimited amounts of the worst food in Bilgeton and all the watered-down ale you can drink. Your band mates want to take the act on the road, but since you've got everything you could want right here why would you ever go back out there? Your adventure ends here.

1062

You flee into the night, screaming loud enough to wake the dead. No one's interested in pursuing you so you're allowed to run along the road until you completely run out of steam and collapse into a ditch alongside the road.

This ditch happens to be the not-so-final resting place of a real son of a bitch who was unpleasant enough to come back to life as a ghoul, and he's been reawakened by all your hollering. Ghouls are a lesser kind of undead horror, though there's nothing lesser about this thing from your point of view as the partially-rotten but still very lively cadaver desperately claws its way out of its grave and up your legs to get at your tasty living heart.

🔪**GUTTER GHOUL: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Fleeing is impossible - the thing is literally right on top of you. If you prevail then turn to 1241. If you don't make it then turn to 1512.

1063

It's a desperate struggle but you're too close to the spire for the eagles to really dive at you easily. First one bird then the other falls to the ground squawking its last. Finally you're left alone to finish the gruelling climb up to the nest, assuming you've still got the energy left to do so.

UP THE SPIRE : DIFFICULTY 10

If you succeed then turn to 1696. Otherwise, you're beat. You lower yourself to the ground and fossick around in the huge avian corpses, gathering up a good armful of 50 Eagle Feathers and an Eagle Eye which you pop in your pouch. Add these grisly trophies to your Adventure Sheet - the feathers in Cash and the eye in Junk.

With everything here dead you move on, leaving the spire behind. Turn to 190.

1064

You can understand the skeleton's speech. It bids you sit, and then chitters out its sad tale.

"I was kicked out of home at a young age by an usurper who came and took over my family. I roamed the lands looking for my father but looked too deep in the dark places and could never make my way to him. I hoped that given the chance again I could do better, but if you're here then it seems I cannot. Woe is me! Curses on Jeff!"

This all probably sounds familiar. As you're chewing it over the skeleton continues,

"Turn back while you can. Turn back to Bilgeton. Find your father, and crash on his couch, for there are no couches here... there is nothing here. Nothing but desolation and loneliness lies this way". With this the weirdly familiar skeleton points a bony finger south, towards Bilgeton.

If you've heard enough and want to head back to Bilgeton then turn to 819. If you're determined to press on towards the mountain ahead despite the dire warning then turn to 478. If you're more interested in finding out what this guy's deal is then turn to 215.

1065

Nothing in this horrible wood is as it seems. The bush you've unwisely crawled into is unusually free of the mites, ticks and stinging insects which infest the rest of the Schleimwald. This is because the bush is no tanglevine but is instead a bloodthorn, a carnivorous plant which slowly roams about in search of good locations to wait for prey. You're not as large as its usual eats - it lives mostly on a diet of massive Horror Worms and Hulking Owls - but this plant isn't one to pass up a snack. It draws its vines tight to simultaneously prevent your escape and crush the life out of you.

🔪**BLOODTHORN BLUNDER: DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 1**

It's still a plant and doesn't move all that quickly - there's still time for you to squeeze out! For every item you drop from your pack (not including currency), reduce its DIFFICULTY by 1.

If you escape then turn to 801. If you can't get out then the constricting vines wrap around you, pinning you tight with thorns like hobnails while the bloodthirsty roots tear through your skin to get at the goo within. Your adventure ends here.

1066

The mushrooms that Hurensohn gave you finally wear off a little later in the day. You find yourself following a completely normal road running through the densely populated Bilgeton Plains, passing numerous farmhouses and small hamlets and the like. The road becomes quite busy as farmers and traders clog the way bringing wares to and from Bilgeton which lays not far before you, its great stone walls looming high into the sky.

Soon you're approaching the Trader's Gate, the main way into Bilgeton for merchants, tradesmen and other assorted non-noble types. After waiting in a queue for a while it's Hurensohn's turn. The guards, dressed in the usual militia uniforms of a kettle helm and padded cloth armour branded with the local lord's crest, come to inspect the wagon.

"Hey Hurensohn", one says, "Is this another of your weird friends? We can't let him in, not after what the last one did on the Count's rug".

You begin to protest but the guard cuts you off.

"Look, buddy. If you have something to offer Bilgeton then go get a permit in the gatehouse but we sure don't need another caravan hand, especially not some 'junkie' all 'hopped up' on 'goofballs' or 'magical mushrooms' or whatever the 'hip cats' like this guy are 'pushing'. Now beat it".

You look to Hurensohn for help but he just shrugs. You guess he really earned that name of his. Defeated, you climb down from the wagon. The mushroom farmer thanks you for your companionship and whips the reins, driving his heavy cart in through the gates. You soon lose sight of him among the streets of Bilgeton.

Time to figure out your own way in. Turn to 681.

1067

The others enter the barn. The pixie then inspects your pile with a look of pure scorn. He shakes his head in annoyance.

"How are we supposed to get that supermarket hollowed out if this is the best you can do? Not even worth the price of the potion we wasted on your lazy backside. Get the hells out of our Glade or we'll beat the snot out of you". He gestures with his stick, pointing down a track leading into the forest to the east.

Now that you think about it, it was odd that the huge gold nugget had a sign out the front saying, "Coming soon: Your Local Monopix". It seems that the pixies have tricked you into doing some construction work for them! It's like something that horrible STEPfather of yours would do, though possibly without the hallucinogenic drugs and threats.

You feel like you've been ripped off, but if you don't like your odds of taking on a town full of pixies you can leave quietly without causing any additional problems by turning to 914.
If you'd rather make a scene then turn to 1025.

1068

Benny doesn't even look at your identification documents.

"They're not valid", he says in a tone of voice which implies you're going to get a punch in the face if you hang around much longer.

If you've got 3 Guilders to spare and want to show him three other kinds of ID which you're sure he's going to find valid then turn to 476. If you're not going to take the third degree from some jumped-up doorman then turn to 1186 to start some trouble.

If this experience has just put you off Bilgeton pub culture altogether you can hit the road and find something else to do by turning to 827.

1069

The guardsmen on the wall are lazy and bored and generally not paying much attention to their job, but they can't miss you posing proudly on the stern of your baroque raft as it glides towards their city. They extend their hospitality in the form of a barrage of crossbow bolts fired down from atop the walls, a bunch of them hammering into the front of your raft less than a foot from where you're standing.

"NEXT SHOT WON'T MISS", shouts a guardsman from atop the wall. "SURRENDER OR WE'LL PIN YOU RIGHT TO THE BOTTOM OF THE BILGE".

Well, you guess you're boned. If you'd like to surrender then turn to 1425. If you want to go out fighting then turn to 957.

1070

Still surprised to learn about your noble pedigree, you agree to the Count's gracious offer and, after watching Hugues wager and lose an eye-watering amount of money to his fiancée on the strength of maybe the worst hand of cards you've ever seen, you board the coach. The inside of the vehicle is even more opulent than the outside, somehow - two sumptuous velvet couches face one another across a miniature room with ornately carved wooden walls and plush drapery hanging from the ceiling. You sit down and the count plops himself down on the couch opposite while Amelie positions herself next to you. The guards and servants break up the camp while you make small talk and soon you're away towards Bilgeton.

It's a lengthy trip for a slow carriage and it involves at least a night's stopover along the way. A luxurious tent is set up for you beside the road - it's not as nice as the huge royal tent that the count and his fiancée occupies just across the way from you, but still far better than what you're used to. You lay down on a royal camping mattress which is several times nicer than the pile of bunched up rags you slept on back in your tower at home, but just as you're about to drift off you hear the sounds of furtive movement coming from the direction of the royal tent! Could the Count be in danger?

If you'd like to get up and go investigate then turn to 1682. If it's probably nothing, turn to 803.

1071

You're not going to be told what to do, regardless of how neatly you've been set up. You tell the shopkeepers to blow it out their ears, overturn a shelf containing a bunch of caged birds and storm towards the door in a self-righteous huff.

The denizens of the store don't take kindly to this treatment. Between you and the exit is the fox from outside, with hackles raised and teeth bared.

🔪**VULPA: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2**

If you can't get past it then turn to 962.

If you defeat the fox then you kick the critter to one side and stride out of the shop. Turn to 612 if you released brownies into the town and 1236 if not.

1072

Dwarfs are just bigger, fatter, wingless fairies as far as you're concerned. You're not going to risk your neck for one. Soon the screaming stops and the fairies flitter away, their revenge complete.

With the little blighters gone you move in to see if there's anything still worth having on this pantsless dwarf. Unfortunately he hasn't got anything of value on him - the only thing you can find is a Peach which you can add to your Adventure Scroll if you wish. Moving on from the dwarf you quickly work out what the fairies had against him - the spray can nearby is Fairy Repellent. You sense, somehow, that you're not likely to encounter any more fay folk on this adventure (and in any case it smells horrible) but if you absolutely have to pick up every item you see you can add this to your Adventure Scroll as well.

What you don't find is a key to some Mazyrinth service door, or at least a helpful map, and with there still being no obvious way into the Mazyrinth you decide to move on with this pitiful haul. You continue on through the hills towards Bilgeton, leaving Gobholme behind.

Turn to 1151.

1073

The dragon continues ranting and raving at your back as you leave, accidentally belching out a cloud of roiling blue flame from its overactive flame sack. While not as dangerous as a jet of fire it's still completely capable of giving you a nasty burn.

If you have a shield equipped on your back then it absorbs the flame without much hassle. Otherwise you sustain 5 EFFORT worth of damage from the heat.

In any case you rush outside before the dragon finishes the job, but luckily for you it's a self-pitying beast and simply remains where it is bemoaning its fate. For your part you wrap whatever remains of your outfit around you tight and stride south, hoping to put as much distance between you and this unreasonable dragon as half-humanly possible.

Turn to 889.

1074

Well, I guess no one's going to do anything about that Doom Adder fellow now. The distant barbarian land of Yulia is going to have to take one for the team because you apparently really, really wanted that sword. Add the Heroic Sword to your Adventure Scroll. You may also take the Natty Calf Boots if you wish, though you're not touching the matching loin girdings.

With the barbarian thoroughly looted there isn't a lot more for you to do in this clearing. Not wanting to spend any more time loitering around this woodland crime scene than absolutely necessary, you go back to the road and lie down someplace a little further along. Sleep comes easily despite the suffering your cupidity will no doubt wreak on a faraway land and you wake refreshed in the mid-morning. Add 20 EFFORT and set off along the road to Bilgeton once more.

Turn to 1446.

1075

Not wanting to encounter whatever's up there you decide to go around the butte, following a dry creek bed which runs around the southern side of the flat-topped mountain. It turns out not to be completely dry - while you're picking your way along the rubble and crockery-strewn creek bed you see a stone monolith somehow waddle over to the edge of the plateau and let loose with a stream of foul-smelling, dark yellow liquid!

You shout in horror and disgust: turn to 343.

If you've read this far then you manage to keep your mouth shut, probably a good idea given what's raining down on you. Still, you left home to stopped getting pissed all over and it cuts you to the quick to find that the outside world is just as bad as Jeff in that regard. Lose 5 EFFORT.

The troll gives it a couple of shakes, emits a satisfied and rumbling fart and shambles away. You carry on: drenched, humiliated but alive. Turn to 955.

1076

You lie down in the gravel and try to get some sleep. Unsurprisingly it's not all that comfortable and the feeling of stones and sticks jutting into your spine keeps you awake almost as much as your constantly chewing over how much you hate that scumbag Jeff for doing this to you. Eventually your white-hot indignation subsides to a warm, seething hate and you are lulled to sleep.

You dream of your soft bed up in your tower back in Elfsdale Downs. It's the familiar old room - messy, draughty, musty-smelling like a ripe old cheese left for weeks in a mausoleum - but something is off. The bedsheets keep moving under you and you feel like you're sinking into the mattress...

If you are currently at more than half your MAXIMUM effort you may choose to will yourself back into consciousness by turning to 740. Otherwise you're too tired to be woken up by some weird dream, or just too lazy to stir for any reason - turn to 880.

1077

You wisely make a run for it, dashing through the forest in whatever direction will allow you to get away from the disaster unfolding behind you as quickly as possible. There's a foul smell and the sound of something sloshing and gurgling behind you, but you don't turn around to look at whatever it is. Since it fails to smite you as you flee you guess it's somebody else's problem, for now. Make a note that you've Summoned Something Horrible on your Adventure Scroll.

You manage to get a bit turned around and lose sight of the road, but after a few hours of stumbling around in the wilderness you find the edge of the forest. After you've looked around and satisfied yourself that you're not being pursued by whatever you've summoned you take a deep breath and slow down. As soon as you've recovered you stride out of the forest, emerging into a wide open and brightly sunlit field.

Turn to 268.

1078

The huge bird delivers a ferocious peck to your chest, knocking you sprawling onto the road. You crawl away in panic as it stomps towards you, snapping its beak, flapping its tiny wings and squawking menacingly. As soon as it sees you're not coming back for more it returns to what's left of its wagon. You get up of the ground, dust yourself off and proceed down the road to Bilgeton, glad that nobody but you and the bird witnessed that shameful display.

Turn to 614.

1079

The goblins, stupidly assuming all their enemies were in front of them, were not expecting a frenzied attack from a disinterested passer-by. They soon panic in the face of your berserk onslaught. The rogue slices down his remaining adversaries, and races to help his burly companion. Fighting side by side, they soon begin to turn the tide of battle, at least enough so that they can escape. The pair begin to race back through the streets of Gobholme, pausing only to drive the advancing goblins back with a threatening sword thrust or expertly thrown dagger. You do your best to look nonchalant but the rogue spots you and gestures at you to follow them.

If you'd like to go along with this cool gang then turn to 164. If you've done your part already then turn to 1449.

1080

Karol taps a mean looking man at the bar on the shoulder opposite to the side he's on and the terrible fellow instinctively hits the man seated nearest to him on that side. A one-sided fight breaks out and the rock troll bouncer lumbers into the bar, roaring and slamming patrons aside with his fists. You and Karol successfully sneak out on your sizeable bar tab in the ensuing chaos.

Following a path Karol's marked out on your tourist map you arrive at the gated entrance to Sir Tedbald's manor just before midnight. Beyond the locked gate a short path leads to a small but pleasant-looking townhouse. A light burns in the gatehouse window - no doubt there's a guard in there, hired to protect Tedbald's household while he's off erranting. You sneak up to the window and peek inside, where you see a bored-looking human guard in heraldic mail leaning back in a rickety chair, occupied with a book in one hand and rolling some dice onto the small table in front of him with the other. Karol finds a shadowy spot to conceal himself in.

If you have the Screaming Skull on Spider Legs and want to use it to distract the guard then turn to 469. Otherwise you could storm the gatehouse and eliminate the guard by turning to 813. If you'd rather you could attempt to bluff your way through by turning to 158, or you could enlist Karol's help to give you a boost over the gate (turn to 572). If all this sounds like a bit much you can always give up - turn to 1197.

1081

You grip onto the rope and try to climb back up.

ROPE CLIMB: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you fail then you lack the upper body strength for this task. After a disappointingly short distance your weedy arms begin to ache and your strength gives out. You slide back down the rope. There's no way you're climbing out or retrieving the rope - remove Enough Rope from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 438 if you wish to investigate the mound (assuming you haven't done so already) or 1272 to continue deeper into the tunnel.

If you make it then you climb back over the lip of the abyss. Untying the rope, you stow it in your pack. Everything is where you left it, including the Malrog who is still too preoccupied with whatever it's doing to notice your puffing and panting. Would you like to sneak over to the bridge and attempt the risky crossing (turn to 1136), or would you prefer to creep up closer to the Malrog and see what it's up to (turn to 828). If you're sick of skulking, you could issue a challenge to the beast - turn to 242 to attempt this foolhardy action.

1082

Deftly dodging under the oncoming chamber pot, you leap over the threshold, weave past your mother and slide past Jeff's ineffectual attempt to grab you. You get some of the pot's contents on you, but since Elfs eat nothing but roots, twigs and leaves you're pretty sure it'll wash out.

Like every other home in Elfsdale Downs your place is a tall, thin tower. Your room is on the top floor at the end of a spiral staircase: you might not be able to get up the treacherously wonky steps before Jeff nabs you. You could instead race into the kitchen dead ahead and lock yourself in there before anyone could stop you.

To go for your room turn to 784. If you want to make a break for the kitchen turn to 651.

1083

You let the little guy go, laughing heartily as he disappears into the forest. You doubt he'll be back. If you want to ransack his quarters then turn to 1249. If you'd prefer to get some shuteye now the coast is clear then turn to 1714.

1084

The rock trolls are pretty rowdy drunks, almost to the point of belligerence. You wait until Kaspars is embroiled in a heated debate about absolutely nothing with a neighbouring troll before making your move. Kaspars has left his bottle unattended so it should be pretty easy to pour the eagles' substance into the large stoneware vessel, but being both hammered and terrified of being discovered has given you a mean case of the shakes.

AIM: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then remove the Suspicious Canteen from your inventory and turn to 555. If you fail then Kaspars turns around just in time to see you sprinkling eagle urine into his drink. He's less than amused and displays this by taking a wild swing at you, slamming you in the head with a fist like bowling ball. You're dead long before you hit the ground several yards away.

1085

Approaching the gold nugget - a gleaming gold boulder tall enough that you can barely see over it and several times wider - you kneel down and take up a magical pick presented to you by your host. Add the Magical Pick to your Adventure Scroll.

"Dig only at the centre, dear guest - the top, bottom and sides are common rock and aren't worth anything. Now work hard - your gold haul will buy you a luxurious stay at the Lodge of Travellers", he says, gesturing at the fabulous inn you saw just previously.

Noticing that the boulder is already substantially hollowed out by the elf, man and dwarf who are working feverishly and stuffing their pouches to bursting, you crawl into the nugget alongside them and get to digging:

STRIKING GOLD: DIFFICULTY ? -TOUGHNESS 3

You may decide the DIFFICULTY each round - if you overcome that level you gain that amount of GOLD. Make a note of the amount you've accumulated.

Once you've completed the job one way or another then turn to 631.

1086

Your pathetic attempt at horsemanship is brought to a crashing end when one of the guards wrenches you to the ground with the hooked side of his halberd. As you lie on your back in shock the guard that brought you down bellows smugly, with the air of someone who's dedicated to saying his line no matter the circumstances, "Halt, fiend, and face justice". Even though you're already thoroughly halted you're treated to a light round of police brutality before being hauled to your feet, clapped in irons, stripped of all your possessions and hurled into the back of a waiting iron-barred prisoner wagon.

Turn to 227.

1087

Your digging has exposed the bones of some dead rich woman - maybe she was a merchant or a priest or one of their wives or whatever, but most importantly she's well-dressed and buried recently enough that most of her stuff is in good repair! Her blouse and leggings are exactly your size, too - elf extra extra large, human small! You don the Dapper Garb (add this to your Adventure Scroll) and you also find 5 Guilders worth of gold coins and gems deposited around the body (add these to the Cash section).

Now turn to 1193.

1088

Your decision to make a break for it is extremely foolhardy, considering that this creature is in its element and you - being a half wood elf and not a half sewer elf - most certainly are not. If you've got a travelling companion with you (including the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole) then you can treacherously sacrifice him or her - you kick your loyal companion in the face and shove them into the sewage between you and the hydra. This slows it down enough for you to make your cowardly escape to the sound of your erstwhile friend's doomed screams - turn to 1633.

If you're travelling alone or have moral qualms about disposing of your companions in that way you simply have no chance of escape. Before you're even halfway across the chamber the hydra swims over to you and, biting hard onto a leg with one of its six heads, it pulls you down under the sewage. The cruel monster doesn't quite wait for you to drown before ripping you to pieces.

1089

The warmth and bright light of this ballroom combined with the nervous sweat slowly soaking through your clothes suddenly activates the millions of unhatched giant lunar moth eggs which have been infesting your clothes throughout this whole journey. Your clothes instantly disintegrate as the deceptively tiny caterpillars erupt from the weave of your threads and wriggle away, looking for food to sate their voracious appetites. Luckily for them the fabrics which bedeck the lords and ladies are exactly the kind of feast they're looking for, and in the months and years to come Bilgeton will be bedevilled by a seemingly unstoppable infestation of annoying but harmless giant lunar moths. Its status as the fashion capital of Nonce will pass to Brunnenfeld or Bilgeford or some other backwater that isn't infested with clothes-eating monstrosities.

In the meantime you've just earned the nickname of "caterpillar guy", completely ruining your chances of looking cool around the Bilgeton nobility. Depressed, you show yourself out. Remove the Moth Eggs and the clothes you were wearing from your Adventure Scroll, then turn to 13.

1090

You continue rummaging around. The witch, her goose cooked, screams no more, but a potion she had secreted somewhere on her person catches fire and explodes, showering the interior of the cottage with liquid flames. The shelving starts to catch fire and the wooden beams holding up the cottage begin to groan and twist in the heat. As a shelf falls away you notice a small silver chest crashing to the floor. It opens and spills it contents everywhere - a handful of gold coins which gleam in the firelight. The cat, almost struck by this treasure, screeches: if you haven't secured it already it flees the burning hovel.

Choose one item from the following list (assuming you haven't taken it already): Scroll of Witherdick, an issue of Better Bones and Graveyards, Healthy Poultice, Bottle of Milk, 10 Bilgeton Guilders

Now will you rescue the kids (turn to 1465) or keep looting (turn to 952). If you've stolen enough you can get yourself out alive and not risk your neck for those kids - turn to 83.

1091

You've heard (from the Bestiary, most likely) that humans love their queues, and no humans love a good queue more than the humans of Bilgeton. Since you're culturally sensitive enough to realise that violating this stupid ritual would be so offensive that it could jeopardise your health, you trudge to the back of the line and wait with the rest of the hoi polloi.

There's not much to do but wait as the long line of filthy peasants and shifty-looking merchants slowly shuffles forward towards a side-door leading into the gatehouse. Pretty soon all the waiting makes you antsy - the guy in front of you smells like he bathes even less frequently than you do and the inane human chatter about the doings of their nobility and the state of the weather is slowly chipping away at your sanity. You're soon hopping from foot to foot, looking for something to do.

Turn to 512 to pick a fight or 247 to steal something.

1092

To an elf there's a world of difference between the leaves used in elf currency and the leaves used in elf cuisine, but your racial infirmity makes you blind to the distinction. You manage to get your Elfen Rations and Elfen currency mixed up yet again and choke the whole lot down before you notice. You ward off starvation - restore 5 EFFORT - but remove all Elfen Rations and Elfen currency from your adventure sheet. Now return to the page from which you came.

1093

As soon as the agent works out what you're talking about, he gives you a tight, joyless smile.

"That account has been settled. Now get out. I've got work to do. Unlike some of us", he sneers.

Aggie wasn't kidding about this guy, aside from the bit about you getting along. You consider punching him on the nose but you're a bit worried by the proximity of several skeleton guards inside the union building. Since they're on a union-mandated break you could probably go ahead and kill the agent in front of them without them stirring, but you have no way of knowing that. Instead you swear viciously at the bald little necromancer but otherwise let him be.

You storm out of the union office in a huff and make your way back into the market square. Turn to 244.

1094

The skeleton's chittering appears to convince the robed interlocutor.

"BUGGER IT. CHUCK THE PLOUGHING SOD IN THE FLENSER THEN. I'LL BLOODY DEAL WITH IT TOMORROW", swears the person (who you assume is a wizard or warlock) before retreating from the portal and out of sight. The skeleton turns its attention back to you and, with the help of a couple of bony comrades who have jittered up to lend it a hand, drags your mostly unresisting self along the ground and into the tower. After a bone-rattling drag across the flagstones of the ground floor you are dragged up a couple of flights of a spiral staircase, your head banging painfully off every step. Unless you are wearing a helmet you must lose 5 extra EFFORT from this rough treatment.

Finally the skeletons drag you off the stairs and into a large stone room full of vials, tomes, magical equipment and, ominously, a heap of elf corpses of varying freshness in the corner. Even more worrying is the platform in the centre of the chamber - roughly the size of a tall person and coated in ritual markings, this is clearly a table used for dark magics. It's to this that the skeletons begin strapping you, tying your hands to ropes attached to each corner. You'd better put up a fight if you don't want to spend a night in the flenser or to be "dealt with" tomorrow:

DEFLEND YOURSELF: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then turn to 1579. If you fail or can't be bothered then turn to 1628.

1095

Several swampy, leech-picking hours pass before you hack through yet another thicket of tangled branches, only to unexpectedly burst out into a clearing which contains a small elfish village - Aelfsburg, according to the large white letters affixed to the trees on the other side. There are ten short towers, roughly as poorly-built as the ones back home and made of cobblestones as well. Just like in Elfsdale Downs there's a large tree in the middle of the clearing which presumably houses the semi-famous Aelfsburg School of Lorewardening, hateful old Jeff's alma mater.

The village is eerily still. No one seems to be around, though you're not sure if that's because no one's here or because it's before noon. As a half elf you were always a bit of an early riser despite Jeff's constant claims that you were a layabout. You used the extra time to desecrate his toothbrush when the mood struck you.

If you'd like to investigate the town then turn to 884. If you've got better things to do than hang around this dump then turn to 332 to continue on your journey.

1096

If you've got the Confessor's Shovel and have committed any crimes at all since you were Redeemed (or if you have the shovel and were never Redeemed) then turn to 589.

Otherwise the man, seeing that you're probably friendly, greets you:

"Well, you seem harmless enough. Welcome to Skull Mountain, gateway to the Mist Steppes. What brings you to my domain?"

You want to tell him that you're on your way to Bilgeton but you can't bring yourself to look directly at him on account of his scandalous attire. You're also acutely aware that you're not traditionally considered a good guy and that although the Spectre might look silly, he could easily stomp your guts out judging by his massive size and the muscles rippling under his skin-tight suit. This internal dilemma makes you look incredibly shifty to the Ghost Who Roams, who narrows his eyes behind his bandit mask. You try to get it together.

BE COOL: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

Each time you fail this the DIFFICULTY increases by 1.

If you succeed then turn to 646. If you fail then The Spectre isn't at all convinced of your good intentions... you'd better get him before he gets you first! Turn to 663.

1097

This tunnel seems endless, and with the increasing tremors and ant cries coming from somewhere deeper in the caves you're far too worried to get any rest. All you can do is press on.

As you proceed you notice that the tunnel begins to split, with more passages branching off from the main route. These passages aren't particularly deep - one of Them! must have started digging but given up when it hit a boulder or failed to find any food. These side passages are a lucky find: soon after you notice them, you hear another of the warbling screeches and feel the tunnel shaking violently. You quickly duck into a handy side tunnel just in time to see a pair of Them! skitter past in the direction from which you came. Perhaps they are drawn on through the dark by the sounds they make, or the chemicals released by that monstrous ant that you slew earlier.

Once they're long gone you continue, dodging ant patrols as necessary, which becomes a more frequent occurrence as you go deeper and deeper. One of Them! rushes past you as you hide in another side tunnel, the earth rumbling twice as hard as usual and causing a rain of dirt and small stones to shower down on you from the tunnel roof. It seems the ants are getting bigger and bigger as you descend into their nest. It might be wise to find a way out, if you can.

Just as you're giving up hope you encounter an unusual feature - the tunnel drops down vertically about eight feet. Its smooth wall wouldn't present much of an obstacle for the enormous Them! but it'll be a nearly insurmountable barrier for you, not that you've got any reason to go back that way anyhow. After you lower yourself down you find yourself next to a side tunnel from which you feel a breeze blowing - faint and musty, but moving unlike the air in these ant holes. Perhaps this could be your way out of this horrible mess and back up to the surface.

If you'd like to take this passage then turn to 664. If you'd rather continue further down the main tunnel, bearing in mind that without the proper preparations for dealing with a lot of giant ants you're likely to meet a grisly demise, then turn to 1355.

1098

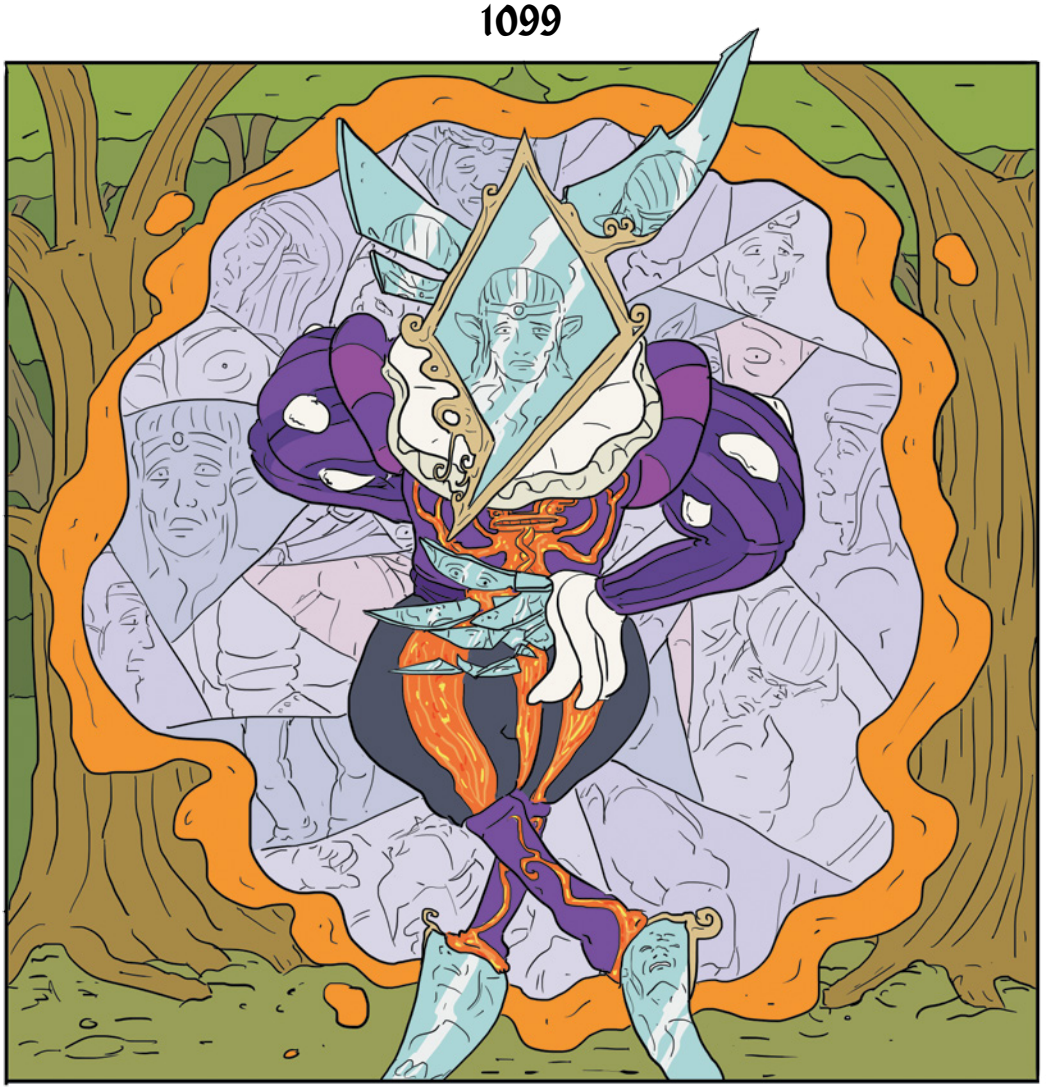
The brownie camp is abuzz with preparations for the big attack on Brunnenfeld. Each of the brownies - men, women and children, warriors and whatever regular brownies are called - has packed only their most essential items: their enchanted thimbles, needles, tongs and so forth: and they're packing themselves into your backpack one by one. Within about twenty minutes your backpack is absolutely rammed full to bursting with the entire shanty of about two hundred of the wee fairies. Your job is to sling this pack across your pack and walk it into Brunnenfeld without getting busted. How you're going to do that when you can barely lift it is a little beyond you, but after a bit of effort and a lot of effete elfen swearing you manage to get the pack up onto your back. And you're away, with the hopes of all brownie kind literally resting on your shoulders.

Or at least you wish it'd rest, because it's like hauling a sack of cats. The little creeps just won't sit still in there - some of them are doing an appalling job mending the stitching of the bag, others are mangling the lining as they try to repair it. Some of them are sewing on unwanted and mismatched buttons. Almost all of them seem to be arguing with one another.

Since trooping through the forest with this heavy pack is out of the question, you're forced to follow a path alongside a river that heads in the general direction of Brunnenfeld. Of course this path is patrolled, and coming round the bend ahead you see sunlight gleaming off the metal helmets and the razor sharp halberds of a pair of Brunnenfeld militiamen!

If you'd like to tell the brownies to shut up before it's too late then turn to 379. If you think the cause is hopeless you can try to bluff your way past the guards by turning to 47 or, if you're feeling particularly doomed you can drop the brownies and flee into the woods - turn to 1712.

1099



There's a strange sound of smashing glass. You look up to behold a curious demon standing before you. It's a being the size of a man wearing a beautiful doublet of crimson velvet, embroidered with shimmering brass needlework which seems to glow and writhe like embers on an infernal fire. Most striking of all, this being has no face at all - or rather, it has your face, though reflected a hundred times across a shattered mirror facade. This is a terrifying Prince of Shards, a greater trickster demon of the infernal Hell of Introspection. Deigning to notice you, it politely bows deeply, flourishing a hand which is nothing but a loosely collected heap of shattered glass before standing again. Its feet, themselves blades of thick glass, dig into the marshy ground.

"Well met, traveller. You have the honour of addressing the Archduke of Torment, third in line to the Brooding Throne. Kindly do me the service of informing me as to why I have been summoned so I may summarily disembowel you and return post-haste to my realm".

Now might be the time to run for it - turn to 1003 to get out of here. If you don't like your chances of escaping un-slashed or are otherwise too responsible to leave a horror of this magnitude loose on the earth, you can try to explain yourself - turn to 582 - or you can attack without warning by turning to 234.

1100

The reaction to your question would be comical if it wasn't so life-threatening. Your asking about a fundamental elfish activity, especially one which forms the lifeblood of this village in the same way that grasswatching does for Elfsdale Downs, instantly notifies everyone within earshot that you're not on the level. Almost every elf on the ground floor of the pub leaps out of whatever chair he or she is reclining in and rushes you as one.

Luckily, thanks to your upbringing you've got a sixth sense for when elfs are about to give up on tolerating you, so you're already at the door before anyone's close enough to take a swing. You race off into the night unharmed (aside from your credibility among the elfs of Aelfsburg, which you guess isn't likely to recover any time soon). You hear a hue and cry behind you as you crash through the tangled forest verge and onwards in what you hope is a generally easterly direction.

Elfs are nothing if not lazy and it's doubtful they even bothered pursuing you into the dark woods, but just to be on the safe side you keep jogging for half an hour until you're certain you're safe. Attempting to move through the dense woodland at any speed in the dark results in numerous bumps, scrapes and cuts (lose 5 EFFORT) but he difficulty seems to dissuade the elfs from even attempting to come after you. Once you're sure you're in the clear you resume your night time trek at a slightly easier pace.

Turn to 1804.

1101

The fight takes longer this time - you've been arrowed and the skeleton is far warier of you, but you eventually get the upper hand and smash the skeleton into its constituent parts again. This time you pick up its bones and fling them as far away as you can, mostly into the tree line and down the road. It'll be a while before that bag of bones bothers anyone again.

This takes long enough that by the time you're done the rest of the elfs have overpowered the remaining guards and utterly plundered the wagons, leaving nothing for you. Horrified at the unfairness of this considering your role in this successful ambush you go to see the brass armour-wearing half elf. He's distributing loot by the side of a burning wagon but stops to laugh at your complaints.

"Where did you get the idea that you were going to be paid?" he says, incredulous. "You're a grasswatching intern! Your payment is in experience and exposure. Next time there's an expedition I'm sure someone will give you a paid position".

The half elf notices your stunned expression.

"Oh, all right. I see you've caught a stray arrow so your blood's ruined that armour, and it looks like you took a couple of whacks to the head fighting the skeleton so I don't think we'll be able to use the helmet again. Why don't you take what you're wearing and piss off? But don't think I'll be putting in a complimentary review for you, your attitude is lousy".

Unhappy with this crappy armour but pretty sure you're not going to be getting a better deal out of these elfs, you leave this lousy experience behind you. Turn to 294 to continue along the road heading east in the general direction of Bilgeton.

1102

You wing the potion at the back of the Malrog. Being alcohol-based and therefore extremely flammable, it detonates upon contact with the lava-based creature and explodes in a shower of broken glass. Regrettably the potion itself and most of the dangerous active ingredients it contains are instantly consumed in the fiery blast.

The Malrog, now very aware of your presence, roars in fury as it stands to its full 14 feet of height and lurches towards you with terrifying speed, if somewhat unsteadily. It flails wildly with flaming fists the size of beer barrels, and although it doesn't seem all that coordinated, its attacks are quick enough that you'll have to move if you want to keep your head on your shoulders, let alone sneak a counterattack in:

🔪**MALROG: DIFFICULTY 11 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 3**

After each round of combat the Malrog loses 1 DIFFICULTY.

If you lose a round of combat one equipped item of your choice is destroyed by the shattering force of the attack - remove it from your Adventure Scroll. If you have no equipped items then lose one unequipped item, or 10 EFFORT if you're out of those.

If you defeat this fiend then turn to 391. Otherwise, since it's not going to accept your surrender and is blocking your path to the bridge, there's nothing for it. Calling to whatever god or gods you believe in, you take a running jump into the abyss! Turn to 144.

1103

Regrettably for you the guards heard the awful noise made by the mutt's demise and were heading back to investigate. You nearly fill your breeches as you look up from your sleuthing to see a mailed fist sailing towards your face, but luckily the blow knocks you completely unconscious before you can accomplish such a feat.

Turn to 1221.

1104

You approach the royal spread - it's a delicious assortment of dainties spread on top of some priceless tapestry representing a lady sitting beside a unicorn. The centre of the tapestry is covered by an ornate silver platter, atop which sits a huge and incredibly fancy feewald cake which could easily stuff ten people. Silken cushions are scattered around for the noble buttocks whose owners were invited for the trip. The royal coach, a large and baroque whirlicote, is parked up hard nearby with a couple of noble steeds grazing serenely in front of it. They show no interest in you and, for now at least, the feeling is mutual. With no one around it'd be easy enough to help yourself to a portion of the feast or have a rummage around the camp.

If you'd like to mess around with the food then turn to 1666. If you're more interested in whatever's in that fancy coach then turn to 129. Otherwise you could inspect the royal tent instead by turning to 920.

1105

You gulp as you approach the barbarian and wonder if you've made anything like the right choice. This man-mountain stands seven feet in height, towering over his diminutive goblin adversaries, and swings a greatsword even taller than he is in great arcs like a reaper cutting stalks in a wheat field. The goblins stagger away before him as he strides on, saved only by their heavy armour. You, however, are probably no better protected than this nearly-naked barbarian but you lack his huge stature or musculature. He roars a hearty laugh as he sees you approaching, and his sword sings the song of your death as it cuts through the air:

🔪**CRONAN THE DESTROYER: DIFFICULTY 11 - FISTS 3 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you have the Bow of the Woods equipped and want to try to keep this guy at range then turn to 133.

If you lose a round of combat against this guy then lose an additional 10 EFFORT.

If you win here turn to 1725. If you can't defeat the barbarian then turn to 1204.

1106

You run uphill along the street with the church on it, not stopping until you reach the double doors of the human holy site. You step inside into what seems like total darkness. It takes a short while for your eyes to adjust after the brightness outside - the only source of light in here is from a triangular window set high in the wall behind you, and it filters down through a dense haze of dust and smoke. As your eyes adapt you notice that you're in a wide, stone-walled hall, and that you're standing in an aisle between several rows of benches. The walls all around you are covered with paintings, hooks from which the smoke-producing bronze censers are hanging, and shields painted with heraldic symbols and crests. Ahead of you, at the end of the aisle, is an altar, and behind that and slightly off to the side is a chair on which a brown-robed, balding man is sitting, messily eating a hunk of meat off the bone. The church doors slam behind you with a reverberating boom, echoing throughout the stone church. The man, probably a priest of some kind, hastily stands and steps up behind the altar. Putting his greasy meal down on top of the podium he speaks, pitching his voice so you can hear him,

"My bro, be welcome to the Three Boulders Redemptist Church of The K-NG! My name is Brother Chlothar". The cleric notices the wild, hunted look in your eyes and the sweat pouring down your face. "What troubles you, my bro?"

You quickly inform him of your potential legal problems. Chlothar laughs.

"Well, I have just the thing. Pledge yourself to The K-NG and I will Redeem you, cleaning the slate in the eyes of god and man. What say you?"

While you don't like the ominous capitalisation of the word "Redeem", it may be the only way out of this mess. If you accept the priest's offer then turn to 908. If you'd rather take your chances with whatever waits for you outside then turn to 19.

1107

A hand that dainty must belong to a beautiful lady! Slicking your hair back and cocking an eyebrow greasily, you sneer out something to the effect that you have a sword in your tights for the Woman of the Waterhole to hold. Although this doesn't have the desired effect, the hand doesn't go away, which you choose to take as a positive sign. Certain you're about to get lucky you wade into the waters.

Turn to 633.

1108

Although you escape with your life, the wagon you fought so hard to free isn't so lucky - far slower than you, it makes an ideal secondary target for the siege weapon. The ballista speaks again: its shot tears the wheels off the right -hand side of the carriage and discombobulates one of the skeleton horses at the front. As the wagon lists over, spilling its undead cargo onto the road, you reflect that you perhaps were not cut out to be a caravan guard after all. You're sure Aggie will understand that you gave it a good old try and there's no way her agent would ask for the money back or anything.

Reassuring yourself with these unlikelihoods you ride hard along the road to Bilgeton until you can't see or hear any sign of the battle on the road behind you. Only then do you finally relax a little after such a hard morning.

Turn to 294.

1109

You ask the Malrog about his book. It's probably aware of what you're up to but it loves to talk about its literature too much to resist opening up about its work.

"I AM WRITING AN ANALYSIS OF THE QU'BAN MAGIC MISSILE CRISIS WHICH DECONSTRUCTS THE COMMONLY ACCEPTED CONCEPTUAL MODEL - THE SO-CALLED RATIONAL MONARCH MODEL - AND OFFERS TWO ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTUAL MODELS - THE MILITARY MANUAL MODEL AND THE WIZARDING POLITICS MODEL."

It looks at you expectantly, trying to gauge your reaction to this bombshell. You try to think fast.

"I'm sure the kings made their decisions based on what Their Highnesses thought were the best interests of their respective realms". Turn to 503.

"The decisions of the kings were constrained and sometimes overridden by the organisational capabilities and practices of their militaries, acting in accordance with their own drills and procedures which were set long in advance of the crisis". Turn to 1346.

"The Military Manual Model and the Wizarding Politics Model are too similar to one another and perhaps some kind of synthesis of the ideas would shed more light on the crisis than either individually". Turn to 656.

1110

The priest looks disappointed.

"Yeah, righto. I spose", he says, placing his knife back on the table.

You seem to have unwittingly violated one of the nobolds' most cherished customs and the padre is no longer interested in your company. A bit drunkenly, he asks you to leave so he can get back to his dark worship. You may, if you wish, leave peacefully, stepping through the church door and back into the street. From here you can investigate the tavern next door by turning to 458, or you could look for the way out of town by turning to 591.

Alternatively, if you won't be treated like an unwanted pest by yet another person pretending to be a disappointed father figure then you can stick around and take your anger out on the padre by turning to 598.

1111

"Ah, c'mon mate. Don't be like that..." you hear a pixie shout from the edge of the clearing, but it's too late. Your mind is made up. You stride with some purpose through the clearing in the general direction of the Count's Road, which you can just make out shining in the moonlight at a distance through a dense swathe of trees.

Turn to 711.

1112

You reply that you were talking to yourself.

"Well, we could certainly see that. You certainly are an uncharismatic fellow and I don't think either of us would relish a trip with you as a travelling companion. If I was in that situation I know I'd be telling you to shut up all the time too."

You start to reply to this rudeness but the guard cuts you off by telling you to shut up.

"See? Well, I think we've all had enough of you now. Stay safe traveller. Or, not".

And with that the guards continue with their patrol, leaving you clear to hike onwards to Brunnenfeld.

Turn to 777.

1113

Despite his ridiculous facial hair and shirt which is tight enough to restrict the free movement of his arms, the bartender is a surprisingly tough fighter and he manages to box you into a corner where he keeps you until the guards arrive to haul you away.

Have you previously spent time in the Brunnenfeld jail? If so turn to 649. Otherwise the guards march you at halberd-point to the town gates.

"If you're running out on a bar tab you're not going to have a bribe for us, and it's not worth our time booking you. Get the hell out of town and don't come back."

With that the guards prod you through the gate to the south and return to their patrol. Not wanting to risk the consequences of following them back in you soon find yourself wobbling slightly unsteadily southwards along a wide dirt track leading away from town.

Turn to 372.

1114

You take the right tunnel. The current speeds up and alarmingly quickly you find yourself whisked out into the unbearably bright light of day. It takes a little while for your eyes to adjust to daylight after so long underground, but you quickly wish that they didn't as you find yourself heading towards some powerful rapids! Several mountain streams are converging along with the one you're riding to form the beginnings of the mighty River Bilge, the disgustingly polluted lifeblood of Bilgeton! This river will soon descend from the mountains and deliver you to the great city, along with all the pollution generated by every civilisation in the region, but between here and there is a bumpy and dangerous ride! It's all you can do to hold on as the Drop Kick is flung this way and that on the choppy waters!

FLUME RIDE: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you fail, your vessel and then your skull are dashed to pieces on the rocky rapids - your adventure ends here.

If you manage to succeed, you cling on for grim life and after many nerve-wracking near-misses you find yourself soaking wet but still alive at the bottom of the mountains - turn to 1488.

1115

You inquire of the proprietress as to what kind of musical entertainment the establishment usually has.

"Oh, we have both kinds - ballade AND rondeau." she replies cheerily.

Your fellow members of the hot new minstrel troupe Queynte are not sure this is the place, but you allay their concerns - for now. Turn to 1221.

1116

The next shot doesn't miss.

1117

You inform them that you'll be taking the turtle, and that you'll be paying in cash, but you'd prefer the fresh one from out the back. It's a two-person job to lug a huge snapper like that around so both the man and the woman disappear through the door. Almost as soon as they're gone you swipe the monkey off the plinth and stuff it into your backpack. Add the Obscene Monkey to your Adventure Scroll. You go to leave the store but are stopped dead in your tracks by the fox from outside, who is blocking the doorway and growling, its sharp teeth bared.

"Well, caught you red handed. I guess you'll have to listen to what we had you brought here for", says a voice from behind you. It's the male shopkeeper! He and the lady seem to have returned early and without the snapper, displaying a disturbing level of cynicism about your intentions. But they've got you dead to rights.

If you're willing to listen to the Silvermane's Sundries story then turn to 600. If you'd rather fight your way out of here to avoid being railroaded into this plotline then turn to 1071.

1118

You ask about a "punt". The bartender points to the table where the nobolds are carrying on. You go over and see what they're doing.

"G'day cobber", says one, a particularly filthy miner. "We're betting on which of these two flies will get out the window first. Bet's two Guilders, chuck it into the pot and grab a tinny".

Right next to the window there are a couple of cave flies, despicable and grotesque creatures about the size of your thumb and with a sting like a scorpion. The one with the bluish cast is closest to the window but the green one, though a little further away, is flapping its wings as though about to take off.

If you want to place a bet and have at least 2 Guilders (no alternative currency will do) then will you pick the blue one (turn to 1265) or the green one (turn to 822). Or will you abuse the power of the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes, assuming you have it? Turn to 640.

If you're not interested in this stupid game the nobolds suddenly take exception to your presence and the mood turns sour. They don't have any time for penniless drifters, or "tramps" as they call them. You figure it's time to leave. Turn to 546.

1119

You haven't got time to mess around in a store. The guards could be coming for you.

Small fires are breaking out all over town as the townspeople divide their efforts between fighting off the brownies and robbing each other blind. It's not a scene you want to return to. Instead you head up the hill to the top of the road where you find a short lane running alongside the outer wall of the knight's mansion. The mansion gates are locked firmly shut but just down the street is an empty gatehouse and a wide-open door leading through the palisades. Whoever was guarding that had the right idea and got out early. You follow suit.

Aiming to put as much distance as possible between yourself and the chaos engulfing Brunnenfeld you set out along the rocky pass which winds upward through the jagged mountain range looming ahead. Turn to 1698.

1120

Brought up on a diet of racist fairy tales about humans and their unelfish cruelty, you'd prefer to have nothing to do with the picnicking nobles. You trudge on by. Turn to 1445.

1121

Maybe Karol knows some way in, but as you turn to ask him about it you see he's already occupied in an animated conversation with a small group of humans behind you in the line.

"...Na początku września zdarza sie czasem załamanie pogody i w górach lubi sobie juz wtedy sypnąć śniegiem. Jednak po takim zamieszaniu ok. Piętnasty pogoda zwykle sie stabilizuje i można cieszyć się słońcem przez ładnych kilka dni. Jeśli więc jechać w Tatry we wrześniu to w granicach od dziesięć do dwadzieścia pięć …ale uwaga, po słonecznym i ciepłym dniu - czasem bardrzo ciepłym, szybko zapada zmrok i robi sie cholernie zimno...", he explains to his interlocutors. They seem to be pondering his words with intense concentration, though you can't tell whether it's because they're hearing something interesting or incomprehensible. Either way, he's not letting up and listening to him droning on in that made-up language of his while you languish in this line is making you more bored than you've ever been in your life. You'll need to occupy yourself at once! Will you start picking fights (turn to 512) or steal stuff (turn to 247) to pass the time?

1122

While you're wracking your brain for some solution to this problem, the Malrog, moving with horrible speed, smashes the supports on his side of the bridge with his flaming boulder of a fist. The ropes snap and the bridge falls away, sending you toppling into the terrible blackness of the abyss beneath the world.

Turn to 144.

1123

You are hauled up to the top of a watch tower and hurled over the palisade, landing heavily in a gorse bush just outside the southern gates. Your possessions rain down upon you as you struggle to get free of the plant.

The wall's only a couple of stories tall so nothing's seriously hurt except your pride: not a severe injury in your case. Still, you lose 5 EFFORT from the chagrin of it all. You scoop your crap up and stride huffily away to the south and away from these inhospitable humans.

Turn to 372.

1124

The carts roll on south for a couple more hours. You've gotten used to the ride, crammed in as you are among the merchandise and your burly co-passenger (a caravan guard called Batu as it turns out after a terse introduction). It nearly reminds you of your room, aside from the fact that there's another person here and the stuff in it is of at least some value.

You're half-way through showing Batu your belt collection for the third time when you hear a bell ringing frantically outside. Batu seems to take this noise seriously and clambers over and past you to the backboard while the carriage lurches into a rapid acceleration. Batu disappears through the exit and around the sideboards while you stick you head out for a look.

Just before the road turns east dead ahead you can see a horrible sight - about twenty monstrous creatures with the upper body of an entire horse and the lower body of almost an entire man are charging across the plains towards the caravan. They're wobbling along on their human hind legs with astonishing speed and kicking up a huge cloud of dust as they come. These are taurcents - barbaric hinterland beings mostly hired for muscle and paid in hay on the rare occasions you've seen them hanging around Elfsdale Downs. You've never seen them in groups of more than two or three though. These ones are wearing leather armour and are equipped with tridents, spears and weighted nets so they're clearly not running up to swap bon mots. The taurcents are almost certain to overtake the caravan just before it reaches the bend in the road.

If you want to bravely leap out the back and roll to safety while no one's looking then turn to 448. If you want to defend your sweet ride against these party poopers then turn to 1785.

1125

You can't keep the booze down. To Kaspars' great amusement and that of the other trolls you get up and run, only just making it outside the circle before heaving up most of the alcohol you've just imbibed along with some stomach lining. Although you're somewhat humiliated, you feel better after getting that out of you. Restore 1 of the ÉLAN you lost from drinking.

As soon as you stop spitting up chunks, Kaspars calls you back to the circle. The trolls are still laughing, though it's mostly good naturedly.

"It's been a while since a meat man has tried to keep up with us! It's no shame that you can't drink like a troll. Why are you going to Bilgeton anyway? If it's just to find some place to sleep why not stay with us and learn our ways instead?"

Even given your wretched state it seems suspicious that anyone would actually desire your company, but it seems you've won these trolls over with your valiant, if disgusting, display of drinkmanship.

If you'd like to stay with the trolls then turn to 1414. If you're prepared to risk the trolls' ire by refusing this kind offer, perhaps because you have places to be, then turn to 1421.

1126

Since you're leaving town anyway you may as well let this guy know how much you've always hated him: not as much as you hate that Jeff guy who stole into your mom's affections and ripped away your hopes and dreams for the future, but still quite a lot. Yelling an inarticulate scream of rage you take a swing at the shit-eating grin on your childhood oppressor's face:

🔪**BIFF: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1**

If this battle takes longer than two rounds then turn to 714 at the start of the third round. If you defeat Biff before that then turn to 1182.

1127

The archers flee before your onslaught, melting away in panic as your steed plunges into their ranks. You manage to get one with a good kick in the back of the head before the evil jerks disappear altogether into the woods.

There's no time to get after them - you return to the first wagon and yell at the driver to get moving while the elfs are still busy with the rest of the caravan. The driver, no longer hunkering down to avoid imminent re-death, pops his skull back out of his ribcage and whips the reins. The horses chitter out a bony whinny and race away along the road as fast as possible, leaving the melee and their hapless comrades to the non-existent mercy of the elf raiders.

You've managed to save 1 WAGON and 1 GUARD (assuming you had any GUARDS left to save) - remove all the others from your Adventure Scroll. At least you didn't die, and you're going to get something through to Bilgeton, though you doubt Aggie's going to be pleased. Then again what the hells did she expect from you?

Turn to 382.

1128

The guard looks incredulous as you describe your epic battle with the Malrog and its stunning conclusion, but evidently he elects to believe you.

"You slew the beast beneath the mountain? That's unbelievable. And yet you've got the burns to prove it... very well. Your heroism has earned you your place in Bilgeton".

After dotting all the is and crossing the ts, the guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink : from now on will start each new game with this item, allowing you through these gates with a minimum of fuss. With that done the guard escorts you out of the office and through to the other side of the gatehouse. You step through the exit and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

1129

It was probably a mistake to approach a guard while using equipment that could only have been stolen from another guardsman. In any case, everyone in Brunnenfeld knows everyone else in town, and that's doubly true of the town militia. The customs officer immediately twigs that you're not a member of his unit and he raises the alarm. Before you can get five feet you're surrounded by armed guards who are very interested to find out how you came by that loot, and very, very angry indeed when they learn the truth.

Your adventure ends here.

1130

You smash the rotten old skeleton into powder and crouch down into the barrel, where you cower, listening to the sounds of battle. They're over quickly - the mercenaries smash their surprisingly weak opponents into powder and gore. Soon they'te rushing on deeper into the crypt, leaving only a couple of fallen comrades behind.

You'd rejoin them but as the barrel is cosy and you're all tuckered out it's only a matter of time before you're snoozing away in there. You don't wake until the next morning. Restore 20 EFFORT and add the Barrel to your Adventure Scroll if you like.

Unfortunately the barrow is locked during daylight hours and the entrance is magically sealed shut. Wandering further into the crypt - a pretty stereotypical dungeon with stone and dimly-burning lanterns providing a minimal amount of mood lighting - you find a large bone pile on top of which are the partially-chewed remains of your intrepid band, including Rouge-Gorge who seems to have developed a nasty fist-sized burn hole through his chest. They've been looted of anything even slightly useful but the Foppish Hat - its function presumably alien to subterranean and nocturnal corpse monsters - is still perched on his head. You can take it if you wish - add the Foppish Hat to your Adventure Scroll - before carrying on.

If you'd like to keep checking around the weirdly quiet crypt for loot then turn to 726. If you'd rather just press on you head deeper into the darkness - turn to 805.

1131

There's nothing else you can do, so you tell the guards that you know your rights even though you probably don't. Ignoring you, they advance on the caravan. To the intense annoyance of the skeletons they tear the whole thing apart item by item looking for whatever they're looking for. It takes an hour, and you spend the whole time sitting on a tree stump with a crossbow aimed at the top of your head. Eventually, having shaken the skeletons clean of everything of value the well-dressed guard approaches you again flanked by a pair of halberdiers.

"That carriage exceeds the road weight bylaws. We'll be confiscating it in lieu of payment", says the guard. "Now move on".

No amount of outraged utterances or the chittering of the upset skeletons has any effect on the Bilgeford militiamen. You can, if you wish, exhort the skeletons to rise up and free their trapped wagon - turn to 1498 - or you can abandon the wagon and head on - turn to 304.

1132

The eagle extends a wing and gestures out of the nest to the landscape below. You look to where it's pointing and see that not far to the east is a flat plateau amid the mountains which features a wide stone circle of twenty or so large statues.

"See that? Those are rock goblins. We hate those guys. This place used to be called the Eagle Rocks before they showed up here. Plus they get pretty rowdy when they drink, which is nearly always, and then they chuck rocks at us whenever we ask them to keep the noise down".

You wonder how rowdy a statue can get, but this is quickly answered when you hear a low muffled boom followed by one of the statues falling over. Several other deep reverberating booms issue out from the henge as the statue somehow rights itself. The noise sets the spire to vibrating.

"See what we have to deal with? Do us a favour and we'll help you out with a lift out of these mountain ranges, or give you a neat treasure. All you need to do is put something in their leader's drink for us. We've tried but we're not good enough shots to do it from above and we're too slow and obvious to get away with sneaking in on the ground."

If you agree to this deal then turn to 1034. If you're not about to risk your neck for some birdbrained scheme you can politely refuse by turning to 11. Alternatively if, at this juncture, you feel it's appropriate to go completely berserk then turn to 314.

1133

As the elfs that stood before you flee a ripple of panic washes over the raiding party and they all take to their heels, scattering back into the undergrowth. Taking advantage of this stroke of fortune you and the skeleton drivers quickly shove the barrels out of the way of the rear wagon so it can continue on its way - and not a moment too soon! The elfs have found their nerves, along with a host of dangerous-looking reinforcements, some of which are armed with bows.

As arrows begin to whizz towards you, you order the skeletons to move out and the wagon continues down the road. After receiving such a savage beating and having lost the element of surprise, the elfs do not follow and, barring a couple of stray arrows flitting overhead, the caravan is soon out of harm's way.

Turn to 382.

1134

"Good man", says the guard. "He's finishing up now". You watch as his gambling partner, a beautiful noblewoman, stuffs a fistful of gems and coins into her purse before getting up from the picnic rug on which they were playing and returning to her tent. The Count is about to follow her but the guard lets out of a polite cough to get his attention. The nobleman looks up. He's a tall, slender man with long hair, immaculately dressed in the latest dwarfen styles.

"My liege", says the guard once he has the Count's attention, "This is Marquis le Gaze de Nâvel of, um, Aulde Git. He's come to play you at cards".

The Count looks as though he's trying to place the location but the guard knows his lord wasn't top of his class at geography. Giving up, he welcomes you.

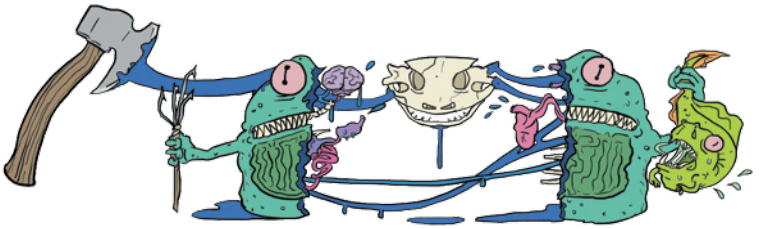
"Well met, Marquis. I am styled Count Hugues of Bilgeton, also known as "The Mark" due to my excellence in hunting". At this the guards standing nearby let out a snicker. "We were just about to finish our vacation here but since you've come all the way from... Aulde Git...is that a distant land? Well anyway let's play. Since you're titled let's have an opening bet of, say, 20 Guilders? But be warned, I am famously excellent at the game". The guards, listening in, murmur in exaggerated agreement at this statement.

You agree, after all if you lose you can always write him an IOU. You can't help but notice that he has great difficulty shuffling the cards and deals them extremely clumsily. You pick up your cards - he's dealt you one too many - and prepare to face off against Count Hugues of Bilgeton.

HIGH STAKES - DIFFICULTY 2 - FISTS 1

Each time you lose a round the DIFFICULTY increases by 1.

If you win turn to 461. If you fold turn to 514.



1135

Having a pretty good idea of the kind of dire straits you're in, you fling yourself to the ground rather than wrestle with an animal that you have a tenuous control over at the best of times. For the next few seconds the beast of burden looks at you like you've gone crazy, and then with a twang and a thud the creature is gone, borne away into the undergrowth by a brutally accurate round from the ballista. Before the elfs can reload again you're up and running, dashing towards the woods and into the undergrowth, heedless of direction other than away from the horrible scene on the road behind you.

Eventually you realise that you're not being followed - no doubt the elfs are content to loot the wagons. You're grateful to still be alive, though your enthusiasm at the prospect of continuing to live is dampened somewhat by the near-certainty that you're completely lost in one of the many woods in this part of the Kingdom. Preferring to take your chances in this forest rather than risk being found by some elf patrol you set out in a direction that you think might be towards Bilgeton.

Naturally you manage to get turned around: instead of finding the road again all you encounter are more and more trees. After another two mercifully uneventful days of slogging through dense undergrowth and increasingly swampy and foul-smelling woodlands you find yourself wandering late at night, lost among a pitch-black, slime coated forest of twisted trees.
Remove any steed you may have from your Adventure Scroll, make a note that you've failed Aggie, and turn to 1409.

1136

The Malrog is occupied with whatever it's doing and doesn't spot you as you move stealthily from stalagmite to stalagmite across the cavern. Emboldened by your success you sneak past the monster and set foot on the bridge. Your run of good luck comes to an end halfway across the rickety rope bridge - you step on a creaky board and the Malrog's head swivels in your direction. Its burning eyes widen with fury as it gazes directly at you.

Enraged by your presence, the beast stands to his full height - fourteen feet of rock, fire and pure, molten hate. Emitting a thunderous roar it rushes towards the bridge, racing forward with terrible speed and the sound of a team of pack horses.

If you want to rush across the bridge then turn immediately to 1014. If you've read any further your slow wits have betrayed you once again - turn instead to 1122.

1137

You give up the fight and prepare to be ripped to pieces by this horrible bone monster. The golem seems a bit deflated by your attitude.

This particular bone golem had been lying under the gravel for years after having had its head smashed in by a passing hero. You chose to sleep directly on top of it and, awakened by your life force and seeking a replacement head, the golem reacted by trying to latch onto you. It didn't count on the fact that you had barely any life force to steal, and that of substandard quality. Despite beating you, there's nothing in you for it to sustain itself on.

Having used up the last of its magical reserves in subduing you, the ancient golem disintegrates into a scattered assortment of bones. They're all different sizes and don't even appear to be from the same creature. You rummage around in the bone heap hoping to find something worth taking but the only thing of interest you find is a jawbone with a cute little skull imprinted on it. Despite your packrat tendencies this is worthless even to you so you leave it where you find it, though perhaps in future playthroughs it might help you join a few dots on a minor plot point if you ever come this way again.

Having somehow survived this ordeal you settle back down on another gravelly patch (not too nearby) and sleep until morning - restore 10 EFFORT for this fitful slumber. At least nothing else attacks you. You rise, scratch, and resume your trek through the mountains: turn to 521.

1138

You follow the guards for a bit of a hike steadily downhill through the forest, emerging from the woods alongside a stream which runs through an open field. Directly ahead of you and looming huge against the sky is a huge mountain range, and nestled against the foothills beneath is a surrounded by a wooden palisade. Behind the walls you can see the rooftops of a few large buildings - it looks to be a far larger place than Eflsdale Downs, which you previously thought was a pretty big deal.

Witlass waves you in through the open front gates, then he and his companion turn back towards the forest to resume their patrol. Turn to 16.

1139

You turn to Karol for advice but he's absentmindedly cleaning his nails. He wasn't paying attention!

The Malrog notices your panic.

"I WAS ASKING YOUR OPINION, NOT HIS. YOU CLEARLY KNOW NOTHING. YOU WILL WASTE NO MORE OF MY TIME".

Turn to 242.

1140

You're not going to be picked last! You stop slouching, stand up straight and puff out your chest, daring the punters not to pick you.

The human traders have enough sense not to buy someone dressed like an elf vagabond, but just as you're worried that you'll be left on the shelf you're purchased by one of the High Elfs for the price of a shiny new apple. As one of your taurcent slavers chows down on his payment you are turned over to the High Elfs who take you back to their distant land of Gond where you'll be working for the House of Glorf. You're allowed to ride in their fancy carriage and you're given a beautiful gold tunic with a glistening sunflower masterfully stitched into the middle, so you assume that you've escaped a dreadful fate and it'll all be smooth sailing from here out.

You couldn't be more wrong. If your new masters thought your elfish upbringing would help you adjust to life as a high elf scullery slave they were mistaken. You were lost in regular elfish society - you have literally no idea of what's going on here. High Elfs are even more high-handed, arrogant and snobbish than the regular kind, and you fail to master even the most basic of the esoteric cookery rituals demanded by your new hosts. You spend the rest of your days being shouted at, demeaned, magically cursed and generally locked in your room: a disused pantry adjacent to the scullery located at the very bottom of the Glorf manor. In short you've traded one Jeff for an entire kingdom of them, and your lofty attic for a lowly cellar.

Your adventure ends here.

1141

One of the elfs stumbles up from his chaise longue, clumsily splintering a leg of the fragile, poorly-made chair and knocking over his goblet of aelfwine. He's clearly in his cups, and like most elfs he's a garrulous, blowhard drunk.

"You!", he shouts, pointing belligerently. The remainder of the elfs in the pub turn to look at the source of the disturbance. "You're not even an elf. I bet you're working for that filthy warlock!"

You don't like the way the elfs are staring at you. Several of them rise from their chairs and reach for the weapons hanging from their belts. Since the atmosphere has turned decidedly sour in here you figure it's time to beat it.

Turn to 187.

1142

They spend all day pelting you and now they want your help? That's the sweetest plum! Incensed, you rush to attack the brownie host. The sparrow riders aren't even off the ground before you're on top of them and the knights can't get the momentum up to hurt you with their lances.

Unfortunately for you though, your continued hostilities constitute a breach of contract between you and the Brownie Bomber, who takes advantage of your bloodlust-based distraction to clamber up onto your shoulder unnoticed and give you a solid whack on the chin. Like most blowhards you have a glass jaw and this unexpected comeback from the champ puts you out like a light. You hear yourself hit the ground with a dull thud, then everything goes black.

While you're unconscious the brownies drag you far from their village, steal all your cash and rough you up a bit. The Brownie Bomber also reclaims his title belt. Remove all cash, Joe Louis and the Feewald Championship Belt from your Adventure Scroll, then turn to 992.

1143

Refusing a dragon's offer of Freundschaftsbezeigungen often offends, and it does in this case too.

"I put my heart on the line", roars the beast sadly, "and you trample on my feelings after leading me on all evening and eating all my pizza. Get the hells out. I never want to see you again, and you can tell your father that I'm not buying his milk anymore no matter how good his Freundschaftsbezeigungen is. That's what you get for playing games with a dragon's heart. I hope your father canes you. Now GET OUT!"

The dragon is practically sobbing by this point with boiling water pouring out of its eyes in big, steaming drops. But what does he mean about your father?

Do you want to leave immediately then turn to 1073. If you want to ask what this overgrown lizard meant about your father despite the obvious danger then turn to 1060 instead.

1144

You go to complete the job for which you've been paid, slowly twisting the ring off your finger. It's slightly cursed so it sticks despite being far too big for you, but you begin to work it free.

If you have the Dire Wolf and the Owlet with you a devilish idea occurs to you just as you're about to remove the ring - turn to 1655 to put this plan in motion. Otherwise you can simply hand it over: turn to 274.

1145

You weep and scream and cry - you rend the cavern air with your mournful shrieks, you tear at your clothes and you whack your forehead into the ground over and over as you rue the day Jeff came into your life, decry his kicking you out of home and lament the series of events that led you to this jerkwater town at the bottom of the earth. This exhausting display continues for a while (deduct 5 EFFORT) and gathers the attention of the entire town. By the time you're done, curled up on the dusty cavern floor in the foetal position and whimpering softly, about

twenty nobolds have gathered around the spectacle, shaking their heads in incomprehension at what they're witnessing.

One of the nobolds, probably the mayor or some other senior town official based on the abundance of frills and ruffles that grace every available inch of his outfit, steps forward.

"What's this whinging about? I've been given the drum that some reffo's spitting the dummy and here you are having a big sook in the middle of the street. Now I know you've just rocked up and you're from the vicinity of Dingo Woop Woop but we've got laws against being a big girl's blouse in Busted Hill".

One of the townsfolk yells out "Hang the bastard!". The frilly nobold raises his hand to silence the mob.

"Fair go, mates. Can't just hang the cobber, he looks like he might be touched in the head. Gotta give him a trial and then we can hang him. So court's now in session". Turning back to you he says, "What are ya pleading, guilty or not guilty?"

If you're guilty then turn to 1172. If you'd like to claim to be not guilty then turn to 949.

1146

Raising your weapon high in defiance, you give a rousing war cry and charge at Bilgeton's gates. If you were hoping to impress the guards with your bravery and strike fear into their hearts with your weedy little screech then you're bound to be disappointed. Instead of fleeing before your might the crossbowmen on the walls seize a rare chance to practice their aim on a live target. Unfortunately for you their aim is already pretty good and you fall riddled with crossbow bolts long before you get close enough to the gates for the halberdiers to get a chance to work on their technique as well.

Your adventure ends here.

1147

The awful elf has spooked your steed and the terrified animal responds by hurling you off of its back and sprinting away as fast as its legs can carry it. Lose 5 EFFORT as you slam hard into the ground. Fortunately your attacker is more interested in the wagon than he is in you, so you're able to get to your feet unmolested. While you're busy catching your mount the inevitable ambush is sprung. You clamber up into the saddle and wheel about to find the caravan and its guards are now beset by a small horde of elfs which are streaming from the trees lining both sides of the road. This isn't good.

Add 3 to your PROBLEMS and turn to 1200.

1148

The Fly Hat's enormous and impractical feather happens to be from a rukh, a species of colossal birds of which this working bird is a juvenile example. Seeing the towering feather flopping around even over its head the huge baby concludes that you must be its mother! The bird sits down and allows you to clamber up onto its back. You hold on tight to the harness around its neck and lightly tap its flanks with your boots to get it to gee up. The giant creature rises to its feet and takes off like a shot south along the road to Bilgeton, running with surprising speed for a monster of its size.

Add the Baby Rukh to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 313.

1149

You feel like you know the mountains reasonably well by now, though it's still a long and difficult slog. Avoiding the various dangers you encountered last time, you ignore Eagle Rock and approach the Big Rock Goblins' plateau. Since the stream is now flowing there's no way of going around the plateau - you'll have to go over it.

If the rock trolls are still alive then turn to 536. If you wiped them out then there's nothing left to encounter here: turn to 955 to proceed deeper into the mountain range.

1150

You've somehow defeated a mythical and gigantic slime beast! The hydra, with at least ten of its twelve eyes blackened, retreats in terror from your wrath and sinks beneath the surface of the sewage. If it survives your onslaught it will be licking its wounds for a good long time. No doubt this victory will be sung of in taverns and bawdy halls across the kingdom but even before the first impressionable wench has heard your boasting you've already taken on the swaggering airs of a true hero - add 1 FIST.

Since you don't want to risk diving after the wounded hydra to scavenge hydra parts you decide to move on, paddling along with the slow-moving current over to the other side of the cavern.

Turn to 1633.

1151

It's a bit later in the afternoon and you've left the stark and unforgiving Big Rock Goblin Mountains well and truly behind you. Gone are the steep vertical drops and rocky hillsides, replaced by rolling grassy knolls interspersed with running streams. Occasional black pits sunk into hillsides and weed-choked slag heaps stand testament to a goblin presence in the area, but on the whole the inveterate delvers don't seem as interested in the lands closer to Bilgeton. After you cross a couple of sturdy bridges crossing some of the wide streams in this area the roads and goblin infrastructure vanish, replaced by stands of trees, wide grassy vistas and the peaceful sounds of birds and crickets.

To the south-east of here the trees grow denser and not far away in that direction you see the hills giving way completely to the fringe of a great, dark forest which has been looming on the horizon for some time. To the south you hear the distinct sound of rushing water - not the trickling streams you've been crossing all afternoon but something far larger.

To head for the forest turn to 1792. If you've developed an aversion to trees then you can head for the water by turning to 1181.

1152

The bartender, a skinny man wearing thick, horn-rimmed pince-nez spectacles, an obnoxiously waxed and curled moustache and an irritating haircut, crinkles up his nose as you approach the bar. After ignoring you for the maximum amount of time possible given that no one else wants his attention eventually forces himself to extend the barest shred of civility.

"Yes? Can I help you?" he sneers.

If you're aching to try out one of these human drinks you've been hearing about turn to 474. If you'd prefer to ask for information then overlook the exaggerated eye-roll the bartender puts on for your benefit and turn to 844. If you're beyond this terrible man's help you can wander off and either find out what the fighting's about by turning to 186 or investigate the crying lady's concerns by turning to 1703.

1153

Bedüdelt beams warmly at you both, a rosy glow in his cheeks. You can't tell if it's because he likes solemnising marriages since most of his work is lifting curses and listening to litanies of sins, or just because he's clearly hammered on the holy whisky he drinks by the ladleful from the barrel behind the altar, but either way he's happy to get you both married off in the house of The K-NG. Since you're already legally bound there's no weaseling out of it for you - the bishop simply sprinkles some holy whisky over the pair of you, slurs out a quick prayer and pronounces the deed done. Stunned, you stagger out of the Synod with your wife clinging happily to your arm.

You settle down in Bilgeton and manage to survive, mostly because Nilde is industrious, thrifty, adaptable and always cheerful. In short, she's way too good for you. Your contribution to the marriage extends about as far as hocking some of your stuff to rent your first wretched hovel in the Drudgers' Quarter and performing your husbandly duties extremely poorly, but still well enough to sire a small brood of quarter elfs. You mostly sit around the hovel all day neglecting your children and pretending to look for jobs in the Bilgeton Gazette, but luckily Nilde is capable of bringing back enough bacon for the lot of you. And so your adventure somehow ends with a happily ever after.

1154

Since the merchants in the square won't take your money you decide to take your business elsewhere. The shops on the southern side of the market square are more upmarket, as are their prices. Perhaps they'll be more interested in your custom.

Regrettably, the stores where you might be able to break a Guilder are open by appointment only to deter thieves, and the few that are open to the public don't carry anything as crass as change. One of the shopkeeps snootily suggests you try the bank you heard about earlier instead of wasting everyone's time pretending to be interested in porcelain cat figurines.

Well that was an hour well-spent. If you'd like to visit the bank you can put the loathsome porcelain cat back in the display cabinet and make your way there - turn to 1201. Otherwise if you're done with this market malarkey you can go and do whatever you came to Bilgeton to do - turn to 827 to finish off this adventure for good or ill.

1155

Ignoring the troll's offer, you puff out your birdy little chest and explain that you've been charged with a mission of the greatest import from Sir Witold of Brunnenfeld. Further, you have no time to drink with a bunch of trolls until the issue has been redressed.

If you have dreams of the rewards waiting for you in Brunnenfeld after this demand is acceded to, they're soon shattered. "Oh, another one of these assholes", snarls the troll. "I'll tell you the same thing I told the other guy. Brunnenfelders are a bunch of rude, uptight jerks and we wouldn't piss on you if you were on fire. Now get out".

You seem to have breached diplomatic etiquette somehow! As you're thinking on how to save the mission one of the trolls throws a stone bottle at you which misses your head by a whisker. This encourages you to abandon your quest, and just in time - you take your heels just in time to evade a savage swipe from your trollish interlocutor. You're not out of the woods yet, however - the entire circle of trolls begins taking aim with their bottles. As you run for the edge of the plateau the stone vessels rain down on you with alarming accuracy:

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE : DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then you escape, relatively unscathed : turn to 605.
If you fail then turn to 586.

1156

You approach the small brick building which a sign out the front identifies as the Skeleton Workers Union, Bilgeton branch office. Although it's a pretty unremarkable building there are an unusually large number of skeletons loitering around out front and you can see a few through the windows working at desk jobs inside. Far from the naked specimens you might expect to find in dungeons and tombs which are clad at best in rags or maybe a barrel, these skeletons are dressed in clean tunics and some very fine doublets, some of which have even been cut to flatter the skeletal frame. They're chattering merrily among themselves, though a few stop and look at you with their empty eye sockets as you approach.

Surely you had some reason for coming here? If you're a skeleton yourself then turn to 285. If you're not completely skeletonised, are you here to talk to Aggie's agent (assuming you were on a mission for her, otherwise there's no way you'd know this guy was here) - turn to 449 - or are you here to hire a worker (turn to 776)? If you want to know what this place is all about you can accost a nearby skeleton for more information - turn to 337.

1157

You put up your dukes. With all the theatrics out of the way, you now face Fistface, heavyweight boxing champion of Bilgeton!

🔪**FISTFACE: DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 3 - TOUGHNESS 4**

If you somehow prevail then turn to 741. If you lose then turn to 329.

1158

There's always some arsehole who brings a real weapon to a fancy-dress party and today that arsehole is you. Sadly, this party is formal attire only so your decision to wear military trappings marks you out as both weird and unfashionable. Aside from some snide remarks you attract little attention and spend most of the evening hopping the saltarello on your own in the corner of the ballroom. Eventually one of the household guards approaches and informs you that you're making the guests nervous and strongly implies that if you don't leave at once he'll kick all your teeth down your throat. Since you're not likely to win out in any exchange of blows with this guy you let him escort you from the premises.

Turn to 13.

1159

Your opponent may be tiny but his fists are as hard as little diamonds. He drops your guard with a rapid-fire barrage of hooks and body blows which has you crying in pain. He then knocks you down with a right hook and you never really recover. The rest of the fight resolves into a series of jackhammer blows which thoroughly tenderise you and probably break a whole bunch of things that will be difficult to repair. After getting hit several dozen times you black out.

You come to some time later to the sound of water gently lapping at a shore. Somehow ignoring the pain of what feels like fractured vertebrae you sit up and gaze around through swollen eyes. A nearly full moon illuminates a small lake just outside the forest. In complete agony you grope around for your possessions but find nothing - the brownies must have robbed you blind before dragging you to wherever you are. Remove all items and currency from your Adventure Scroll and deduct 1 ÉLAN from the painful injuries you've sustained. Your energy drained from this small effort, the stars overhead start spinning and you collapse once again into unconsciousness.

Turn to 992.

1160

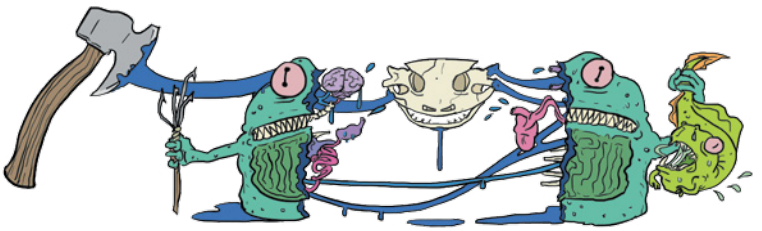
You grovel and cower at your erstwhile friend's feet as he raises his fist to deal you a finishing blow. You wait, but nothing comes.

"Nie jesteś tego wart" he snarls, spitting in disgust as he walks away, leaving you in the gutter weeping. You'd better leave him alone for a while! Remove the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole from your Adventure Scroll and make a note that you may not select him at the start of your next adventure!

Eventually the guard decides to finally get up off his arse to see what all the fighting was about. Seeing you lying in the street outside the gate he waddles out of the guardhouse, drawing his shortsword.

"Get out of here you bum, or I'll call the militia!" he yells. Although you look like Tedbald as far as the guard is concerned, what with your filthy road-stained appearance and generally knightly attire, the knight errant is not known for bawling his eyes out in the street. With your cover blown all you can do is crawl away and try to pull yourself together.

Turn to 827.



1161

You manage to deliver enough damage to the primitive creature that it gives up on trying to devour you. The wet soil emits a grotesque belching noise as the worm slips back under the blood pit to lick its wounds (or however giant worms like to recover from their injuries).

There's no way you're going to get a good night's sleep here after that ordeal. Instead you move away from the blood pit, find somewhere sort of dry to sit, and keep a nervous watch. You hear some dreadful howls and something large lumbers past uncomfortably nearby, but mercifully you're not hassled again before sunrise by anything more dangerous than a swarm of merciless Bastard Flies. Even these disperse as the morning glow dimly filters through the dense canopy of the Schleimwald. It's still a bit dim but at least you can now see where you're stepping. You're able to proceed without lumbering into any other of the dreadful traps that litter this forest.

Several hours later you find yourself hacking your way through the forest verge and back out onto a patchy, half-paved highway. The great city of Bilgeton, its walls looming large, lies just a few miles down the road to the south east. Although you're exhausted you're glad to have gotten out of that forest, and you should be able to find to catch up on your lost sleep soon enough in the comfort of the provincial capital.

Even though you didn't get any shuteye, at least you weren't walking all night. Restore 5 EFFORT for taking a load off and turn to 1732.

1162

Bilgeton, the only large metropolis in the region, lies before you and you intend to make a lasting impression. Ignoring the Trader's Road leading to the authorised entrance, you roll straight to the main gates, a passage reserved for the nobility and military. Nothing much happens as you proceed down the banner-lined, well-maintained road until you're in bow range of the city walls, at which point a crossbow bolt sails from an arrow loop high up above the gate. The projectile punches into a nearby skeleton who chitters in irritation. A guard hollers an ultimatum from atop the walls:

"Halt, merchant! This gate is out of bounds to your ilk and you are trespassing on the ground of those whose feet you are barely fit to be kicked by. Render yourself up for arrest at once or be cut down where you stand". You must decide how to proceed. If you want to rush the gates with your invincible skeleton crew, turn to 849. If you think it'd be safer to turn yourself in, turn to 174. Alternatively you might try to talk your way past the guards by turning to 966. If none of these options sound good you can ditch the wagons and head for the hills by turning to 336.

1163

Kaspars nods.

"Very well, meat friend. One more drink for the road and we'll see you off", he booms. Most of the other trolls, realising that your time with them is growing short, stop their conversations and turn to see what you're doing.

You're already pretty maggoted: there's a good chance you won't survive a second round. Then again, Jeff always said you never could finish anything, and you'd hate to prove him right yet again. Cursing your STEPfather under your breath you make your decision.

If you'd like to politely refuse to kill yourself then you put the bottle down and try to beg off this round of drinks - turn to 1421. On the other hand if you don't want to risk the trolls' wrath for refusing their hospitality then you could see if you could get away with nursing your drink - turn to 1595. If you don't want to take any chances of annoying your hosts (or you're confident you can handle your booze) you stagger over to a pile of bottles and prepare to finish the contents of your stone flask:

DRINKING PROBLEM: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then turn to 1730. If you fail then turn to 1125.

1164

You yell at the giant ant to get its attention and then throw your sugar sack as hard as you can down the tunnel behind you. The gigantic creature turns surprisingly quickly and scuttles right after the delicious treat, trampling you in the process. Lose 5 EFFORT and remove the Sugar Sack from your Adventure Scroll. Hopefully you don't need that stuff later for some reason.

Assuming you survive, with the ant out of the way the path is now clear. You continue forward, heading deeper and deeper into the tunnels. Turn to 1097.

1165

Your dithering has given the guards time to get into position atop the bridge. Still, the stream draws you underneath without them firing a shot at you so you allow yourself a sigh of relief. This turns out to be premature, because as soon as you emerge on the other side a rope net weighted down with lead shot is hurled down right on top of your head.

Before you can drown, a guard positioned by the river bank hauls you out of the water. You don't have time to splutter out any thanks or excuses before the militiaman slams you into the ground and hog-ties you. Another guard, more expensively attired than the others and wearing a badge identifying him as the town sheriff, approaches.

"Another drifter, breaking the law. We don't care for your type in our little town. But even though you tried to get through our toll bridge without paying your way, well, I'm going to do you a real favour. You want a free ride to Bilgeton? You got one."

With that you're given a summary beating, clapped in irons, dragged through the town square and chucked into the back of a barred wagon. A couple of horses are hitched up to the front and the sheriff talks to the driver while another guard locks the cage door shut behind you.

"Another vagrant for the Bilgeton brig. Take him away".

And just like that, before your head has stopped spinning, you find yourself being carted away to Bilgeton!

Turn to 227.

1166

It's the middle of the night in this monster's hunting grounds and you, a half elf who dislikes going outside, are going to attempt to shake a gigantic starving wild dog with a taste for elf-flesh off your trail. Good luck!

DITCHING THE DIRE WOLF - DIFFICULTY 6

If you succeed, turn to 380.
If you fail turn to 581.

1167

You're not going the same way as these guys so you ask for information about the road ahead.

"If I was you, I wouldn't head that way. The Plain of Endless Fortune is impossible to traverse on foot and doesn't really lay within the scope of this adventure, at least not in the north-west. A bit of this book is set there, but it's in the southern part of the map."

You wonder whether it's his grasp of Palavan Humanese or yours that's at fault here.

With no more time to spare for you Hulagu brushes off any further questions and makes his polite but firm farewells. He snaps the reins and the huge birds heave with much squawking and flapping. You step aside to allow the carriages to pass while you think about what to do with what you've just learned.

If, after due consideration, you've changed your mind about the Endless Plain then you can turn back and follow the caravan - turn to 480. If you're you're still keen, you press on - turn to 939.

1168

You run along the street, following the fox. It's clearly waiting for you - as soon as it notices you catching up it runs on a little further and stops for you. This was apparently the trader's street, though no one's doing much trading now. Shopkeepers are already boarding up the store fronts and fights have broken out between merchants, guards and looters. It's unclear which of those groups are doing the most stealing but they're all hauling away impressively large piles of stuff.

Wending your way through this chaos you eventually reach the top of the street, where the fox sits patiently in front of a charming green storefront - some shop called Silvermane's Sundries. Weirdly this one doesn't seem to be affected by the violence unfolding everywhere else in town - it looks like the brownies aren't interested in it for some reason. As you consider the setting the fox sits patiently, regarding you with its slightly too-intelligent eyes and wagging its fluffy tail whenever you look at the store entrance.

If you'd like to do what this fox is painfully obviously demanding of you then turn to 1259. If you'd like to ignore this vulpine envoy and carry on up the road in search of another way out of this madness then turn to 1119.

1169

You paddle onwards and, after a slight struggle against the creek's tepid current, manage to push through the junction where the creek splits off from its parent river. The current of this stream is far faster - a fitter half elf than you could probably struggle against it, but you're tuckered out. Your little punt is borne at slightly faster than walking pace downstream to the north, following the river as it descends from the Big Rock Goblin Mountains.

Since you have nothing to do anymore ,you sit back and relax. The soothing motions of the punt combined with your exhaustion plus a heaping helping of your laziness equals a good nap. You pass out in the bottom of the punt.

It's morning when you wake to a grinding sound as the little boat is run aground on a gravelly shore. The river bore you a long way and has deposited you at the edge of a great lake, deep in the frozen Mist Steppes. Blinking the sleep out of your eyes, you stare blearily towards the sun overhead - it's nearly noon, a relatively early start for you! You sit up and stretch - restore 20 EFFORT from the restful slumber.

Unfortunately you don't have time to wake up properly - your boat has attracted some attention. The water around the beached punt boils fitfully and half a dozen huge black tentacles erupt from the lake. You leap from the boat just as the tentacles slam down on the little craft, smashing it into pieces. A couple of the tentacles coil around the wreckage and draw the whole thing back

and down into the water. You stare in disbelief as the little punt disappears entirely beneath the surface, then take several steps back from the shore. The tentacles seem content with their prize, at least for now, and don't re-emerge for the boat's occupant. Still, it sucks to lose your ride.

Well, there's not much to be done about it but carry on. The only feature in this frozen wilderness- other than the lake - is a tall, snow-capped mountain which juts alone out of the plains ahead several hours walk away, mostly along the shoreline of this lake - turn to 806 to head that way. If you'd like to try to make your way to Bilgeton from here despite not really knowing where it is then turn to 889.

1170

Wrapped up tight in your elfish rags and sleeping motionless wedged in the small gap between a couple of stacks of chests you look like every other piece of worthless tat in the wagon. In fact, you look so much like worthless tat that you manage to snooze all the way to Bilgeton without anyone noticing you. Restore your EFFORT to its maximum and restore 1 ÉLAN if you're injured thanks to the restorative powers of doing nothing.

You sleep right through the trials and tribulations that would normally confront you on this long and dangerous path, until you almost arrive at Bilgeton's Trader's Gates where you are finally awakened by a terrible screech. There's a noise like a hurricane as a strong wind buffets the wagon and a terrible sound of splintering wood. Suddenly the entire wagon lurches upwards and slams back down to the ground. Thoroughly jostled now you take the opportunity to crawl out the back to see what's going on. When you get out there you wish you'd just stayed inside.

Assaulting the caravan is the biggest bird you've ever seen! It looks like a gigantic eagle, but not like those pesky giant eagles that are indigenous to the mountains of this region - it's more like a colossal eagle, as large as a tavern or a church, and it's swooping down on the wagons and tossing them about like toys as it savages the harnesses securing the huge flightless birds to the carriages. If you had the Bestiary (the indispensable guide to all beings and locations in the world of the Bastard Elf, available wherever you can find books or documents waiting to be shredded) you'd identify this thing as a rukh and the giant birds pulling the wagons as rukh chicks. But for you, for now, it just looks like a giant bird doing its best to destroy your ride!

A horn blows and guards begin to line the top of the wall and come streaming out of the gates to somehow do battle with this thing, their shiny metal helmets, halberds and crossbows obviously completely inadequate for the task. Hulagu, driven to madness by his destroyed livelihood, draws his dagger and roars furiously at the monster. The rukh replies by snapping at him, its cruel beak wrenching him up off the ground before devouring him with a single gulp. Absent their paymaster, the rest of the drivers scatter. Peasants and townsfolk, previously queued at the gate, flee in all directions as the rukh lands and, with a single flap of its wings, knocks their goods-laden wagons over. Ignoring the guards who are now fruitlessly firing crossbows at the beast it begins to smash the wagons into firewood since its beak is too big and clumsy to release the harnesses from its children.

You're still quite close to the action, hunkered down behind an overturned carriage and holding for dear life to avoid being blown away. Something must be done! If you want to assist the guards in driving away the monstrous bird then turn to 451. If you want to seize the opportunity to sneak into the city while the gates are unattended then turn to 169.

1171

Faced with overwhelming odds, you bravely decide to save yourself and kick the flanks of your steed as hard as half-humanly possible. The animal gallops off down the road at a good clip, leaving the caravan behind to be despoiled. Well, there was nothing you could do, and you're sure Aggie will understand, you reason as you pat the purse full of money she gave you. No point going back to give her the bad news either, you're sure one of the skeletons will get around to it.

Forget all your WAGONS, GUARDS and PROBLEMS, but make a note that you've failed Aggie (who most certainly will not understand). Once you're sure you're safe you slow down to a canter and, whistling a jaunty tune, continue on your way towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 294.

1172

They hang the Bastard. Your adventure ends here.

1173

You've failed to collect the obscure useful item that would have kept you alive in this situation. Having wandered into a giant ant nest, you've attracted the attention of a mighty Warrior Them! Finally realising the danger, you try to play dead but the ant knows some kind of food is there and doesn't give up. It's got a queen to provide for, after all. You know the jig's up when it pinches your boot, gently at first but then more violently as it begins its attempt to drag you away. Panicking you kick hard, but the monstrous ant just bites down harder with its mighty jaws. No amount of thrashing, begging or pleading prevents the Them! from dragging you deeper and deeper into the nest, ready to serve you up as a bite-sized snack to its queen!

Turn to 1508.

1174

Greater bands than yours would be driven into an early retirement by the kind of beating Seed Drille is giving you on stage - you can't get a note in edgeways as they rock away through their epic saga, introducing and repeating numerous themes layered one atop the other to the incredibly loud acclaim of the audience. But you are not a greater band - you are Queynte, and you are on a Mission from The K-NG. This faith alone allows you to stand your ground as the flautist leaps and dances around you, winding the crowd into a frenzy with his consummate tootlling.

Seed Drille is formidable and the flautist front man rarely screws up. But there are moments where the whole idea of the self-parodying concept ballad belies the apparent folksiness of this hugely popular group. It is into this chink in the otherwise impressive armour that you strike: noticing the audience beginning to flag at the two-hour mark as the saga shifts gears from a

discussion of the importance of introducing a vineyard culture into corn crops to a treatise on the reduction of the public expense such an introduction would engender, you give the high sign to your band. They pick up on the melody and begin playing over Seed Drille. Taking advantage of the flautist's shock at this unheard-of contumely you scream,

"GOOD EVENING BILGETON! WE ARE QUEYNTE AND WE'VE BEEN SENT FROM THE K-NG TO ROCK THIS QUARRY!"

Have you at any point, in any playthrough of this tome, defeated the Shiny Demon? If so turn to 561.

If not, Seed Drille is beginning to recover and the enthusiasm of the audience for your antics is already beginning to wane. You'd better pull something real interesting out of your arse or it's curtains for your musical aspirations!

If you're ready to fight this Battle of the Bands fair and square then turn to 1407. If you'd rather cheat and have some Pixie Bits left over from your journey then turn to 450.

1175

Without further ado you run the half elf through with his own sword and leave his corpse for Aggie to collect. You sheath your new blade and saddle up.

The skeletons have mostly pulled themselves back together and as soon as they're back on the wagons you give the signal to move on. The horses neigh and the wagons shudder forward along the road to Bilgeton. Turn to 937.

1176

You stand high atop the wagon and wave your arms back and forth to show Biff and his gang that a fellow towns-elf is aboard! They must not recognise you because the hail of stones intensifies. One of the rocks clips you on the side of the head and you topple from the wagon like a felled tree, slamming hard into the dirt. Before everything goes dark you see the carriage tipping over onto its side as a wheel is smashed away by a large rock.

You wake up some time after dark with a throbbing headache. You feel dried blood when you touch the side of your head but nothing seems to be broken. Still, it's a painful wound. Lose 10 EFFORT. You sit up and take stock of the situation: you've been dragged into a ditch by the side of the road and robbed. Biff and the others are gone and you've been relieved of all of your cash and any loot you're carrying (remove these from your Adventure Scroll), though you still have your rations so long as you haven't eaten them yet. Food is the last thing on your mind right now though - you're nauseous from the concussion. The carriage looks to have been torn to pieces as the elfs searched for valuables to take away. It's now nothing more than splinters of wood and iron scattered all over the road. You won't find anything of value in there.

You lurch to your feet and wobble violently as the stars wheel crazily overhead. You manage to begin staggering south onto the cobbled road towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 25.

1177

You rise the next morning, well-rested despite the hangover. The skeletons have cleaned your clothes and prepared you a hot breakfast. Restore your ÉLAN and EFFORT to their maximum values. Aggie is outside preparing the caravan to leave and you go down to say goodbye.

"Fare fucking well, and don't put up with any shit from those blasted elfs. They'll jump you as soon as you reach the road so be ready to give them a good ploughing. If there's anything here you could use, let me know and I'll bloody bring it to you."

She hands you a pouch containing 25 Bilgeton Guilders. Add this to the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll.

"That's part payment and it includes the bloody Bilgeford toll so don't go ploughing any whores before you get there. You'll get the rest when you meet my agent in Bilgeton. He's an utter cunt so you'll get on like a fucking house on fire. Now piss off, some of us have some fucking work to do."

Before you go you may select one from the following which may help you on your way: Boots of Elfish Stomping, The Robe and Wizard Hat or A Rusty Scythe of Scything. If you don't already have a horse or other mode of transportation Aggie also gives you a Clapped-Out Old Nag that she has spare (add this to your Adventure Scroll if you're still on foot).

You wave a farewell to the necromancer who is already busy doing something else and pays you no mind. You mount your steed and follow the skeleton caravan as it trundles away. Turn to 608.

1178

Luckily your carriage has another guard who, based on his equipment and demeanour, is better suited to defending this caravan that you are. Unfortunately he's recently seen his comrade in arms (the guy who used to have your spot on the wagon) shredded by a flock of harpies. Not particularly wanting to fight right now he comes to roughly the same conclusion about you as you did about him and decides to leave you to it. Leaping from the wagon he races screaming across the clearing and into the forest to the raucous laughter of the elfs. You're on your own.

If you want to follow suit then turn to 434. If you'd rather stick with the wagon then turn to 328.

1179

The guard is almost as taken aback by this stream of unmitigated bollocks as you are, not least because neither of you know what the word "roisterer" means. Another thing you may not have known is that humans, especially humans in positions of authority, are monstrously corrupt and usually chisel something away for themselves. Although he doesn't believe your story, as far as he knows you are a roisterer, and if you're one of those then you might be a diplomat as well. Since he'd rather not get hung for stealing from the local lord he caves in.

"Fine. Here's the other three", he says, reaching into his pouch and handing over three more Guilders (add these to your Cash section).

You're pretty sure he's still holding out on you, though by the sad looks on his and his comrades' faces it's not a lot more. You get the impression that if you pursue the matter any further you're going to earn a punch on the nose so you let it rest and collect your stuff. Leaving the jailhouse behind you step out onto the main square of Brunnenfeld.

Turn to 16.

1180

If you've been hired as a guard turn at once to 1444.

Otherwise you squirm back inside your carriage and huddle down. Strangely, no one seems to notice you've done that. Even more strangely, the caravan starts to move again almost straight away - there's no way the guards could possibly had time to defeat their enemies and come back. You look out the back of the wagon as it rounds the bend towards Bilgeton and see the taurcents subduing the last of the guards while the rest lay on the ground, their wrists bound with ropes.

As this dismal scene recedes into the distance you reflect smugly that at least you got away. You lean up against a pile of stereotypical fantasy chests and relax as your ride takes you towards Bilgeton. Soon you're fast asleep.

Do you have the Elfish Cloak of Invisibility equipped? If so, turn to 1170. If not, turn to 973.

1181

You head south and soon find yourself at the banks of a rushing river. You've found the starting point of the Bilge, the great river that runs through Bilgeton and into the kingdom of Palaver beyond. Just upstream the great river that flows from the melts of the Skytrap Mountains and winds across the frozen Mist Steppes is joined by numerous streams from the springs of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains. You watch a fast-food wrapper floats past along with a bunch of dead fish suspended in an odd-coloured slick of chemicals and other assorted filth. A heap of garbage has washed up on the river banks, mostly chunks of wood, empty casks and rusted bits of metal. True to its name Bilge is already polluted even at the source - the goblins and drows and other scum that live in the mountains aren't too careful about where they dump their garbage. There's no way it's drinkable. In fact even smelling it stings your nose a little.

Suddenly, inspiration strikes you. The Bilge flows right through Bilgeton, so why not fashion some kind of vessel from the crap washed up on the shore and simply float into town? To give this a whirl turn to 1055.

If you'd rather not ride the river on a home-made floatation device you can take the overland route, following the river bank through the forest towards Bilgeton - turn to 1031.

1182

Biff goes down before your furious fists! The bully drops into the dust, bleeding and crying as he covers his face with his hands. You let out a mighty victory cry, which turns out to be your downfall: Biff's loyal goons recover from their shock at the defeat of their leader before you've even finished yelling out your boast, and they pelt you mercilessly with cobblestones, flinging them from the stick-like tools known as whimsywands. One of the rocks connects with your temple and you collapse like a sack of potatoes right next to your old nemesis. You manage to pull one last hideously smug face before everything goes black.

You wake up some time after dark with a throbbing headache. You feel dried blood when you touch the side of your head but nothing seems to be broken. Still, it's a painful wound. Lose 10 EFFORT. You sit up and take stock of the situation: you've been dragged into a ditch by the side of the road and robbed. Biff and the others are gone and you've been relieved of all of your cash and any equipped weapons (remove these from your Adventure Scroll) but anything else you own is untouched. You wonder if someone or something interrupted the looters before they could get everything.

You lurch to your feet and wobble violently as the stars wheel crazily overhead. Despite your swelling itching brain and nausea from the head wound you feel great about kicking Biff's arse with your bare hands. From now on you can reroll one FIST dice per battle so long as you're not armed (make a note on your Adventure scroll).

You start to totter south, stepping out of the ditch and onto the paved road heading in the direction of Bilgeton. Turn to 25.

1183

The Goblin King is dead, and with him dies the magic that holds much of the Mazyrinth together. The walls of the castle begin to shake and huge chunks of masonry fall from the ceiling. The goblins who were loitering about watching the fight scatter as the world falls down around them. You've barely got time to loot the Goblin King, finding only a Scrying Orb with a single charge left, Toby the Baby, and -reaching into his leggings- a surprisingly Mediocre Codpiece. You've only got time to grab one before the roof caves in - add it to your Adventure Scroll and flee! The entire castle crumbles behind you and the earth itself quakes as the magic holding Gobholme together begins to fade away.

Shoving your way through the chaos of panicking goblins rushing around the town square you return through the Mazyrinth via the way you came earlier. There are no head-throwing goblins or fairies or talking doors, or any of the other attractions that the place is meant to hold - it's now silent and dead aside from an ominous red glow coming from the Goblin Town.

With the Goblin King dead the future of Gobholme is extremely questionable. Make a note of your victory and turn to 1151 to continue on with your journey, putting the scene of this devastation far behind you.

1184

The demon moves his queen like a knight, knocking over a pawn and threatening your rook.

"Checkmate!" it cries triumphantly. It's too late to correct the demon's playstyle now - in the full flush of victory the demon slices your head clean off and drags your soul back with it into the Daemonic Plane where you will languish for eternity. Your adventure (though not your torment) ends here.

1185

No one ever comes for you - it seems that as soon as they found out you stole the creature you've been riding around on they simply decide that you're in the right place and leave you there. Since it's an oubliette it does what it says on the tin and you're swiftly forgotten.

Your adventure ends here.

1186

You've got to get inside for some reason! You decide that the best way to do this is to attack the murderous bouncer. He grins horribly and clenches his fists.

🔪**BENNY THE BOUNCER : DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

Did you win? If so turn to 320. Otherwise you receive the arse-kicking of a lifetime - lose 10 EFFORT as you're hurled violently into the road, chipping at least a few teeth as you land face first on the stones. None of the wealthy passers-by do anything but tut, titter and comment, "I say", as you painfully haul yourself back to your feet.

If you need a drink to help you get over this drubbing you can turn to 1497 to head over to the Dribbling Wand which will hopefully be a bit more lax about who they let in. If this experience has put you off the pub scene in Bilgeton you can just get on with whatever you came to the city to do by turning to 827.

1187

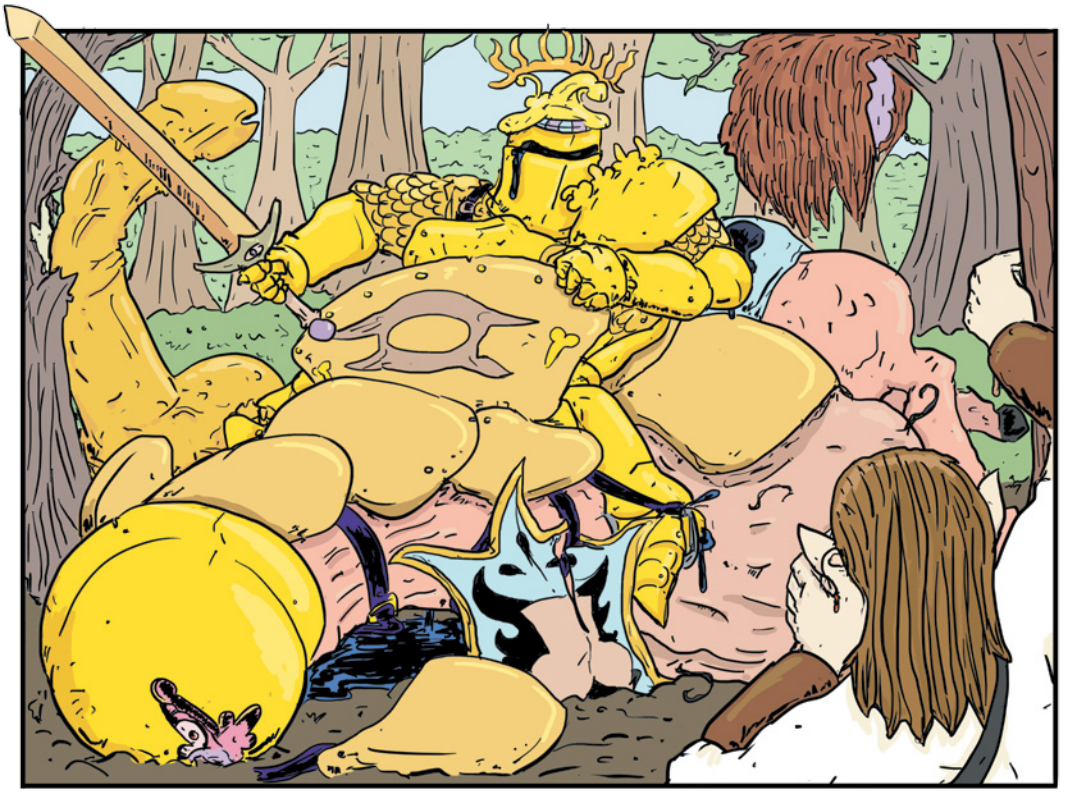
Well, that was the idea, but face-to-face with the nearest horse you recall that elfs don't traditionally have much use for the things, which they consider to be environmentally-unfriendly hay-guzzlers. As a result you never learned to ride, though there's no time like the present, especially since the present includes a gaggle of armed guardsmen coming to give you a stomping at best and a killing at worst.

Instead of the dashing escape you had planned you scrabble awkwardly at the side of the horse, trying to get into the saddle.

SADDLE UP: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then add the Noble Steed to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1432.
If you fail or give up then turn to 1086.

1188



You regain consciousness to a terrible roaring sound. The Phalloknight has gone off his game completely. His steed has gone limp and won't get up. The demonic knight is trapped, immobilised with his leg trapped under his penis and, by the looks of the puddle of blood forming under him, partially torn off as well. The armour plates and war gear scattered around the ground is evidence of the rapid shrinkage which is what threw the Phalloknight to the ground while galloping.

You have no way of knowing this, but the Shamhat the Horrible's Greater Daemoniacal Circle of Unsealing that you constructed was slightly imperfect, and the Word of Power you uttered was pronounced just a tiny bit incorrectly. Although this was still enough to summon a powerful demon, its essence is fatally compromised. It is bound more by the rules of this universe than its own, and in this universe you can't just stay up all the time. What goes up must come down.

The Phalloknight is seriously hurt, barely mobile and safely far away, but still presents a threat. His lance is shattered against a tree but he wields a huge sword which he starts swiping around in your direction as soon as he notices you stirring. You must decide on how to proceed.

If you still have Pixie Bits, you can render him harmless enough to approach and finish him off. Turn to 341. Or if you have a bow you could shoot him until he dies. Turn to 1601.

If you believe that nothing this splendid should die such a base death and you have the Medical Diploma or at least a Healthy Poultice then turn to 460.

Otherwise you just sidle past it outside of sword reach, forget what you've seen and done here and make your way back over to the road. Turn to 1609.

1189

You don't have a weapon capable of piercing the ant's thick rear armour, but you definitely get its attention. The monstrous insect turns in the tight tunnel with surprising agility and looms up as high as it can, scraping the ceiling with its antennae. It emits the weird warbling cry you heard earlier, spraying out a horrible-smelling acidic spittle from its maw as it does so.

It now considers you a threat, and the front part of the ant is just as heavily armoured as the back! You're in a tight pinch, a pinch which is going to get even tighter if this gigantic monster manages to get at you with its huge snapping pincers!

Do you know the weak spots of these creatures? If so multiply the number of letters in that word with the number of times the letter "n" appears in the word, add it to this paragraph number and turn to that paragraph. It it makes sense, read on. If not, come back here and face the music.

Failing all else you could attempt to use the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes, if you have it in your possession - turn to 275 to try it out.

If you don't have the ring and have no idea of the giant ant's weak spots you don't stand a chance - annoyed by your provocations it nips at you with its giant pincers, tearing you clean in half. Your adventure ends here.

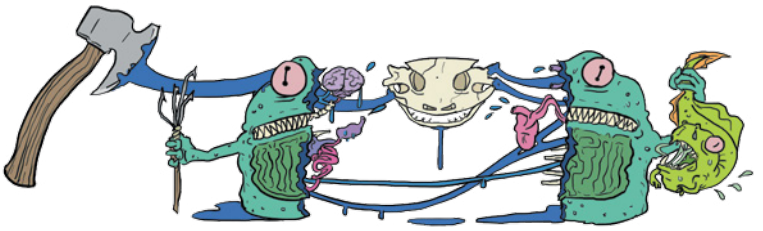
1190

You must exercise extreme caution crossing this swamp so late at night - some of the pitfalls here could plunge you up to your neck in swamp water and there are all kinds of predators lurking about, like the colossal forest snail you can see bathing under the moonlight in a particularly soggy patch up ahead. Luckily those things are as slow as any other snail so you're able to avoid it with ease, though your escape is complicated by the treacherous terrain:

PATHFINDING: DIFFICULTY 10 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you fail to overcome this challenge you stumble and sink into the swamp often enough to become saturated with fetid pondwater, ruining your perishables: remove all food items, maps, scrolls (including the Medical Diploma and Residency Scroll, at least for this adventure) and elfish currency from your Adventure Scroll.

After about an hour of slow going the ground begins to firm up a little and you make a bee-line through the forest for the road to Bilgeton. Turn to 1331.



1191

Unbeknownst to you, one of the monster eyes in your collection has been hanging out the side of your pack and has been staring at the belligerent greaser for a while now.

"You better stop looking at me like that, fuck-face," the man snarls aggressively. You try to point out that he's talking to your backpack but the bruiser is spoiling for a fight and won't be deterred. The dwarfen women scream and flee. Knowing what's coming, the other bar patrons and the bartender rush for cover behind the bar, tables and whatever else they can find.

🔪**SAVAGE SID - DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

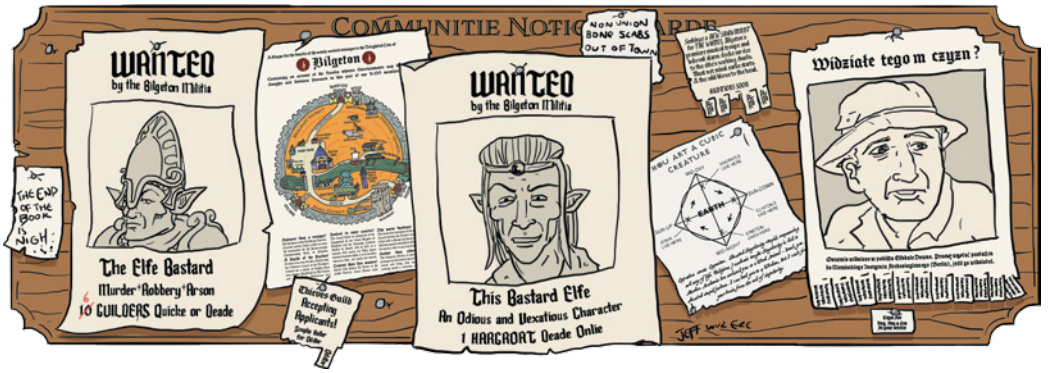
If you're wondering why Sid would pick fights at a bar instead of waiting for the boxing tournament to release his belligerence, you soon have your answer - Sidney's chosen a switchblade which he flicks out of his jacket and waves around menacingly.

If you win thie fight then turn to 463.
If you lose this fight or want to chuck in the towel turn to 756.

1192

You continue through the woods and, after an interminable slog uphill you begin to notice the ground getting rockier and scrabblier and the trees thinning out. You finally emerge from the forest and find yourself halfway up a long and winding mountain trail.

Turn to 521



1193

As you're climbing out of your pit you find yourself face-to-face with a horror from your worst nightmares - a living, breathing skeleton. Well, it's probably not breathing but the fully-dressed corpse is looming over you, fists clenched and teeth chattering wildly. Could this be divine retribution for your crimes against the dead? Before you can figure out which of your elfish deities you've annoyed the horror attacks, swinging its bony fists wildly.

🔪**GREENBONES: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you defeat this graveyard guardian then turn to 510. If you throw yourself on the mercy of this osseous opponent then turn to 1599.

1194

The leader of this gang of ruffians is clearly a well-trained swordsman, but far too clever for his own good. He attempts a complicated feint that would have caused a trained swordsman to raise his guard, at which point he would have followed through with a thrust right through the stomach. Unfortunately for him you're not trained and his threatening move causes you to scream and crouch down into a ball. His finishing thrust goes clean over your head, the momentum of his attack carries him forward and he trips over you, banging his head on a tree stump as he topples to the ground. There's a sickening crunch as the flamboyant swordsman's neck twists at an obscene angle and Rouge-Gorge is still.

The death of their leader causes his band of ruffians to panic, but hard-pressed by the woodsmen they're unable to flee and are hacked down by the axes, hatchets and carving blades of the lumberjacks.

There's no rest for the hardy woodsmen though - with the strange warriors despatched they need to turn their attention back to Biggins, who in his reverse-taurcent form seems to have taken an unholy interest in the mare. He's dragging three full-grown lumberjacks behind him as he prepares to trample Simon who stands between him and the object of his horsey affections. Seeing you unoccupied, Simon calls out to you.

"You! I've had enough of this. Every bloody day. Take the mare and get going. It'll be one Guilder, take it or leave it."

As if to emphasise the point Briggins kicks out behind him, felling one of the lumberjacks like an axed tree. You can't help but admire the human dedication to commerce even under the most trying circumstances. If this sounds like a good deal and you've got the money then you flip over a Guilder and mount up. The horse needs no persuading to get moving and you soon leave the chaos of the woods behind. A couple hours of hard and bumpy riding to the south finds you on the well-maintained cobbled road to Bilgeton, which you begin to follow to the east in the direction of the big city. Add the Clapped-Out Old Nag to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1455.

If, on the other hand, your elfish distrust of humans and horses is piqued, you decide not to cut a deal. You may take one of the Foppish Hat, the Heirloom Sword or a purse of 5 Guilders which you find on your fallen opponent and then you get the hells out of there, leaving the woodmen and their various problems far behind. You soon emerge from the trees and trek onwards on foot.

Turn to 282.

1195

Turning your back on this galloping behemoth was a bad move. The Phalloknight is very used to impaling things from behind, and he's on top of you long before you reach the edge of the clearing. Struck in the back at full speed by a couched lance the size of a battering ram, you explode into little more than a fine red mist.

1196

While the idea of introducing yourself to these humans was brave, your trials and tribulations have given you an extremely unpleasant and seamy disposition. The guards. knowing trouble when they see it, have no intention of letting you approach. You face a trio of the brutes now - wearing iron helms and padded gambesons and armed with halberds and crossbows. There's no way you can beat them in a fight - these guards actually look like they might know what they're doing with their weapons, but you're a pretty greasy half elf: perhaps you could slip past them?

SLIPPING THROUGH THE CRACKS: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2

Since you haven't done any harm yet, these guards are more interested in running you off than anything else. If you give up you simply skulk away. They don't bother pursuing but merely glower at you harmlessly as you leave. Turn to 817.

If you succeed, you slip on by the surprised guards who are far more used to suspicious people running away from them than towards them. They quickly recover and raise the alarm, and you watch in horror as more guards which were previously scattered around the clearing start approaching, weapons drawn. The nobles, hearing the commotion, seek shelter inside a huge, magnificent hunting tent which looks better built and far more expensive than your draughty tower back home. Suddenly a crossbow bolt whizzes by your ear from behind - the guards you just evaded are coming for you again, and this time they mean business. You're either going to have to fight your way out for real this time - turn to 1495 - or, spying a beautiful stallion munching on some grass outside the tent, will you leap up into the saddle and ride out of here in style? If so turn to 1187.

1197

You tell Karol you've had enough - skipping out on a bill is one thing, but taking on even one of the no-doubt highly trained and elite members of a private security detail is quite another! Ignoring the disappointed look on the giant man's face you find a safe place sit down to think about your next move.

Turn to 827.

1198

The wizard scoffs.

"You can't even pronounce it right. It's not like you could afford it. And even if you could, what would you do with it? Someone with your limited palate could hardly even begin to appreciate the craftsmanship that goes into my creations".

If you insist on getting your drink then turn to 262. If you're growing weary of this wizard and this horrible place you could just leave - turn to 1532.

1199

You've struck the guard a mortal blow. As his blood pools on the guardhouse floor you begin to panic - what have you done? Rather than face the music for your crime you instead try to stuff the unfortunate household churl and his effects under the guardhouse desk.

Normally, murder in Bilgeton would attract the death penalty but as someone impersonating a noble you're about to get a crash course in the niceties of human society. When the town militia are alerted to the crime by the maid who finds the body, a small portion of your estate will encourage them to ignore the murder weapon you stupidly stored in the umbrella holder right next to the front door and they will instead focus their investigations on some unlucky member of the Bilgeton homeless population who will be found guilty and publicly executed. You'll fire the maid and get around to hiring a new guard when you remember.

For now you try to forget about the thing you did. If you have the Signet Ring then turn to 1777. If you do not then turn to 789.

1200

As Aggie predicted, the elfs have attacked! How much trouble you're in will depend on your PROBLEMS. Check your Adventure Scroll.

If you have no PROBLEMS then turn to 550.
If you have 1 PROBLEM then turn to 814.
If you have 2 PROBLEMS then turn to 578.
If you have 3 or more PROBLEMS then turn to 301.

1201

Not one to give up easily all of a sudden, you decide to head over to the bank. It's an imposing marble building on the western edge of the market, near some well-to-do merchant houses. The great wall of the city rises up hard behind it, looming over the bustling scene of rich merchants and numerous black-clad bank functionaries rushing about their probably important business.

Entering the bank through the huge oaken doors, you go to approach a teller but are met with a wall of tutting and groaning. You suddenly become aware of a lengthy queue which you must join. You stand at the back for a while but the line goes nowhere and you're steadily running out of patience. Lose 1 EFFORT.

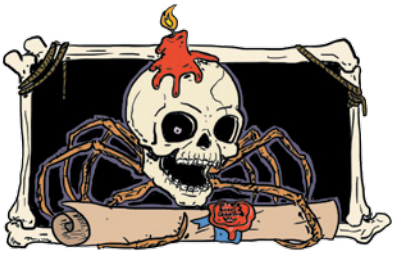
If you wish to continue to wait then turn to 1304. If you're done with this noise you can finally give up, leave the market behind and figure out how to end this adventure by turning to 827.

1202

All these human grave markers look pretty much the same to you so you sink your shovel into the ground in front of the nearest one and start digging. Unlike elfs, humans like to bury their dead deep so it takes a surprising amount of digging to get to what you're after. Eventually though you hear a loud thud and a splintering of wood as your shovel strikes a coffin - payday! But what have you uncovered?

Despite the soothing song of the shovel and the pleasing softness of its ergonomic handle digging is very hard work. Lose 5 EFFORT and then roll a die if you're still standing. If you rolled 1 or 2 then turn to 1087. If you rolled 3 or 4 then turn to 1431. If you rolled 5 or 6, turn to 1087.

If the task of digging wore you out (by reducing your EFFORT to 0) then turn to 38.



1203

With uncharacteristic wisdom you decide that it's time to get out of here before the guards return. Humans might be "pragmatic" about situations that threaten their health, but they're not elfs - if they're being paid to do something they'll usually stop running eventually and get back to work.

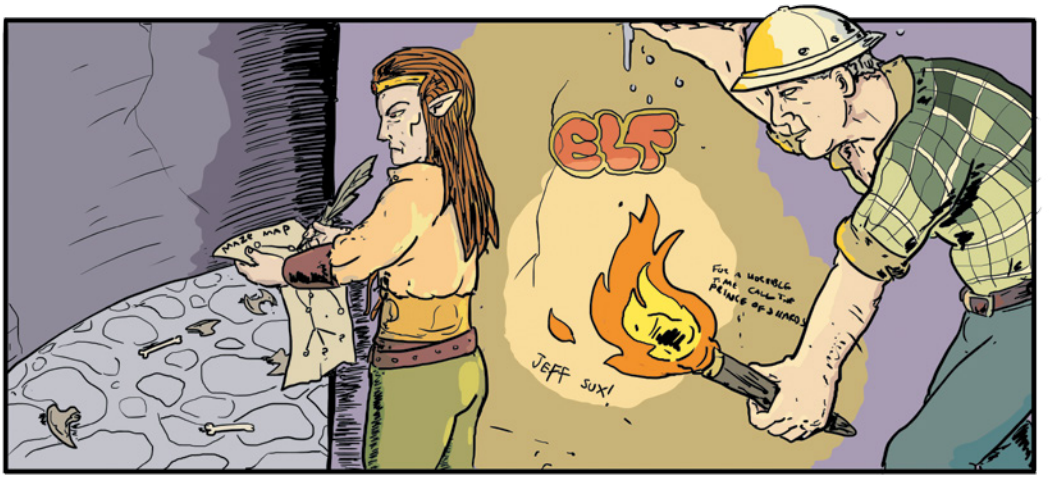
If you'd like to sneak out of here on foot so as not to give them any extra crimes to pin on you, turn to 954. If you'd rather pinch a horse for a quick getaway then turn to 79.

1204

Try as you might you can't get anywhere near the barbarian with his gigantic sword in the way. You receive a nasty slash which, fortunately for you, is turned by one of your many elfen belt buckles before it guts you (destroying the buckle in the process - if you have Extra Buckles, the Sweet Belt or a Championship Belt remove one of them of your choice from your Adventure Scroll, otherwise it's just one of your many regular buckles with no real effect other than the sartorial damage). As you crawl away sobbing about your belt, lost before its time, the barbarian gives you a hard kick in the buttocks which sends you flying into a nearby alleyway. You lie there lamenting your fate and your pummelled posterior as the huge man chops down the goblins who are hassling his buddy. Now free to go, the duo flee back out into the Mazyrinth with a column of heavily armoured goblins following hot on their heels.

You wait a little while for things to settle down before you emerge sheepishly from the alleyway, hoping that no one that witnessed that shameful display is still alive to share the story. Turn to 218.

1205



Ignoring the inscription, you walk through the secret entrance. Karol follows, stooping low to avoid scraping his head on the ceiling. You briefly wonder what would possess a 10-Foot tall man to take up a career in Dungeoneering, a field which involves much stooping and crouching even for far shorter adventurers.

Breaking your train of thought, Karol suddenly shakes you by the shoulders and blurts out a phrase in his strange tongue, "Znaleźliśmy Labiryntu w Człowiek Nietoperz!", whatever that means. He seems happy, so you assume this will turn out to be a profitable adventure.

You take in your surroundings - bare stone walls and a paved floor: standard dungeon fare. A thick layer of dust covers everything - it looks like no one's been here in a very long time. A short distance ahead of you there is a sharp left-hand turn. The wall to your right is straight, terminating at a 90-degree angle at this junction. The left-hand wall curves sharply around the corner. It seems like you might be about to enter a horrid choose-your-own-adventure maze. Shuddering, you brace yourself for what's to come.

If you want to turn the corner turn to 863. If you'd prefer to turn back now before it's too late, you step right back through the arch: turn to 1339.

1206

You strip down to your skin (or perhaps you were already buck naked: sadly, the book lacks the capacity to tell unlike those damned personal computers and their text adventures that will probably spell doom for the adventure gamebook genre at some point in the mid 90s). As you streak towards the entrance in all your half elf glory you can't help but notice that the humans seem distinctly unimpressed by what they're seeing.

Luckily for you, your stringy, almost emaciated body is considered very attractive by skeleton standards and, like most bouncers, the guards are more than happy to let hot people into the club even if they're not on the list. Instead of striking you down with their halberds they uncross them and you streak right on through into the ballroom.

Once inside you may get dressed again if you wish. Make whatever adjustments you need to and turn to 585.

1207

You wisely decide to get away from anyone who yells "Oy!" at you, especially if they're wearing armour and carrying a huge halberd. Although you should have been able to get away easily you're all stiff from all that crouching and you trip over a branch as you awkwardly waddle away, thereby squandering your head start. By the time you're up and ready to make your escape the guard is almost on top of you.

GREAT ESCAPE: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then turn to 1051. Should you fail to get away or just give up then turn to 1624.

1208

You approach the whiskey cask and tap it so as to remove some of its contents. But even after a mugful of booze it's still not light enough to carry... maybe another will help?

Some time later the wounded priest staggers back into his home carrying his destroyed skeleton gardener only to find you rolling around on the floor, drunk as a lord amid his scattered possessions which you've thrown everywhere while looting the place. He's furious at you for some reason and tans your drunken hide, though being a religious man, he stops somewhere short of killing you.

Having extracted his tooth for a tooth (several, in this case), the priest grabs you by your hair and the next thing you know you're being dunked head first into the (still mostly-full) barrel of whiskey. Just before you run out of air the priest yanks your head back and out of the liquid. You collapse on the floor, soggy, sozzled and thoroughly shellacked. Lose 1 ÉLAN from the booze (which you will regain next time you sleep) and a further ÉLAN (which you will not recover by resting) from the partially-crippling injuries the priest has meted out.

Now turn to 1593.

1209

The elfs scatter before you, freeing one of the wagons! Unfortunately, the skirmish has drawn the attention of the rest of the elfs who, being numerous and well-armed, refuse to relinquish their prize to a single scared-looking half elf and an assortment of jittery skeleton guards. This time they form up into a single body, making no attempt to do anything other than drive you back. Should you have the Boots of Elfish Stomping equipped they've made a serious blunder: turn to 1012. If you have the Pixie Bits you can think of a way to make their un-elfish tactic of grouping together work against them : turn to 1233. Otherwise if you want to free the next caravan you must fight:

🔪**ELFEN BAND: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 6**

Each time these elfs hit you they destroy 1 GUARD or inflict 1 ÉLAN damage from wounds.

If you defeat the elfs, turn to 309. If you can't prevail then it's your turn to retreat - turn to 1365.

1210

You've probably read the Bestiary and know just how to handle Them! when you run into Them! Kudos! You swing at the closest antenna and smash it clean off, causing the monster to rear back in pain and confusion. It soon recovers from the surprise and warbles its terrifying call as it snaps its pincers open and shut. Dribbling acid from its lethal maw it lurches forward to the attack!

THEM!: DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 1
If you fail, you're ant food - the enraged creature crushes you with its mighty pincers. Your adventure ends here.

If you defeat this monster then you slash, mash or otherwise tear off its remaining antenna. With a horrible screaming noise it collapses to the floor of the tunnel, convulsing unpleasantly. Since it's not quite dead and still more than capable of tearing your head off if you get too close to it, you forgo the usual looting spree and carefully sidle around the thrashing heap of snapping pincers and kicking legs. You make it safely to the other side and continue on your way, leaving the wounded ant to its fate.

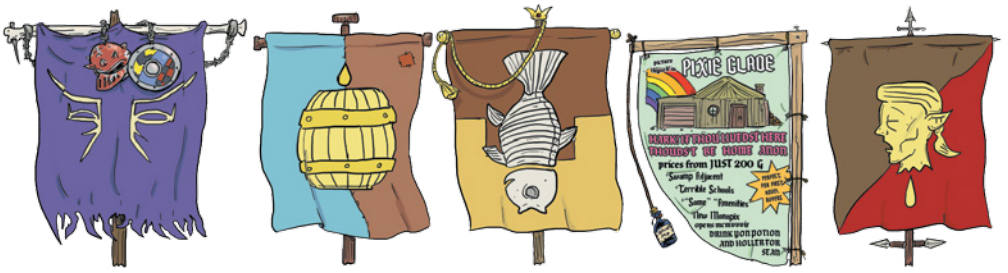
Turn to 1097.

1211

The dragon's eyes open wide in horror as you heft your macabre improvised weapon and take a mighty swing with it. It's too tubby to get out of the way in time and the diamond-hard stinger at the tip of the bulbous tail slams right into the dragon's gut, where it sticks firmly. The dragon opens its maw to dispense fiery revenge on you but nothing comes out other than a pitiful wisp of smoke. Its eyes bulge comically and the smoke is followed with a stream of projectile neon-green vomit that you deftly avoid by leaping to the side.

The foul-smelling stuff has barely spattered on the floor behind you when the dragon lets out a groan. "Ugh... I don't feel too good... I'm going to .... lie down". With that, the beast promptly falls face-first onto the floor, stone cold dead. Although you're pretty sure this outcome had more to do with your lucky choice of weapon and less to do with your heroic nature, that's not what the bards will sing about once you're done boasting. You're already taking on the swaggering airs of a true adventurer. Add 1 FIST for your brave exploits.

Manticore venom is extremely dangerous stuff and probably the only thing other than an enchanted sword that someone like you could have used to take this dragon down. With the tail used up and buried under a mountain of dead dragon you leave it behind (remove it from your Adventure Scroll) and consider your next move: will you get stuck right into looting the cavern (turn to 113) or will you harvest some parts from the dragon first (turn to 1516)?



1212

An individual elf on its own isn't much of a threat to anyone but they can be vicious in a pack. You're giving as good as you're getting but the remaining elves begin to take advantage of their numerical superiority and are creeping around to strike your undefended sides and back. You're in a tight spot! For every point of TOUGHNESS left on the elfs in the last encounter, roll a die. Add all the rolls together and subtract this much from your EFFORT from the kicking you receive. Instead, you can sacrifice as many items of loot as you like: for each item you give up roll 1 less die. The items you select are broken or pinched in the scuffle but at least you avoid taking the thrashing you have coming to you.

Should you survive this rough handling, you are amazed when the attack suddenly slackens off. Some of your enemies actually turn and flee before you! You briefly feel unbearably smug about your martial prowess until you spot the real cause of the rout - several of the aforementioned skeletons have burst into the brawl, swinging rusty but dangerously sharp weapons with the annoyingly high level of enthusiasm skeletons usually display when carrying out this task. There are three skeletons present but the other two have charged into the remaining elfen brawlers, leaving you face to skull with a single adversary:

🔪**JAUNTY SKELETON - DIFFICULTY 10**

If you defeat the skeleton turn to 74. If you want to throw yourself on the mercy of your undead foe turn at once to 61.

If you've read this far without rolling any combat dice then you've displayed an ability to think a bit more strategically about these kinds of situations. Instead of fighting this skeleton, do you instead turn your back on it and continue fighting your mutual enemy, the elfs? If so turn to 228. Finally, you could simply play possum and loot the corpses when it's all over. Turn to 910 to attempt this heroic plan.

1213

You've probably read the Bestiary and know just how to handle Them! when you run into Them! You swing at the antennae and smash both feelers clean off, causing the monster to rear back in pain and confusion. With a horrible screaming noise it collapses to the floor of the tunnel, convulsing unpleasantly. Since it's not quite dead and still more than capable of tearing your head off if you get careless, you forgo the usual looting spree and carefully sidle around the thrashing heap of snapping pincers and kicking legs. You make it safely to the other side unharmed and carry on down the tunnel, leaving the wounded ant to its fate.

Turn to 1097.

1214

The wolf flees into the mountains and the Ghost Who Roams is now the Ghost Who Lays On His Back Moaning In Pain. You take the opportunity to rob him of all he possesses, which doesn't come to much - the Skull Ring is the only thing which might come in handy. You blanch at the thought of touching the man's external underwear, let alone the disturbingly form-fitting attire, though if you choose to do so then turn to 1561.

Maybe it's time to get out of here before the Spectre stages a recovery. To hoof it out of the mountains and into the shifting fogs and vapours of the Mist Steppes or turn to 1812. To turn back through the mountain passes to the south-east turn to 898. Otherwise you can enter the forbidding skull cave to see if there's anything more to steal by turning to 978.

1215

Having learned to no longer take things for granite around this cheaply-constructed Mazyrinth, you kick a huge hole in what turns out to be a painted plywood wall and go inside the caterpillar's house. For you it's a cramped little affair and you have to bend over double to get into the living room, but for a caterpillar you suppose it's pretty palatial. You trample a sofa and smash a chandelier as you struggle in but the caterpillar, a gracious host, doesn't seem to mind. Lounging on a tiny chaise longue in front of you is the "missus", who looks pretty similar to the first caterpillar but she's got some lipstick and mascara on. The caterpillar introduces you.

"This 'ere's the missus. Say allo, love", he says. The missus flutters her ample eyelashes at you. "Allo, love", she squeaks, smiling.

"I'm off to fix the tea", announces the first caterpillar. "Don't do anything I wouldn't do!". With that he inches towards the kitchen door. You notice that the missus has been staring at you this whole time, licking her lips. She pats the chaise longue with her tail, inviting you to sit down. Is she coming on to you? As you uncomfortably lower yourself onto the chair she lays her rear abdominal segments over your leg, dispelling any doubt. You begin to sweat - she's a grotesque little insect and her husband's just in the next room. You're a creep but even you couldn't stoop to this level… could you?

If you could then turn to 1044.
If this is too depraved even for you then turn to 370.

1216

You head on over to Reynfrid's Music Exchange, doing your best to muscle your way through the market crowds. Stepping through the entrance of the large, mural-coated building you find yourself in a store jammed with boxes of merchandise. Hurdy-Gurdies, psalteries, rebecs, citoles and even a chitarrone hang from hooks on the walls by their straps, drums big and small are displayed all over the shop floor and shawms, sackbuts and crumhorns are piled haphazardly on shelves. But what really draws your attention is the Fender Bilgeton Deluxe Aerocaster lute. You reach out to touch the glowing maple wood of the master-crafted instrument...

Suddenly you hear a man's voice from the dark corner of the store where the counter is located. "Pardon me... but we do have a strict policy concerning the handling of the instruments... an employee of Reynfrid's Music Exchange must be present" it says. Looking around sharply you see that someone's been watching you since you came in - well, not exactly watching, as the human to whom the voice belongs is clearly blind since he's wearing the trademark blackout spectacles. "Now, may I help you?" he continues cheerfully.

If you'd like to enquire about the lute turn to 802. If you'd rather rob the blind storekeeper even blinder then turn to 1553.

1217

You're stopped by an armoured guard immediately after passing through the gateway.

"Halt! Strange visitor, identify yerself", says the guard, glaring at you through the eye slit in his metal helmet. "Be ye man, or be ye elf?"

This question seems to cut you to the core of your being! How do you answer?

If ye be man, turn to 1480. If elf, turn to 1460.

1218

You surrender, placing your hands on the cart as instructed.

"You know, you try to be nice to some people" the sheriff says, shaking his head as he pats you down for weapons. If you have any weapons equipped they're confiscated - remove them from your Adventure Scroll.

You're taken to the town lockup where the town guards spend some time deliberating as to whether or not you actually are an elf under all that filth you've accumulated on the road. While the sheriff fills out the arrest vellum the militia decide to give you a clean - a dunk in a tub of water filthier than you are. Then they decide to give you a shave. One of the guards draws a razor-sharp dagger from his belt and advances on you while one of his colleagues restrains you.

Suddenly it dawns on you - thanks to your elfish heritage you don't have any facial hair! These humans mean to cut your throat with that blade!

If you want to draw first blood then turn to 1568. If you're pretty sure they've just made an honest mistake and really do want to give you a pleasant shave then turn to 621.

1219

You ask Karol for ideas. He thinks for a moment before replying.

"Odetnij obie anteny".

No further help is forthcoming, as usual. Turn back to 1189 and come up with a plan.

1220

You find yourself in an open cave. There are four exits from this cave - you can go west, northwest, north or east. There's also a passage to the south, but there's something awfully foreboding about it - perhaps it's the dusty smell which in a fantasy setting can only mean an unexplored crypt, or maybe it's the distant moans of shamblers or the tinkling of living skeletons you can hear from that direction. Whatever's there you can explore it in a future adventure by taking a different path, but for now you're leaving it well alone.

To go west turn to 319. To go northwest turn to 279. For north turn to 1301. To go through the eastern tunnel turn to 529.

1221

You wake up some unknown amount of time later lying on the cold stone floor of a prison cell. As soon as your head stops spinning from the beating you received, you sit up and take in your surroundings. A tiny, iron-barred window allows a stream of bright daylight in, illuminating the contents of the cell: a wooden pallet which your captors couldn't even be bothered to heave you on to when they dumped you here, a small heap of filthy straw in the corner and a bruised and beaten half elf. There's a softer light glowing through the iron bars of your cell door - torch light from the guard room next door where a couple of your captors are passing the time gambling with dice around a large oak table.

One of the guards, a human with an ugly blonde moustache, notices that you're stirring.

"Awake, be he", he croaks in rustic humanese at his colleague, who stops messing around with his limited-edition Sword of the Bastard Elf dice and squints in your direction. The pair stand up and approach your cell door.

All your stuff's been confiscated by the guards, but did you have a Cut Purse in your possession when you were busted? If so turn to 1704. If you're without the purse but you did have the Enchanted Tools then turn to 58. Otherwise if you'd like to stay calm and see what these humans want from you then turn to 233. If you'd prefer to make a bad situation worse then turn to 134.

1222

Whoever this guy is, he couldn't be any worse than being left to the tender mercies of these barbaric horse-men. With great difficulty you pull yourself together and cease your sobbing. This display of resolve is enough to convince the hooded figure that you're good enough for whatever purpose he or she has for you, and a handful of leaves and twigs is enough to secure the deed to your ownership. While the taurcent slaver whinnies discontentedly at having to take elfish currency to get rid of you, your new master leads you away to your new life of slavery.
After a lengthy journey on foot which mostly follows the path you took, you find yourself back in Elfsdale Downs where the identity of your saviour is finally revealed: he or she pulls back the voluminous hood to reveal the familiar smiling face of your mother! But your gratitude is swiftly dashed when you learn that she wasn't buying you to give you your freedom: instead she intends to strictly enforce the terms of your slavery! To add insult to injury you won't even be permitted to return to your room which has already been converted into Jeff's study: instead you will sleep in front of the kitchen stove. You spend the rest of your days carrying out your parent and step-parents' household chores, running their errands and standing in for them at their places of employment while they smugly loaf about doing nothing whatsoever.

1223

Your hatred of Jeff has reached such a pitch that you want all trace of him and everything he cares about wiped off the face of Nonce. You stand before the gates of his beloved school which gave him the diploma of Lorewardening that he hangs in your house - your house! - with so much pride. It must burn.

To that end you scurry around the deserted town rounding up every piece of cloth, every splinter of dry wood, every scroll and every scrap of vellum you can find, dumping them by the armful at the base of the ancient oak. Once everything's there you strike a spark from your flint and ignite the conflagration.

The oak, like near everything else in the Schleimwald, is damp, but the heat from the fire is such that after some smouldering it ignites. Its rotten old heart which houses the school is nice and dry so the fire spreads rapidly, and the guttering flames lick up the side of the tree and into the branches and leaves overhead. The boughs collapse with surprising speed, knocking over a couple of the rickety stone towers that were built beneath their shade. Sparks fly everywhere, setting the thatch and wood tiles of most of the remaining towers on fire. Within minutes your act of arson has become an inferno which threatens to engulf the village of Aelfsburg entirely.

Make a note that you've destroyed Aelfsburg. Certain that the smoke billowing out of the forest clearing will attract unwelcome attention you decide to get going while you still can. You launch yourself into the undergrowth and take off running - a far riskier proposition at night than at day.

If it's still nighttime then turn to 1804. Otherwise, after a fast jog through the Schleimwald you soon find yourself emerging from the tangled forest onto a patchy, half-paved highway. Bilgeton, its walls looming large, lies just a few miles down the road to the south east. and turn to 1732.

1224

Taking the sputtering torch, you head for the major treasure room in hope of major treasures. The rough-cut tunnel winds deep into the cave before opening out onto the treasure chamber.

There's really not a lot here - the bones of a small snake, a dented-up old cup, a large stack of papers bearing a script for a play about some dude called Fortinbras and a red stick with a wick sticking out of it like a candle. It's all worthless crap but as you kick the papers aside in frustration something beneath catches your eye as it glints in the torchlight - a pitted, corroded old sword with an ornate handle and hilt. It's of human make so despite its wretched condition it's still better weighted and probably sharper than any elf blade. You may add Excalibur to your Adventure Scroll.

The torch is just about dead, so you make your way back through the tunnel and arrive at the living area just as it burns out completely. You chuck the smouldering stump carelessly on the ground.

With nothing left to do in the cave you head for the exit. Turn to 1738.

1225

You paddle to the side of the tunnel where several of the hands grab your punt, holding it fast. You're about to try to figure out how to work these things when a bunch of them reach out, grasp you by your shirt and lift you several feet of the deck. As you dangle in the firm grip of this collection of hands an odd thing happens - a few of the hands contort themselves into shapes that look kind of like faces, their fingers twisting to resemble brows, noses and mouths. Improbably, a voice booms out of one of these faces.

"Up, or down?"

Since you look shocked, it repeats the question.

"Up (turn to 117), or down (turn to 634)?"

1226

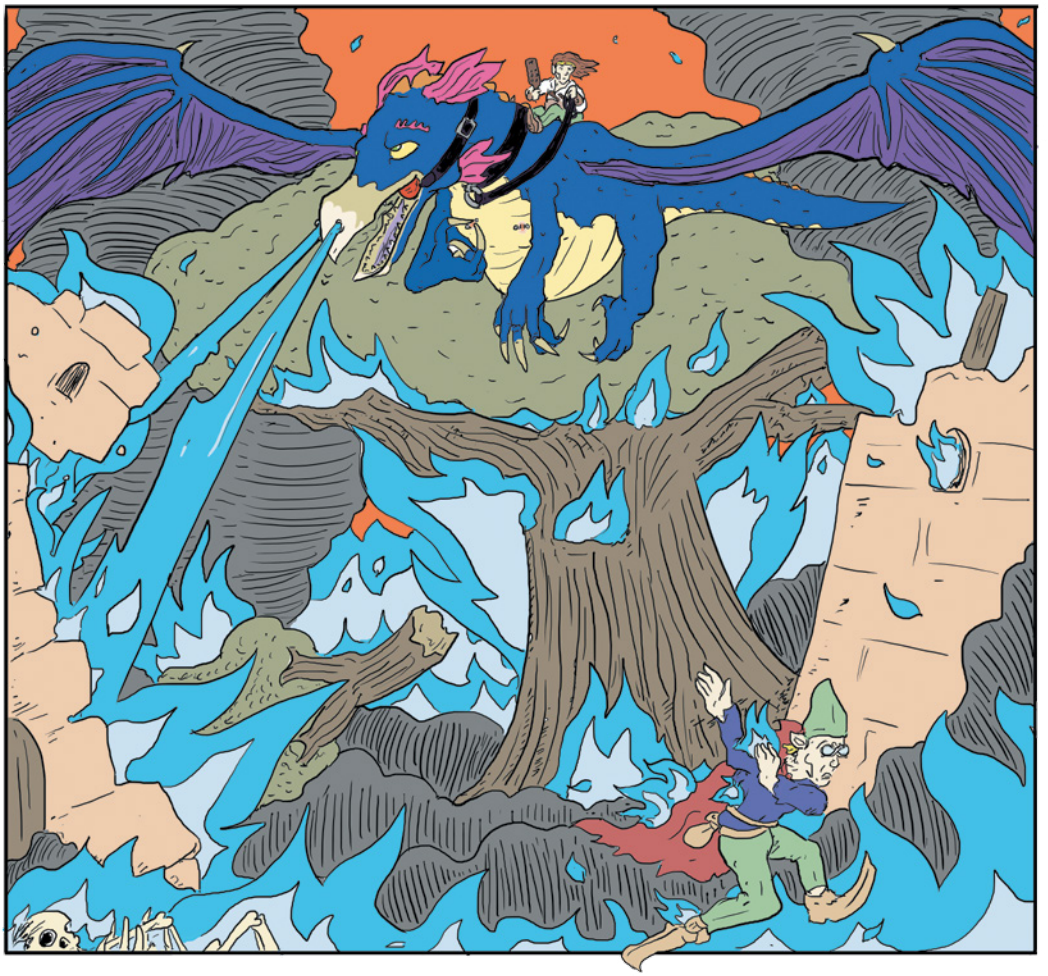
Biff is no match for you for once and he collapses into the dirt at your bird's feet. You're about to deliver a finishing blow when he looks up at you with a pleading expression on his face.

"Bastard....don't do this. I want you to know that... I only pushed you so hard because we all saw what you could achieve if you tried," he groans, wincing from his battle wounds, "Jeff asked me to look over you and guide you... to greatness. He believes in you. I believe in you..."

Tears are running down his face and landing heavily in the dirt as he kneels, begging for your mercy.

If Biff's pleas have reached your petty little heart you can spare him by turning to 1418. Otherwise one lousy heartfelt apology isn't going to stand between you and a hearty dish of revenge served ice cold: turn to 1780.

1227



Sighing, you give up on your attempt to leave. The dragon grins disconcertingly and wraps its tail around your waist, dragging you back to bed. Beats being set on fire, you guess.

Time passes and you eventually get used to Bhad the Dragon's funky smells and grotty cavern. You haven't done too badly for yourself, actually - a large, dry cave, hot meals whenever you want them and vast treasures which you're almost as enthusiastic about hoarding as your draconic host is. Speaking of Bhad, you eventually grow quite close to it and you tell the dragon all about your upbringing with Jeff. Bhad takes your side and, horrified by the way your step-father has treated you, lets you ride on his back as he pays the village of Elfsdale Downs a little visit. You laugh merrily as the dragon burns everything from the sky, making extra sure that he coats your old home with a double dose of blue fire. Chuckling at the sounds of Jeff's screams all the way back home, you cheerfully return to the cave with Bhad and never leave again.

1228

After a long slog through another tunnel you arrive at a dead end. Annoying, isn't it? You head back the way you came. Turn to 792 and pick another way to go.

1229

Your rummaging around for loot and the horrible noises you and that skull made while tousling have summoned a small horde of shamblers. They approach you slowly but inexorably, murmuring for brains! Just as you're preparing to fight your way out (or, more likely, get eaten) the shamblers simmer down and part, creating a passage. You're chuffed at your ability to instil fear in the undead but it turns out they're just getting out of the way of something far, far worse than you - a terrifying lich! The horrible, four-armed undead abomination fixes his terrifying gaze on you and points one of his bony fingers in your direction. You're getting ready to grovel for mercy when the fiend, instead of blasting you with some kind of death spell, merely beckons to you and turns to walk away.

Your options being limited to following him or being torn apart like a rotisserie chicken by a bunch of drooling shamblers, you decide to go along. You proceed after the lich down the corridor and through a doorway to what looks like a bathroom - the gigantic bubbling cauldron which dominates the room has a loofah floating on the surface and a soap dish on a nearby stand. The lich disappears ahead of you through another doorway leading into an adjacent room.

You reflect for a second - the lich can't see you and the shamblers are no longer all over you, so couldn't you make a break for it? To run like billy-o turn to 1642. On the other hand, he'll probably be all on his lonesome in that room - to rush in and attack turn to 665. If you think these options may be too risky then you'd better follow the lich and see what he wants - turn to 1670.

1230

Getting black-out drunk in the portside tavern was probably not one of your smartest ideas. When you come to some time later you are surprised to find yourself in the cargo hold of a moving ship. You are immediately accosted by a hideous grey-skinned elf with red eyes who insists that you stand and tell him your name. You are then hauled off the boat by a human guard and subjected to an embarrassingly personal questionnaire before being turned loose on some island populated mostly by more of those dark-skinned elfs. You go on to have several more adventures before you are eventually pecked to death by a swarm of razor-beaked skin flaps racing along the cliffs of this strange land, but this particular adventure ends here.

1231

You put your hands up and exit the carriage where three guardsmen await you, halberds and crossbows at the ready. You're immediately spear-tackled to the ground in a textbook display of medieval police brutality. As you lay winded and gasping for air you're clapped in irons and stripped of all your possessions aside from the shirt on your back before being hurled bodily into the back of an iron-barred prison wagon.

Turn to 227.

1232

The demon looks taken aback.

"Well I'm certainly not lending you my unholy axe". He reaches out and points a long, sharp fingernail at you theatrically while stroking his goatee with his other hand.

"It's been a hundred thousand years or so since anyone was foolish enough to summon me and I'm in no hurry to go back to the Daemonic Planes. I'll give you a sporting chance: get an instrument, maybe learn to play it, and I'll be back for your soul later".

The huge shiny demon cackles and disappears in a blinding flash of light, leaving you alone in the swamp. You get the feeling that this demon is going to be extremely hard to be rid of.

Make a note on your Adventure Scroll in INK that you've summoned a Shiny Demon. Putting this ominous apparition to one side for now you strike out in the direction of a road you can see in the distance between the trees ahead. Turn to 1609.

1233

The group of elfs before you are more than a little intimidating, but you recall that you have just the thing to cut them down to size. Retrieving the sack of pixie bits from your bag, you whirl it around overhead and release, flinging it in the direction of the raiders. Unfortunately you were always picked last for the aelfball team for a reason: the bag lands on the road halfway between you and your target where it explodes in a cloud of halluciogenic dust, filling your lungs and those of your enemies equally.

You've effectively imbibed a potion - temporarily lose 1 ÉLAN and roll on the Potion Effects table, then resolve whichever outcome you get. If you survive the elfs are left stumbling around in a psychedelic haze, now more of a threat to themselves than you or the wagon they were previously menacing.

Turn to 309.

1234

You push aside the weeds, revealing a small cave entrance. Crouching down, you enter the dank cavern. Inside, green suffuses everything. To be blunt, it is time to take a break. Honestly you are starting to get a case of the munchies anyway. Suddenly, you sense movement! It's a roach! Thinking fast, you bomb that thing with your foot, but now you're covered with the sticky icky. You're no dope, it's time to smoke this joint and get moving. Besides, any more of this overwrought wordplay and you'd be stoned out of your gourd. If you want to head back to the pixies and their less annoying hallucinogens, turn to 420. If you have sworn off drugs and terrible puns, turn to 69.

1235

With your looting accomplished it's time to get out of here, though you make a mental appointment to come back for the rest some day. Waddling under the weight of your new acquisitions you make your way out of the cave without incident and start out south across the tundra towards Bilgeton.

An hour or so into the walk you suddenly have a thought - were you supposed to have done something in there? If you were sent on a mission from the Goblin King then turn to 114. Otherwise you've got nothing to worry about - turn to 889 to keep going.

1236

You reach the end of the street and turn right onto a shorter road called Manor Lane. This short lane runs alongside the high, whitewashed walls surrounding what you assume is the local lord's house based on its size and the tacky heraldic signs painted on its otherwise plain white exterior. There are no other houses up here - just a fancy gated entrance to the mansion grounds and a considerably less fancy and far smaller wooden door set in the palisade at the end of the lane. There's a ramshackle wooden guardhouse next to that door - you have a sneaking suspicion that you'll have to pay someone in that rotten little box if you want to get that gate opened. Further away, behind the manor and town gate, the Big Rock Goblin Mountains loom ominously.

Do you want to pay the local lord a visit? If so turn to 1801 to approach the manor gate. Otherwise you've seen about as much of this place as you can stomach - it's time to go. If you want to approach the nearby door leading through the town wall then turn to 963. If you'd prefer not to hike through a bunch of mountains on your way to Bilgeton then you can double back through Brunnenfeld and head out through the south gate - turn to 338. If you somehow have completely avoided visiting the town square until now, you can go all the way back to the bottom of the lane from which you came to check it out by turning to 16.

1237

Following the map you trek back towards the south-west, cutting through the Feewald on the way back to the Count's Road so as to not waste time in going around the outside. Now that you've calmed down and figured out where you are, it's a pleasant enough walk. You're even beginning to enjoy the birdsongs until you notice they're becoming suspiciously loud. Suddenly you hear a horrid little plopping noise and feel something warm, wet and malodorous slap onto your tunic. You look up and see the culprit - the trees are teeming with hundreds of birds, squirrels and other assorted forest crap that Elfsdale Downs usually pays good money for someone to exterminate.

Through the trees ahead you can see what looks like a clearing. The birds and animals get even more numerous in that direction, with boughs bending under their weight and bushes rustling with rabbits and whatever else rustles in forest bushes. If you'd like to go check it out turn to 579. If you'd prefer to avoid getting shat on anymore you can give the clearing a wide berth and continue onwards to the Count's Road - turn to 1623.

1238

You go right. You walk for a very long time between the stone walls of this maze but find no other archways, trapdoors or features of any kind that could indicate a path towards the Goblin Town. Just as you're about to give up and turn back you find yourself looking once again at the entrance to the Mazyrinth, still open a crack just as you left it. You've just come full circle.

Bored nearly senseless and no more likely to work out what's going on now than you were an hour or two ago, you decide to call it a day.

Turn to 1277.

1239

All those cobblestones give you an idea. You pick up a reasonably large specimen and tie your rope around it, then head around to the front of the tower. Your room is all the way up on the top floor, but if you can get the rock through the window you'll be able to scale all the way up the side of the tower. You spin the rope, ready to release when the time is right:

ROPE TRICK: DIFFICULTY 11

If you succeed turn to 1038.

If it's too hard (or you can't be bothered after all) then there's not a lot more to be done here. It's time to move on. To head out along the road to Bilgeton as Mom suggested, turn to 643. If you'd prefer to completely lose your mind and flee headlong into the forest then turn to 785.

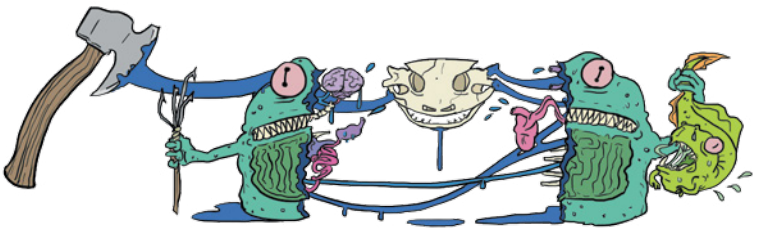
1240

The guard holds up the cut purse, the coins still tinkling around inside it.

"What the hell is wrong with you? This purse bears the blazon of Countess Amelie de Fraude, the wife of the liege of Bilgeton! Why would you bring it here? You'll hang for this!"

Since you've been caught being an accessory to a crime against the ruling family of Bilgeton there's no trial - you are dragged out of the guardhouse and hung from the city walls as a warning to anyone else that would forget to remove obviously incriminating stuff from their inventory before voluntarily allowing the police to search them.

Your adventure ends here.



1241

You kick the undead being off you and give it a good stomping. Once you're certain it's completely re-dead you clamber out of the ditch and find some other place to sleep, eventually settling on a thick patch of sedge off the side of the road a mile or so towards Bilgeton. Mercifully nothing other than a few stinging insects come looking for a bite and you wake fairly refreshed for someone who spent half the evening wrestling with a living corpse. Add 15 EFFORT.

Rubbing the sleep out of your eyes, you get up and continue along the road. Turn to 1446.

1242

You stand atop the bloodied, unconscious body of the ogre as the crowd boos you viciously and bays for your blood. Before the crowd can tear you apart the bartender calls for silence.

"Since the rules for boxing have not yet been codified there's nothing in the rules saying you can't shank an opponent before the match begins. The Jabbing Jabroni is therefore the new ultra-heavyweight champion of Bilgeton!" he says somewhat ruefully.

You tear the title belt off your fallen opponent and raise it above your head! The crowd boos!

Now that you're the greatest pugilist in Bilgeton you can probably coast on this victory for the rest of your life if you want - turn to 398 to do this. Otherwise you'd better get out of here before any of the local toughs get the bright idea of challenging you for your title. Pausing only to collect the purse of 5 Guilders you make a break for the exit, somehow making it out onto the streets without sustaining anything worse than a mild jostling. You put the Dribbling Wand behind you and try to work out where to go next.

Add the Bilgeton Championship Belt and 5 Guilders to your Adventure Scroll, thenturn to 827.

1243

You dive off the road and hide in the edge of the woods, crawling into a dense thicket of something prickly. The last thing you want to do is run afoul of a gang of elfen ruffians.

Occupied with their ritual, the whimsyflickers don't notice you, and so you finally get to see a real ceremony. It appears they're not praying over the stones but rather prying them up with little sticks known as whimsywands. Every now and then one of them carries a few stones over to the cart and dumps them in, then dawdles back to the road and stoops down again.

Feeling a bit uncomfortable twisted up in this bush, you're about to move when you hear the sound of heavy wheels coming down the road from the way you came. You look and behold a team of gigantic birds hauling a carriage, followed by another and another. The elfs notice this too and make a break for the forest, two of them picking the bush right next to yours to dive into! It's Biff, ringleader of one of the groups of tormentors who picked on you back home, and one of his cronies.

Biff's eyes narrow when he sees you and he puts a finger to his mouth to indicate that you should be quiet. If you agree to keep your head down until the wagons roll past then turn to 747. If you're not one to let a chance of revenge slip through your fingers then turn to 1665.

1244

It's a huge monster but it's still just a bird, and its brittle bones are made more for flight than for battle. You manage to avoid its talons and beak for long enough to give it a couple of black eyes. It collapses with a final screeching hoot and is no more.

As usual you take the time to loot the corpse. You can take up to two of the following items before your squeamishness overcomes you: the Giant Drumstick, Owl Eye or 50 Feathers (add this to the Cash Section of your Adventure Scroll)

Leaving the bloody remnants of the unlucky bird behind, you stagger on into the night. You've become disoriented during the fray and have no way of knowing which way is which. Once you've gone what you consider to be a safe distance you lie down and, once again ignoring the horrible sounds of these cursed woods, drift right off into the kind of deep slumber that only someone who has just beaten a giant owl to death would understand.

Turn to 386.

1245

You claw your way out of the rubble and stagger away into the forest, too stunned even to loot the dead.

Your part in annihilating almost the entire population of Aelfsburg will probably not go unnoticed - make a note on your Adventure Scroll that you destroyed the place.

After a little while you regain your senses. Vaguely worried about any survivors pursuing you, you try to regain your bearings and continue your trek through the dark, slimy forest.

Turn to 1804.

1246

You drag one of the benches a little closer to the table and sit down. The priest pours a generous amount of the contents of his bottle into the cups and pushes one over to you. You take a swig.

After both of you have downed several more of these you're utterly smashed to the point where you can barely sit up straight on your pew (lose 2 ÉLAN from drunkenness until your next rest). The padre's been talking at you continuously, but no matter how drunk you get you still can't make any sense out of his "bloody oaths", "strewths","stone the crows" and "bonzers". Suddenly, and without warning the priest whips out a knife and starts waving it around at you.

If you'd like to lunge across the table before this Hell priest sacrifices you then turn to 1522.
If you'd like to draw your weapon to defend yourself then turn to 251 (remember that you can equip any weapon you're carrying before turn to that page). If you're worried that you may have caused some offense then you can apologise in the hopes of getting this deranged priest to leave you unstabbed - turn to 1110.

1247

You stagger from vendor to vendor in the market square, drunkenly yelling at the salesmen, knocking over barrels and generally making a nuisance of yourself. While no one's really disposed to aid your unpleasant self in your quest to get a free or cheap ride out of town, eventually one of the sellers gets annoyed enough at your presence to direct you to Farmer Hurensohn's mushroom farm a little ways south of town in a bid to get rid of you. Apparently he's loading up a wagon now and he's usually happy to take people along for a ride in return for the company. You burp rudely and stagger out of town through the southern gates.

Farmer Hurensohn's plot is visible from the town - it's only a mile or so away and on the other side of a easily-fordable creek.

EASY FORDING: DIFFICULTY 4 - FISTS 1

If you fail to make the crossing then turn to 888. Otherwise you cross over the shallow water on the wide, wet stones and reach the bounds of Hurensohn's mushroom farm.

Turn to 967.

1248

You wisely ignore the offer. Instead of refusing, you tell Kaspars that you've been charged to stop the trolls blocking the spring that waters Brunnenfeld.

"You really drink that garbage? No wonder you meat creatures are so pathetically flimsy. It's only the finest of trollbräu for us!" roars Kaspars, brandishing his bottle. "We've just been dumping our empties down there in the creek. Well, I guess we could recycle our bottles instead of just smashing them into your drinking water, but what would be the fun in that?"

The troll leader thinks for a minute.

"Tell you what, since you've been pretty decent to drink with for a meat creature - if you can beat me in the traditional Trollish game of "Rock, Paper, Scissors" then we'll clear the stream for you. If not, then Brunnenfeld had best develop a taste for trollbräu!"

You're not completely familiar with the rules of this barbaric game though it seems similar in concept to the elfish game of "grasswatcher, whimsyflicker, lorewarden". Unfortunately you always lost at that one too. Still, with nothing personally at stake, you accept the challenge.

The troll counts down, jerking his huge stone fist up and down as he gets ready to throw the sign corresponding with either rock, paper or scissors. You must decide - which one will you throw?

Will you clench your hand into a fist, showing the sign of the rock? Turn to 987.
Will you flatten your hand in a crude imitation of a papyrus or vellum sheet? Turn to 1654.
Alternatively will you split your index and middle fingers, keeping the rest of your fingers curled in imitation of the scissor? If so then turn to 629.

1249

You enter the gnome's tower - a heap with a sign outside which proclaims it "the Lorewarden's Arms" - and have a nosey about. It's a standard elfish pub just like the one you barely ever visited back home. Unfortunately it seems to be drunk dry of everything except aelfwine (which has no effect on your half-human physiology at all) and the only currency in the register is Elfen Leaves (add 200 Elf Leaves to your Currency if you have to). To add insult to injury the only bar snacks are lembas bread, a loathsome elfish nibble they feed to outsiders as a kind of racial in-joke. As you rummage through the till you notice the gnome's bedding under the bar. He doesn't seem to own anything - you guess that if he was rich he wouldn't be standing guard outside this tip, but this is just pathetic. Under a filthy pillow you find a solitary Guilder - probably this guy's life's savings (add it to your Adventure Scroll) and you also turn up a Potion inside a brown paper bag next to the thin straw mattress. Add these to your Adventure Scroll too if you like.

Thoroughly bushed now you yawn and head upstairs for a snooze. The spiral stairs in this pub tower seem dangerously rickety but you make it to the second floor where a couple of pokey rooms are located. There's nothing here worth taking so you lay down on one of the relatively comfortable beds and drift off to sleep.

You wake just before noon. You curse the early start but are thoroughly refreshed from the night spent in an actual bed. Restore 30 EFFORT. After a stretch and a scratch you pull up your leggings and make your way back downstairs and out into the Aelfsburg clearing.

Turn to 884.

1250

You knock rapidly on the door three times. Since the door doesn't react there must be more to this code. What's next?

If you want to give the door one quick rap then turn to 1267. If you want to hit it twice hard then turn to 435. If you want to hit it four times hard then turn to 299.

1251

You noticed that the 10-Foot Pole was nowhere around when you needed him earlier, but apparently he's decided to come through for you for once. As you're dreading whatever punishment is coming your way for whatever you did, the prison door swings open and the lanky archaeologist stoops into the building. He mutters something in his impossible language to the guards before handing over a small pouch to the blonde moustache-having fellow. After checking the contents the guards rise, unlock your cell door and tell you to scram.

You thank Karol as you collect your stuff and step out into the main square of Brunnenfeld. He replies, "Wisisz mi dwa Guldenów", whatever that means.

Turn to 16.

1252

You advance on the huge bird, displaying what is meant to be a winning smile but comes across as a shit-eating grin. The beast of burden is domesticated and so, despite some misgivings, its instincts fail to instruct it to stay away from an untrustworthy lowlife like you. Perhaps you can try to ride the thing?

If you're wearing the Fly Hat then turn to 1148. Otherwise, if you have some food you won't miss, you can offer it a meal: turn to 139. If you'd prefer just to grab the creature by the reins and haul yourself up into the saddle then turn to 1805.

1253

Finding a vacant vendor's stall, you lay all your items out on the counter and wait for the customers to roll in. Sadly you lack any marketing savvy so the filthy and jumbled contents of your backpack fail to attract the attention of the Bilgeton public no matter how much you hoot and holler about the crazy deals you're offering. In fact, the only thing you do attract is the attention of a guard patrol. A couple of the city's armoured militia march up to inspect your stall.

"What have we here?" says one. Ignoring the rhetorical nature of the question you commence loudly hawking your wares until the guard thumps the table in fury.

"Enough! Unlicensed vending in the town square carries a fine of two Guilders or a month in the oubliette. What'll it be?" he shouts.

If you've got two Guilders and want to pay then turn to 583. If you point out a sign right behind the guard that says the fine is 1 Guilder then turn to 1817. If you've got no money or refuse to pay anything then turn to 235.

1254

"OH I SEE HOW IT IS", roars the dragon as you finally get the last of your clothes on and equip all your items, "LOVE ME AND LEAVE ME. IS THAT IT? WELL GET OUT!"

The dragon is hysterical at this point, big boiling tears streaming from its eyes,

"AND TELL YOU BASTARD-SIRING FATHER HE'S NOT WELCOME HERE ANY MORE. YOU'VE BROKEN MY HEART AND I WON'T BUY ANY MORE OF HIS MILK. I NEVER WANT TO SEE EITHER OF YOU AGAIN AND I HOPE HE CANES YOU FOR LOSING HIM A CUSTOMER.... AND A FRIEND. NOW GO! GET OUT!!"

You get the feeling you're in extreme danger here, but if you want to ask about your father then turn to 1060. If you'd prefer to escape while you can then you bundle up your gear as quickly as possible and beat as hasty retreat - turn to 1073.

1255

After the eighth guard you passed today mentions it again, you begin to harbour some suspicions about the Dark Brethren. If their activities are so secret how does every guard in Bilgeton seem to know what you've done? Considering they regularly hack people to death in the street for picking up random items from the gutter why aren't they even trying to arrest you for killing their king? You can't shake the weird feeling that this is all somehow just part of a crude and perverse attempt at flattering your ego.

Turn to 147.

1256

You pull out all your currency and fan it in front of you to show off your wealth. Hulagu isn't interested.

"Your entire province is covered in leaves and twigs. If I had any use for them I could haul away as much as my wagons could hold. Now get out of the way, we have business to attend to."

Elfish currency is more than just forest detritus, or so you've been told. Your half-human ancestry prevents you from perceiving the difference between the medium of exchange and the plant matter that litters the woods around town, a disability which has earned you many a beating in your days. It seems this merchant shares your racial infirmity so your money's no good around here. As you stuff the leaves back into your pouch you accidentally crumble a good chunk of it up and drop it on the ground - subtract 30 leaves from your stash.

Changing tack you try desperately to barter your way in with your possessions. You find that Hulagu shows no interest in any of the treasures you stole from home aside from the Feewald Map, should you possess it. If you'd be willing to part with it turn to 627. Otherwise, since you have nothing more to offer, the merchant whips the reins, the huge birds strain at the harness and the wagons begin to roll away. Turn to 799.

1257

The two look at each other, trying to puzzle out a way to get rid of you without being incredibly rude to someone who just saved their lives.

"Umm, we're not going straight there", stutters Harman, clearly reaching. "We need to go get ..."

"Some new instruments", interjects Giselle, seeing that Harman is struggling. Harman gives her a weird look.

"But the only music store in Nonce is in Bilgeton" he says, his shoulders slumping as soon as the words leave his mouth and he realises what he's done. Giselle, exasperated, puts her face in her hands.

Since they can't politely weasel out of your company they reluctantly agree to go along with you to Bilgeton. Add the Dwarfen Troupe to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1581.

1258

You don't feel like heading right back the way you came so you turn to the Pole for answers.

"To jest martwy koniec. Powinieneś był wyjechać na północ od pierwszego pokoju. Boże, nienawidzę labiryntów. Wiem, że to moja praca, ale mimo to nienawidzę ich wszystkich", he says, sounding a bit peeved.

Since he's not busting a hole in the wall or doing anything else useful you head back the way you came, slightly disappointed in your old friend. Turn back to 792 and pick another way to go.

1259

You accede to the fox's wishes and enter the establishment.

Silvermane's Sundries, being on the nicer end of town, is a pretty ritzy joint. You don't know what "sundries" are but apparently it's got something to do with animals because this store has a lot of them - birds, cats, dogs, snappers, domestic moths, stoats, opossums, mice (kept at a safe distance from the cats, of course) and a bunch of more exotic animals you don't recognise. There are dozens of them displayed around the room in ornate cages. The animals simply watch you as you come in but there's none of the screeching, yowling or squawking you'd expect from such a tightly-packed zoo. There's also a strange-looking simulacrum on a plinth in the middle of the room - a not-quite-lifelike effigy of a grimacing. big-eared, brown-furred creature. This one wears clothes and has a pair of metal discs in its outstretched hands. It stares crazily at nothing in particular but as you gaze upon it rattles on its plinth menacingly and it seems to stare right into your soul.

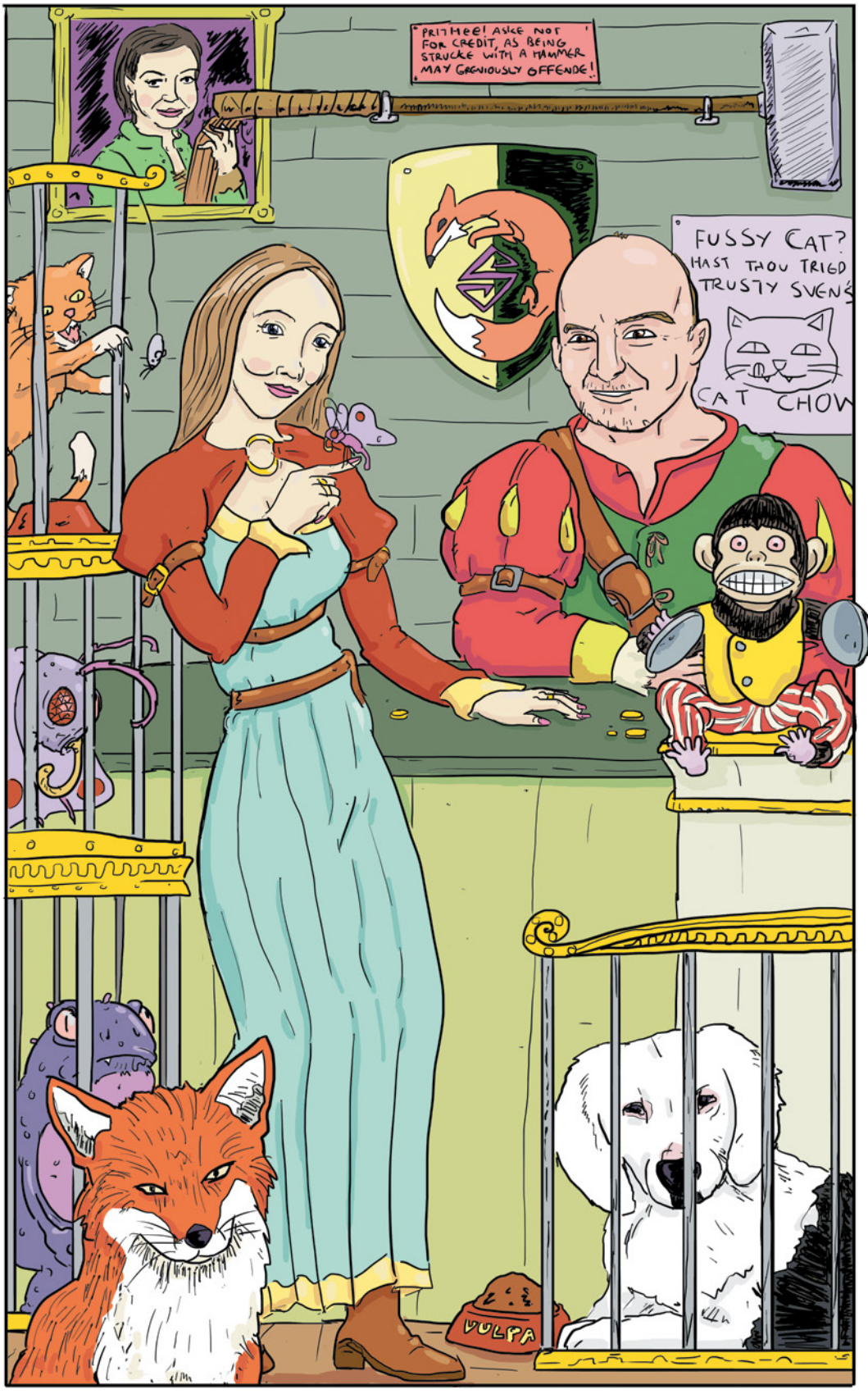
You're engrossed enough by this thing that you almost jump out of your skin when you hear a deep voice ring out. "Oh good, Vulpa found you". You look to where the voice came from and see a human man and a woman loitering around the store counter. They're both richly attired in the finest fabrics, but isn't the lady's bodice from this year's Elfs Saint Laurent Spring/Summer collection? And is the man wearing several particularly fancy belts in the elfen style? Other than that, they look more or less like any other humans you've seen about town, but you're convinced there's something a out of the ordinary going on here. This conviction is only strengthened by the strange greeting and the way these two keep staring at you like they want something.

If you want to cut to the chase and find out what they're after then turn to 600. Otherwise you can pretend you're only here to check out their wares by turning to 528.

1260

The back of the church is nicely secluded, lying as it is between the large church building and the tall wooden wall surrounding the town. Usefully there's even a shovel leaning against the side of the church! Presumably it's used by whoever's stupid enough to bury all these dead guys under their stones. Now you can really get to work!

If you'd like to pick up the shovel and start digging around then turn to 709. If you've suddenly developed some scruples then turn to 1274.


PRITHEE! ASKE NOT FOR CREDIT, AS BEING STRUCKE WITH A HAMMER MAY GRIEVIOUSLY OFFENDE!
FUSSY CAT? HAST THOU TRIED TRUSTY SVEN'S
CAT CHOW
VULPA

1261

Mustering all your resolve you clamber to your feet just before the guards reach your hiding place among the shrubs. You intend to try your usual gambit of weeping uncontrollably and begging pathetically for your life. However as soon as you stand the guards snap to attention and their captain goes red in the face. He salutes along with his men and stammers:

"S..Sir Tedbald of Bilgeford! My apologies, I did not recognise you from afar. We have been placed on high alert - aside from the regular crooks and elfs there's now a bunch of shamblers on the loose, and news has reached us of some lunatic roaming the county ruining everything in his path."

Seizing the moment, you respond, "How did you not recognise my armour, my insignia and bearing of a knight errant? The man you seek is none other than one Jeff of Elfsdale Downs, verily a base caitiff knave and notorious jabroni mark".

Sir Tedbald, known for sticking his nose into every cave and dungeon in the region, was notorious for his habit of collecting monster specimens and dragging them through the streets of Bilgeton. At least he was, until he met his end at the claws and teeth of a rutting giant forest bat in a woodland cave, news which has yet to reach Bilgeton. Any unusual items or companions you have with you fail to elicit much comment as you are waved through the gates and into the city.

If you're accompanied by a skeleton caravan then turn to 717. Otherwise turn to 1364.

1262

You're heavily outnumbered and don't stand a chance of bashing your way through that door. In a blind panic you fling yourself at the attackers who crept up on you from behind. Not knowing quite what to do with a weeping, screaming half elf they instinctively flinch, giving you the split second you need to force your way through the elfs and race right up the stairs. The gnomish bartender shouts a warning - something about maximum occupancy - but you fail to heed it and scramble up the spiral staircase onto the second-floor landing.

The elfs up there look at you with abject horror, but not for long: the floor abruptly caves in underneath you all. The shoddy renovation work knocked out almost all the supports for the upper levels. The fashionably open-plan layout of the Lorewarden's Arms comes with the downside of structural instability, which isn't a problem so long as you don't get more than about a dozen people on the upper floors...

In short the extra weight you've added to the first floor has caused the strategically placed pile of empty barrels holding it up to buckle, and the entire floor has dropped to the ground level, taking a chunk of exterior wall with it. The whole tower proceeds to collapse, burying you and the population of Aelfsburg under a heap of cobblestones and splintered wood.

Turn to 1245.

1263

The crowd boos as you dance away from the ogre, his face getting redder and redder as he fires jab after jab at you but finds only empty air. Still, you're not wearing him out - he can probably keep this up all day, or at least until he lands a hit on you.

He growls and beckons you closer - it looks like he's done messing with you.

If you're ready to close in and fight then turn to 1157.
If you'd prefer to keep dancing then turn to 1015.

1264

You turn and run from the cave, weaving from side to side in case the dragon tries to cook you with its flaming breath.

ESCAPE: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1

If you can't do it then you trip over a golden goblet as you flee and slam into the cavern floor head first, knocking you out cold: turn to 1774.

If you succeed then by some miracle you make it outside unsinged and are soon fleeing towards the south in the general direction of Bilgeton. You don't stop running across the frozen tundra until you're absolutely certain the dragon isn't winging after you. Then, after taking a quick breather, you carry on.

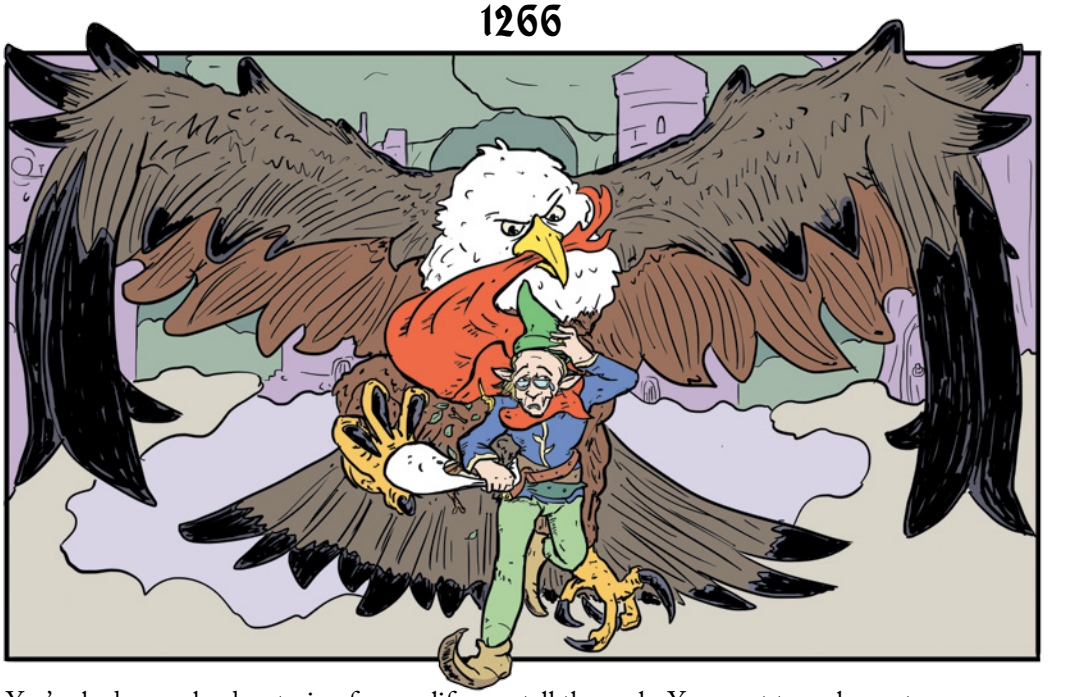
Were you supposed to be doing something for the Goblin King? If so turn to 114. Otherwise if you're a free half elf then turn to 889.

1265

Green might be closer but you have a good feeling about blue - a good feeling which pays off as the bug flitters out the window, leaving green behind to flap pointlessly on the window sill. Add the 2 Guilders you won to your Adventure Scroll.

If you'd like to grab a drink to celebrate your victory then turn to 975. If it's time to leave then you make your farewells and head outside - turn to 546.

1266



You've had enough adventuring for one life, you tell the eagle. You want to go home to your old tower back in Elfsdale Downs. Since that's not all that far away for an eagle he acquiesces. Before you know it you're sailing home through the skies, clutched tight in the eagle's strong talons. Mere hours later you're flying low over the Feewald and coming up fast are the towers of Elfsdale Downs! You point out your tower and the eagle descends with a screech!

Jeff and your mother, lounging on the weedy and overgrown lawn in front of your old home, look up and see you dangling under the eagle and plummeting towards your bedroom. Although they leap to their feet they're too slow to prevent the eagle hurling you into your room - releasing you from his grip you tumble through the open window and land softly on the deep and bouncy piles of filthy clothes and rotting garbage you left strewn all over your floor and bed. You quickly get up and slam the door latch: just in time! Seconds later that homewrecking Jeff reaches your level of the tower and starts hammering on the door, but he's powerless to get you out now! After some more hammering and swearing he gives up, vowing to starve you out.

Fortunately for you that never happens - in fact, the eagle that brought you here finds the thatched roof of the tower very much to his liking and starts building his nest there. He shows his gratitude to you for finding these new digs for him by bringing you dead woodland creatures and diving and pecking at Jeff whenever he sees the treacherous bastard scurrying around outside. Soon more eagles arrive, each more dedicated than the last to making Jeff's life a living hell. As for you, you're just glad that everything went back to normal - you, locked in your room with all your stuff and making Jeff miserable with your continued presence.

1267

You give the door a single gentle rap. There's no reply: were you too gentle? Maybe there's more to this code.

Do you want to hit the door three more times quickly (turn to 1057), give it three hard thumps (turn to 1577) or really go to town and hit the thing 8 more times hard (turn to 5).

1268

The skeletons give you one hell of a kicking (or at least as much as their muscle-less legs will allow: lose 5 EFFORT) before dragging you somewhere deeper into the burrow and hurling you into a bone heap. You lie still in the huge pile of bones for a while until the skeletons jitter away - you guess they're satisfied that you're probably dead. The bruises they gave you hurt badly enough as you painfully rise to your feet that you almost wish they were right.

If you had the Crowing Club then the mace has given up the ghost - after that shameful defeat it no longer has a damn thing to boast about and has become introspective and withdrawn. While it no longer glows it also no longer talks to you or sticks to your hand - the curse has been removed! You can finally unequip it if you want.

You stagger out of the room containing the bone pile and find that you're back in the hallway. You can sense fresh air coming from your right, which means that's probably the way you came in. If you'd like to head that way then turn to 467. To turn left and go deeper into the crypt then turn to 805.

1269

Stepping carefully over the slime you pass through the right passage.

Another half an hour of dull subterranean slogging awaits before you reach the next junction. Along the way you see, smell, and don't quite avoid stepping in numerous piles of the same slime you saw earlier. There's more and more of it as you go along. It continues into the left passage at the fork - the right passage is slime-free this time.

Judging by the accumulation of this stuff you're getting quite close to the lair of whatever's leaving it. If you'd like to continue on to the left then turn to 1529. If you'd like to take the right path then turn to 905.

1270

You don't want to spend any more time with this guy than you absolutely have to, so as soon as he's finished talking you leave without saying a word, much less leaving a tip.

Once you're outside and safely away from that terrible man you have a think about where to go next.

If you'd like to find this Hurensohn fellow and arrange a lift then turn to 298. If you'd like to get some shopping in on your way out of town then you head up the lane on the right - turn to 1473. If you'd prefer to have a look at where humans like to worship whatever gods they think care about them then you head uphill along the road on the left - turn to 501.

1271

"You took his calling card from me. Fifty years ago I was kicked out of home and sent to find my father and maybe crash on his couch. But the address on the card was fake", says the half elf. "It seems he's made a number of half-human half-something else bastards and he doesn't want them all finding him - but he does want his customers to be able to track him down. The calling card leads to the old man's grave. I thought he was dead so I didn't stick around, but I swear I saw the milkman making deliveries around Nonce once or twice after that. Perhaps I should have waited longer before moving on because he's probably picking up his delivery orders from that grave - if he's still alive, that is".

The half elf spits.

"If you wait patiently and stay by his grave, perhaps you will have better luck. Now, let me go".

If you want to fulfil your end of the deal then turn to 156. If you're not going to give up a bounty for this worthless information then you treacherously betray him and continue hollering for the militia : turn to 151.

1272

If you were worried about entering a maze section now there's no need for that - not just yet, anyway. This is a long tunnel which runs seemingly endlessly under the world. It maintains its diameter of eight feet and the walls continue to be perfectly smooth, packed dirt. The passage slowly descends deeper and deeper into the earth. As you proceed you feel the occasional tremor and trickles of dust fall from the ceiling. Sometimes accompanying the minor quakes you hear the distant sounds of scuttling and a strange, high-pitched warbling sound which oscillates up and down the tunnel.

This goes on for a long time - an interminable time, really. Without day or night and nothing but the occasional flash from your flint to guide you along there's no way of knowing how long you've been down here or how far you've gone. You eat when you get hungry, rest when you get tired (restore 10 EFFORT) and trudge when you're neither of those things.

It must be a day or perhaps more before you encounter anything. All of a sudden you strike your flint and notice something large blocking almost the entire tunnel ahead - a something with a curved dark reddish-black shell and multiple sets of long segmented legs. The rumblings you've been following have been the steps of one of Them!, a particularly dangerous breed of giant ant. This one either hasn't noticed you or has no interest in what you're up to.

No matter how many times you strike your flint you can't see any way around it without angering it. If you have a Sugar Sack you could use it now to distract the monster by turning to 1164. Otherwise your only option is to attack it while its back is turned - turn to 1189 to attempt this.

1273

Seeing that you're no longer resisting, the eagle relents, satisfying himself by tearing out a huge chunk of your hair and wrenching the weapon out of your hand before flying back up the spire to add his prizes to the nest. Remove any equipped weapon from your Adventure Scroll. If that weapon is the Confessor's Shovel then turn to 207, making note of this paragraph number so you can turn back here afterwards.

Having seen off one challenge in your own way you must now negotiate another one - climbing to the top of this spire. You begin hauling yourself up the steep spire:

UP THE SPIRE - DIFFICULTY 10

If you make it then turn to 1719. Otherwise you slide to the bottom as the eagles squawk loudly in what your ring translates as a mocking tone. The wind taken out of your sails, you decide to move on rather than deal with these pesky peregrines. Turn to 138.

1274

You don't really believe all the fairy tales about humans (even they couldn't be stupid enough to bury perfectly good stuff with their corpses), and in any case you can't be bothered doing anything as arduous as digging. Instead you roam around the churchyard in search of other stuff to steal.

It's lucky that you didn't try to do any digging because resting around the back of an oak tree you find a complete skeleton, propped up against the tree trunk! It seems some humans have learned the civilised styles of the elfs after all, although imperfectly: this long-dead corpse is still fully dressed in what looks like a brand new tunic. A pouch which may contain money or other goodies is tucked into a new leather belt and it even has a tasteless chunky gold ring on its ring finger.

If you'd like to do the needful with this corpse then turn to 1454. If you'd really prefer not to mess around with the dead after all then you can give up on this venture and head back to the front of the church. If you'd like to go into the religious building then turn to 140. Otherwise there's not a lot more to do here - you carry on up the street to the top of the hill without incident. Turn to 1236.

1275

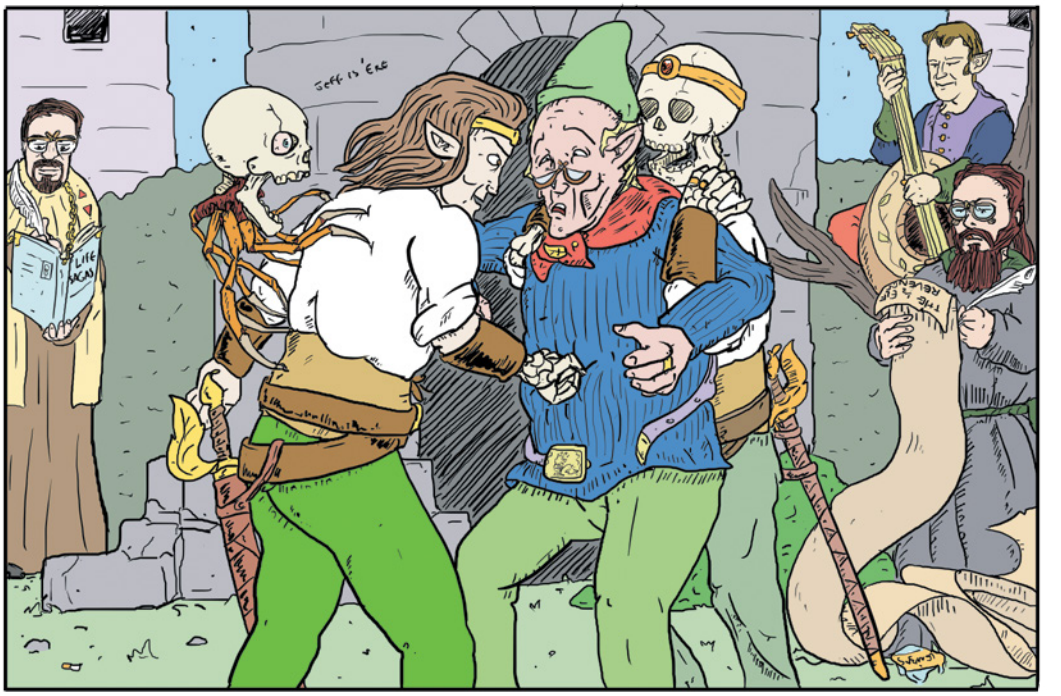
You take a sip of the horrible brew and wince, but stop short of spitting it out. Even ice cold it tastes horrible. The nobolds, on the other hand, appear to love this vile swill and down a couple of tinnies while you're wrestling with your cannister. Eventually the strange looks you're receiving from the nobolds begin to bother you and, yielding to peer pressure even from incomprehensible subterranean lizardfolk you manage to force it all down. Though it tastes like urine it has the advantage of being far stronger than the aelfwine you're used to swilling and you get a decent buzz going - subtract 1 ÉLAN until the alcohol wears off (usually after the next time you sleep).

1276

Just as you're finishing the brew and thinking up excuses you could use to refuse another one a whistle sounds from somewhere deeper in the tunnels. The nobolds finish whatever's in their current cans and rise unsteadily to their feet, mining tools in hand. Bruce explains what's happening for your benefit as he closes the esky: "Smoko's done, back to the yakka. If you're going to be around for a while, Busted Hill's worth a aquizzy. It's within a couple of cooees of here. Can't miss it, it stands out like a dog's balls. Easiest way to get there's to follow the chunder trail. Anyway, back to it. Ooroo!". With that double-barrelled blast of unintelligible gibberish the nobolds split up to work the rock faces on either side of the tunnel.

The nobolds have stupidly left you with their campsite. If you'd like to have a rummage through their stuff, starting with the "esky", then turn to 479. If you want to move on without potentially causing a fuss then turn to 811.

1276



Your bright idea, as you reveal to the skeletal you, is to head all the way back to Elfsdale Downs and, using your numerical superiority over Jeff, rough him up but good. Since the skeleton is you it agrees that this is a grand idea.

Days pass as you traverse the lands back towards Elfsdale Downs, but having done it once before it's a little easier the second time round. You pass the time by plotting out exactly how to carry out your masterful plan of revenge. Finally you arrive back in your home town and it's time to put the fruit of days of plotting and scheming into action. You knock on the door of what was your tower before bastard Jeff came along and took it away.

Sure enough Jeff comes to the door. Swinging it open, he sees it's you there and his face contorts into his trademark ugly sneer as he prepares to lecture you once again about (s)elf-reliance.

"I thought I told you to..." he begins, but the boring monologue is cut short as the skeleton version of you, creeping up behind Jeff from the side of the tower, grabs him from behind and pins his arms. You snap into action and slug Jeff right in his undefended gut with a hard right. He lets out a loud "OOOF!" and, released by your skeletal doppleganger, collapses to the ground, winded and gasping for air.

You and the skeleton exchange a high five and, laughing and chittering respectively, run off into the forest before Jeff can recover. No one sees either of you again: it's highly doubtful you ever find a decent place to crash or even survive the week, but the epic story of your terrible revenge soon becomes legend and is still sung of across the land of Palaver and beyond to this very day.

1277

As you slip out the front gates you hear a strain of some song coming from far away in the direction of the castle at the heart of the Mazyrinth.

"No one can blame you... for walking away...."

Well, you sure as hells don't. Restore 5 EFFORT as the catchy jingle puts a spring in your step. You soon put Gobholme and that stupid maze far behind you.

Turn to 1151.

1278

You're too young and pretty to die! The driver, the wagon guard and the elfs watch with incredulity as you leap from the wagon in panic and race for the forest verge, tears streaming down your face as you bemoan your fate and loudly exclaim your wish that you'd never been born. One of the elfs flings a token rock in your general direction but he's been so disarmed by your miserable display that it barely makes it half the distance between you and him.

Turn to 785.

1279

The shovel's spell over you is broken! You release your grip on the gardening tool - and not a moment too soon! Had you held onto it any longer you might never have been able to let it go. For now it clatters to the stony ground of the church graveyard to lie in wait for the next fool who passes by, or perhaps for the gardener to which it belongs and who uses it for its intended purpose. Remove the Confessor's Shovel from your Adventure Scroll.

Free of the cursed object but lamentably unable to penetrate the mysteries of these graves, you feel it's time to move on. If you'd like to go inside the church while you're here then turn to 140. If you'd rather leave religion out of this adventure altogether you can leave the church grounds and continue up along the lane by turning instead to 1236.

1280

The rest of the day passes and the wagon stops for the night. Your snores and pathetic moans drive the dwarfs out of their own wagon but you sleep comfortably enough: restore 20 EFFORT. The next morning the tired dwarfs set off again and you're soon halted once more, this time before the gates of Bilgeton itself!

You hear some talking outside the wagon as the guards shake down the dwarfs, then suddenly a steel-helmeted head appears at the opening at the back of the wagon.

"You there. You're not on the passenger list. You'll have to line up for an entry permit like all the other scum".

You implausibly protest that you're a dwarfen merchant like the rest of these guys. The guard shoots you a scowl.

"You don't look like you'd know an adulfe from a zampogna. Now get out", he says. While you're temporarily stunned by this guard's apparent musical literacy he climbs into the wagon, grabs you firmly by the lapels (assuming you're wearing something with lapels, otherwise he grabs you somewhere far less polite) and hauls you out and onto the road. The dwarfs protest in a decidedly half-hearted manner which doesn't suffice to prevent you from hitting the cobblestones. Wincing in pain from your recent injury you can only watch as your ride trundles through the gatehouse and into Bilgeton with Chantal waving sort-of apologetically from the back. As soon as it's out of sight amid the crowded buildings of the city the guard pulls you back to your feet.

"Go line up at the gatehouse for a visitor's permit. But by the looks of you I wouldn't bother", says the guard. "Begging's illegal in Bilgeton after all".

He chortles to himself as he goes to harass the next wagon waiting to get into town. You'll have to find some other way in.

Turn to 681.

1281

Thanks to years of neglect, a phosphorescent fungus has grown to coats large section of the mine walls, glowing dimly green, red and purple in the near-total blackness of the mine. Still, it's plenty dark and you find that you're tripping over all kinds of junk as you proceed down a sloping tunnel into the guts of the mine. You briefly think about turning back but it's nothing but mountains out there - besides, you're pretty sure that goblin mines tend to be interconnected, and in a worst-case scenario of getting completely lost down here you might at least be able to rest up and heal your broken bones. Perhaps you could even dwell here in the dark forever, feeding off blind cave critters and tricking unwary passers-by with old riddles you sort-of remember.

Still, you're not a brave half elf and claustrophobic panic begins to set in. You randomly pick paths whenever the tunnel comes to a fork, and you soon find yourself lost in the winding catacombs under the earth.

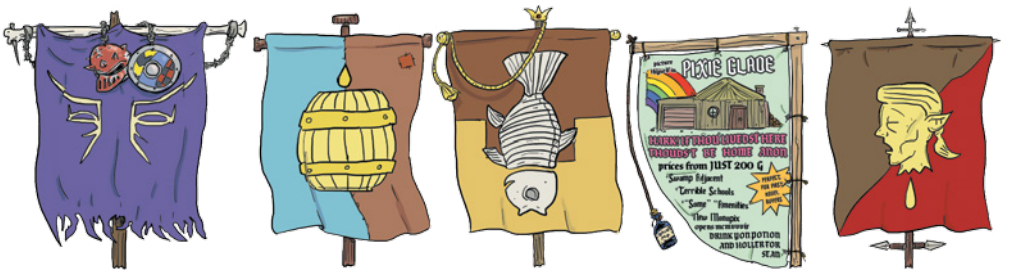
If you'd like to completely give up all hope now then turn to 1430. If you want to keep on going then you try to slow your breathing and think. You're inside a cave, high up in a mountain range, though you have no idea how high you actually are. Setting off in a particular direction and sticking to it might be a good move. If you'd like to take branches and tunnels that slope generally upwards then turn to 549. If you'd rather head downwards deeper into the mine, turn to 359.

1282

The guard snorts.

"That's funny. I'm in the service of Count Hugues of Bilgeton and our uniforms are completely different". You begin to stutter out an explanation but the guard rudely shouts over you, "Hey guys, take a look at this fellow. He says that he's in the Bilgeton militia".

You are soon surrounded by a group of very angry guardsmen who are aggressively curious about how you acquired the uniform and why you thought it would be a good idea to try to con your way into Bilgeton wearing it. Unfortunately your constitution is not as robust as their curiosity and your adventure ends here.



1283

If you've got a Skeleton Hand then turn to 518. Otherwise you point to the F logo, indicating that you'd like to give it a try. Bruce smiles and shakes his head.

"Mate, you must really be from woop woop if you're after a Fosterer. The only blokes who drink that stuff are those whackers from the Great Brittles clan all the way up north". The other nobolds chuckle at what is probably considered a witticism by these animals, though as usual you have no idea what he's talking about.

Noticing your growing anger and misinterpreting the cause, Bruce attempts to console you : "Got plenty of other tinnies here. No? Well, nevermind mate. Break's nearly over anyway. Best we were getting back to it. Ooroo!"

With that the nobold downs the entirety of his "tinny" in a single swig, belches ferociously and takes up his tools. The rest of the nobold miners do the same. They troop off together towards the nearby rockface on the sides of the tunnel, leaving you alone with their precious esky.

Well, their backs are turned - do you feel like getting some looting in, starting with that esky (turn to 479), or is it time to move on, putting these annoying beings behind you (turn to 811)?

1284

Everything goes to hell when you suddenly run into your Mom and your godawful stepdad Jeff who for whatever reason have decided to take a stroll around the clearing. As always, Jeff is the first to open his fat mouth.

"I can't believe you're still here. You should be halfway to Bilgeton by now!"

You retort by calling your stepdad a stupid-glasses-having jerkbag but before you can expand on this theme your Mom interjects by whipping a cobblestone at you with surprising speed and accuracy, beaning you right on the forehead. You fold up like a deckchair. Lose 5 EFFORT.

"Don't talk to your father like that!", she shouts, "He only wants what's best for you". By this point you're no longer capable of hearing anything, let alone pointing out that Jeff isn't your real dad - overcome by grief and horror you're blubbering incoherently and crawling away, pulling yourself to your feet only once you've left the clearing. You stumble away from Elfsdale Downs weeping and crying at the injustice of it all. Maybe you'll never come back. That'll show them.

If your traditional fleeing direction is north, taking the shortest possible route out of town, then turn to 104.
If instead, after due consideration, you decide to flee south, racing through the town so that everyone can see what JEFF has done to you and pity you to the maximum possible extent then turn to 785.

1285

You lack the requisite qualities of courage and endurance to even attempt a walk through an uncharted stretch of forest without some pressing danger forcing you into it, especially when there's an easy path laid out for you. You retrace your steps the short distance back to where you started. Returning to the idiotic tapestry, this time you set off along the trail to the Glade of the Pixies.

Turn to 520.

1286

The guard looks at you with surprise as you describe how you slew the Goblin King.

"Oh, wow. Yeah, the Count's wanted that guy out of the way for a while. Not only is he a baby-stealing nuisance but he keeps upstaging the nobles at their dances by showing up with his giant codpieces. I guess we'll be free to take over the goblin mines and their industrial empire now as well but that's neither here nor there. Anyway, thanks for a job well done! The least I can do is let you in to Bilgeton".

After dotting all the is and crossing the ts the guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink : you are now permitted to enter Bilgeton through the Trader's Gate and will start each game with this item. With that done the guard escorts you out of the office and through to the other side of the gatehouse. You step through the exit and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

1287

It's a glistening, wet slime, opaque and a little bit lumpy. Up close the acidic smell of this slime is overpowering, and although you think you can see chunks of carrot in it you're not able to pick one out for a taste before finding yourself overpowered with disgust. Lose 1 EFFORT.

From the boutique and consistency, you guess it's a juvenile cave slime. Probably a rust jelly. You give it a whack with whatever weapon comes to hand just to make sure it's dead.

Now would you like to go left (turn to 883) or right (turn to 1269)?

1288

You fling yourself to the ground and grovel for mercy, as is your wont, but the elfs aren't inclined to listen to your tale of woe and instead bestow an additional beating upon you. Lose 1 ÉLAN from the painful, bone-cracking booting. You're pretty certain they're about to finish you off and rob your corpse, but then the unmistakeable sound of fighting breaks out in the direction of the caravan and the elfs decide they have bigger and more profitable fish to fry. Pausing only to give you a final kick in the ribs, the elfs run off in the direction of the battle, leaving you for later if they remember that you're still out here.

Thoroughly disabused of your notions of starting a career as a caravan guard, you crawl painfully away in the rough direction of away from here, heading further into the wooded area beside the road. Forgetting about your GUARDS and PROBLEMS you count your blessings that you're still alive... for now. Because after another two mercifully uneventful days of crawling and limping through dense undergrowth and increasingly swampy and foul-smelling woodlands you find yourself hobbling late at night, lost among a pitch-black, slime coated forest of twisted trees.

Remove any steed you may have from your Adventure Scroll, make a note that you've failed Aggie, and turn to 1409.

1289

You relax your grip on the sword. You will repay Jeff for what he's done, but not in violence. You will repay him in his own coin.

Reaching out, you shake his hand and invite him into your house, where you begin to spin your vengeful web. You have decided to bequeath him a villa just outside Bilgeford where he and your mother may live in peace and comfort, but where your agents will be ever watchful for any opportunity to sabotage any effort Jeff makes to find work or better his lot in any way. You will stop by regularly to enquire about Jeff's situation and upbraid him for his laziness, lack of work ethic and general worthlessness.

You can barely contain the self-satisfied smirk as you sign the deed to Jeff's own private hell.

Turn to 1650.

1290

You know a Will O' the Wisp when you see one and you don't want anything to do with the tricky little creeps. They're past masters at leading hapless travellers into their dooms, usually in some bottomless swamp or some giant creature's maw or some other unexpected and yet tediously predictable pitfall. You give them a wide berth.

Unfortunately, fay folk aren't the only menaces in the deep mists! As you stagger around in the gloom you slip over in something wet and cold which freezes you nearly to your core even as it stings like you've fallen into a patch of Elfsdale nettle. As you struggle back to your feet, clothes and backpack smoking from whatever substance now coasts you, the slick you've stepped into heaves up into a five-foot tall mound of white, slimy jelly. You've trod into a White Ooze! Gravely offended by your intrusion into its personal space it burbles horribly before lunging at you:

🔪**FROST PUDDING : DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 3**

You're still standing on at least part of this thing - the ground underneath you is very slippery. To reflect this deduct 1 from any FIST rolls you make. If you lose a round of combat then the corrosive slime this thing is made of eats away at any armour or clothing you're wearing - you must remove an equipped shield, suit of armour, helmet, belt, ring or item of clothing (of your choice) for each round you lose, even if an armour roll would ordinarily protect you from the consequences of losing the round. If you have no such items then there's no effect.

If you defeat this slime then turn to 1806. If you don't have what it takes then turn to 1440.

1291

Do you have at least 10 Guilders to your name, or an ÉLAN of 10 or more, or 3 or more FISTS? If so your various charms instantly win this lady's heart, and despite the clumsiness of your sleazy come-on she sees something worthwhile about you. Turn to 595.

Otherwise she stops sobbing long enough to curse the horrible goldbrick she sees before her in the roundest terms, using elf words too vicious to print here, even untranslated. You step back before this horrific torrent of billingsgate but the lady advances on you, swearing and threatening. Just as you're about to collapse before this verbal onslaught the baby wakes up starts fussing, putting an end to the tirade. The woman kicks you hard in the shin and goes back inside, slamming the door to her tower hard enough to cause several stones to plummet from a poorly-constructed window arch.

You lie stunned on the ground. Eventually you get up but some of the things she yelled at you will haunt you for years to come. Lose 1 ÉLAN. You stagger into the woods in a fugue, somehow and only through the greatest of luck wandering in the right direction. You eventually emerge from the woods and your hazy mental state to find yourself approaching a wide, dusty highway with most of the cobblestones pinched off it. More importantly, only a few miles down the road to the south-east, you can see the tall stone walls of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1732.

1292

Hulagu is pleased with your work this day. If you bought passage with this caravan he gives you 5 Bilgeton Guilders as a reward. If you're a lackey you get a mere 1 Guilder tip for defending your master's stuff. If you were hired as a guard you get squat for just doing your job. Add this cash (if any) to your Adventure Scroll.

After a short celebratory smoke break the caravan is away once more, rolling quickly down the road to Bilgeton. Turn to 1124.

1293

Staying true to your nature, you ignore the extremely perilous nature of your situation and commence to looting. The corpse pile smells too foul to dig in and in any case the bodies seem to belong to elfs and peasants who traditionally don't carry much worth taking. Instead you poke around the edges of the room among the necromantic equipment, avoiding anything that's humming, rattling or fizzing too loudly.

While most of the scrolls, books and equipment mean nothing to you (aside from the Fall edition of Better Bones and Graveyards, which you take - add it to your Adventure Scroll), you identify a few items that might be of use - a heavy book with a leather cover that looks suspiciously like it might be human skin, a slightly suspicious humanoid skull and a jar of pink fluid. Since this is a warlock's lab these items are all likely to be extremely dangerous to your health or trapped, cursed or otherwise screwy in some way. Instead of cramming them into your backpack you decide to proceed with caution for once.

If you'd like to examine the ominous book then turn to 1540. If you want to look at the skull then turn to 523. To check out the jar then turn to 539.

1294

Whatever excuse you have for being here doesn't impress the dragon. You clearly don't have enough money for its wares and your hollow lies are unconvincing. Bhad listens impatiently to your blather until you finally trail off.

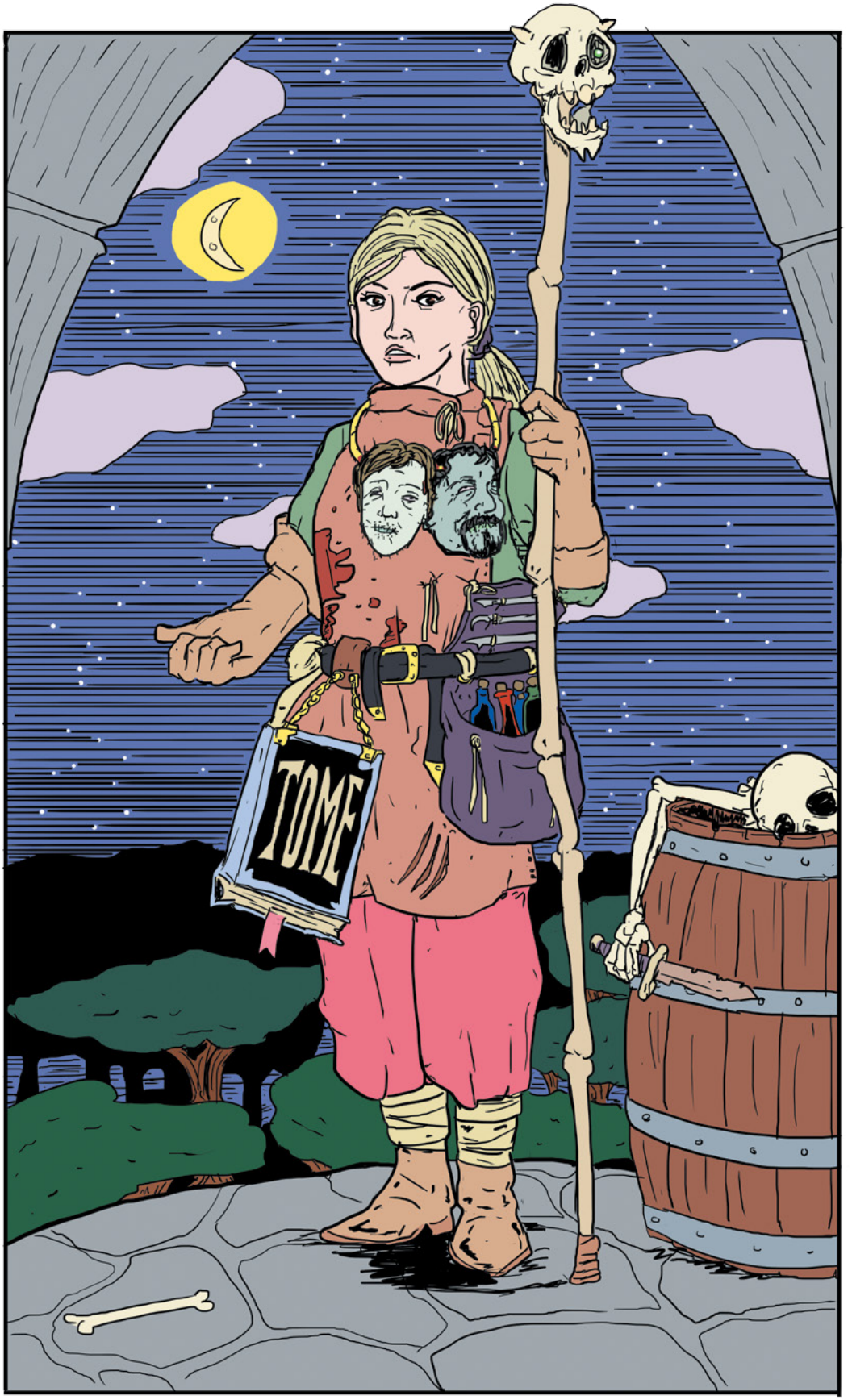
"Oh, in that case, HOW DARE YOU INTRUDE ON THE LAIR OF BHAD THE BLACK. YOU HAVE FIVE SECONDS TO", roars the dragon, and then suddenly stops.

"You...look familiar. Have we... met?" it say in a strange tone of voice. "You look like... no, you're too young. You must be.."

Suddenly the dragon is all smiles, a terrifying crescent of sharp white teeth the size of daggers.

"You wouldn't be in the mood for a nice dinner? You can stay the night if you like. It's getting dark and cold out there after all, and I wouldn't kick you out of bed". The dragon laughs at its wit and you chuckle politely but uncomfortably at whatever the joke was supposed to be there.

If you'd like to stay for dinner then turn to 407. Otherwise you can make some more excuses and get the hells out - turn to 943.


TOME

1295

The foyer of the tower is dominated by a spiral staircase which leads up to the higher floors of the structure. You barely have time to register this before the wizard yells hoarsely:

"TOP FUCKING FLOOR, CHOP CHOP."

You trudge up the stairs, ignoring several interesting-looking rooms on each floor as you're being escorted by armed skeletons and each of the rooms contains a suspiciously large number of oddly jittery barrels. You reach the top floor before long, where the wizard awaits you on the landing. She's a tough-looking lady dressed in a weird, loose-fitting leather armour coated in pouches for magical equipment and covered in dried blood and burn marks. She's a little taller than you and is maybe thirty years old, although it's hard to tell with humans and doubly hard to tell with wizards.

You open your mouth to complain about your rough treatment but the wizard immediately speaks over the top of you with a voice made hoarse by a lifetime of bellowing and cussing.

"About fucking time. Name's Aggie, I'm the ploughing supplier of Bilgeton's post-deceased workforce. Haven't shifted many of my blasted skeletons lately because those shitting elfs have been hanging around on my goddamned lawn the past two moons, fucking off all the customers and robbing my bloody caravans."

You try to talk but she expertly cuts you off and continues.

"Usually I sic the gardeners on them", she says, gesturing to your escorts, "but the slick little shits always move too fast for these lazy bone bags. You did me a good fucking turn keeping the pricks distracted until my boys could finally put the boot into them. Now if you want to do me a second good turn, you'll ride out with the next fucking caravan to Bilgeton tomorrow morning. Those cocksucking elfs show their ugly fucking mugs, put the fear of the buggering gods into them again. If they can't rob my caravan they won't have anything to fucking pawn, and they can't do that they'll either piss off somewhere else or starve. Either way, fuck 'em. I'll reward you handsomely, of fucking course. What do you reckon?"

The verbose wizard finally lets you get a word in.

If you're delivering something on behalf of some denizen of Nonce or the other, then now's the time to get it off your to-do list: turn to 81 to get rid of Skellybones or turn to 693 to deposit the Bag of Child Bones. If you've got both then just pick one or the other.

If you'd rather start by whining about Thighbone trying to plant his axe in you, turn to 1667.

If you don't think Aggie is the sympathetic sort, you could accept her offer (turn to 704) or reject it (turn to 532).

Alternatively if you want to seize the opportunity to rid the world of a fountain of obscenities by summarily booting the necromancer out of the tower window, turn to 674.

1296

You've made a terrible mistake! You turn tail and run. As soon as they notice you're fleeing, the crossbowmen up on the wall open fire! You've gotta get out of here before one of the skilled marksmen punches your ticket!

RUNNING FOR IT: DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 1

If you have a steed of some kind deduct 2 from the DIFFICULTY. If you've got a shield equipped on your back then reduce the DIFFICULTY by a further 2.

Should you fail then one of the marksmen shoots true and skewers you with deadly precision. Your adventure ends here.

If you succeed, you manage to do what you do best and scarper away from danger, expertly dodging the deadly bolts raining down on you from above. Once you're out of crossbow range the guards can't be bothered pursuing you over a trespassing violation.

Since there's no way you're getting in through that gate now you decide to retrace your steps to the junction and take the other path towards Bilgeton - turn to 678.

1297

You strike out directly for the Alp of Abandonment. The Mist Steppes are crawling with unpleasant monsters (as you'd know, having looked in the Bestiary), and spending any longer out here than absolutely necessary will probably cause you to run into more of them than you'd like. You hurry on, steering clear of any shamblers you see lurching across the frozen plains.

Hours pass. The sun is beginning to set and the Alp is still a couple of hours ahead of you when you notice the glow of a campfire a fair distance off to your right. You can see a solitary figure sitting huddled near the fire - a skeleton, if the orange light reflecting off its bony head is anything to go by. If the thing has noticed you - if it's capable of noticing anything - it shows no sign. Its hollow eye sockets stare directly into the flickering flames.

Do you want to approach this strange camping tableau? If so then turn to 1427. If you'd like to continue to avoid encounters out here then turn to 237 to pass it by.

1298

"A SHAME. IT SEEMS YOU LACK THE ACADEMIC RIGOUR TO TRULY UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY. I HAVE NO FURTHER USE FOR YOU".

You bid the Malrog a pleasant farewell but it shakes its ponderous head sternly. Dark smoke pours from fissures this movement causes in the rocky monster's neck.

"THAT WAS A EUPHEMISM FOR ME KILLING YOU, WHICH I SHALL, PRESENTLY".

Welp, you're boned. Turn to 242.

1299

Usually weapons are given a special name like "Excalibur" or "Bob" because they're enchanted or particularly good at slaying boss monsters. Excalibur might look like a rusty, dinged-up chunk of scrap metal but maybe it'll filet this dragon with a single slice. Taking advantage of the element of surprise you charge forward and take a wild swing at the dragon. Excalibur sings as it cuts through the air...

It turns out that Excalibur actually is a rusty, dinged-up chunk of scrap metal and it explodes in a shower of rust and metal shards upon striking Bhad's scales. Remove Excalibur from your Adventure Scroll. The dragon gives you a strange look.

"Where did you get that sword? I haven't seen it since Merlin tried to gut me with it...Could have sworn I threw it into the Mist Steppes. Damn it, I'll have to..."

With the dragon lost in his train of thought now might be the time to draw another weapon and press the attack - turn to 1795. If you'd rather not die you can flee instead - turn to 1264.

1300

You head for the skull-shaped mountain. The rock may have a foreboding appearance but it is pleasingly downhill from where you are, which takes some of the edge off your growing unease.

You soon find yourself standing before the giant skull. It's a large foothill on the boundary of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains and the Mist Steppes, and like everything around here it's wreathed in a dense mist. Up close it's more of a cave than a mountain, really. The mouth and eyes of the skull are passages leading deep inside the skull-shaped formation. They glow dimly from some light shining from within. Someone's home...

Before you can get any closer a curious-looking man comes striding out from the dim depths of the skull's mouth. He might be the strangest person you've ever seen - dressed from head to toe in a form-fitting outfit consisting of a lilac body stocking with a hood, and a pair of striped short braies over the top of this outrageous clothing item. On his face he wears a bandit's mask and you notice that on his right hand he wears a flashy silver ring. Aside from this item of flair he seems unarmed. The strangeness of this fellow is such that you barely notice that he's accompanied by a huge wolf who trots along at his heels, its sharp teeth bared menacingly.

Are you accompanied by the Bone Golem? If so then turn to 1716. Otherwise the man approaches, staring at you through the eyeholes in his mask. If you've got a skull mark recorded on your Adventure Scroll then turn at once to 263. If not then the oddity, deciding that you're at least no immediate threat, raises his hand in greetings.

"I am The Spectre, the man who cannot die. I've sworn a solemn oath to devote my existence to the destruction of looters, the greedy and the cruel in all their forms. I am the original intellectual property of the author of this book series. What manner of being are you to cross my lands?"

You're pretty sure this guy's going to get your number pretty quickly if you hang around chatting with him. If you want to get the drop on this lilac lawman then turn to 663. If you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes and want to use it to get the upper hand then turn to 933. Otherwise, if you think you can trick this guy into thinking you're not so bad then turn to 1096.

1301

You squeeze through a lengthy tunnel and emerge in another cavern. It's pretty nondescript. You hear a bat flapping around among the stalagmites overhead but can't see it. Tunnels lead off in all the cardinal directions.

If you want to go north then turn to 1360. For east turn to 1634. For south turn to 1778. To go west turn to 279.

1302

You hang back just a little, and as your colleagues charge into the elfs you give the flanks of your bird a sharp kick. Your ride squawks loudly and runs for it down the road to the south, leaving the battle far behind. By the time the humans are done murdering your old neighbours you'll be long gone.

Add the Baby Rukh to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 313.

1303

You still don't want to cause a scene here. What if the old man comes in? You tell Nilde you're not meant to be: you come from very different worlds and it could never work out between you, and that it's not her but it's not you, and other such ridiculous platitudes. You hear her bleat in disappointment before departing back to her chambers.

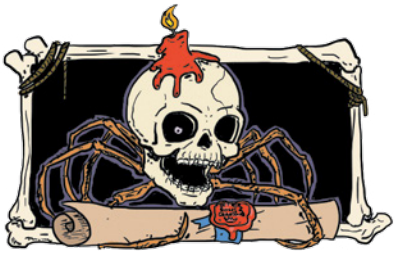
You sleep well for the remainder of the night and are woken up at dawn by Aldrecht who seems a little down for whatever reason. As you stretch he re-lights the fire and prepares a hearty farmer's breakfast for you, consisting mostly of gourds and horsemeat which Aldrecht informs you are the main produce of this camp. Restore up to 20 EFFORT from the relatively comfortable sleep and the healthy meal.

Once you're done with your meal Aldrecht sees you to the door. You thank the old coot for his hospitality.

"Old?" Aldrecht sputters, "I'm thirty-six years young!"

Putting the hovel and its human inhabitants behind you, you set out once again on your adventure in the direction of Bilgeton.

Turn to 1446.



1304

The wait is incredibly, tediously long. The line hardly moves. Minutes are as hours to you.

"Next" calls a teller. The line shuffles forward.

Roll a die, halve the result (rounding up to the nearest whole number) and subtract that amount from your EFFORT. Assuming you survived this terminal case of boredom, will you stick around - turn to 1699 - or will you give up on your side quest to find some change and complete the main quest by turning to 827?

1305

Your sanity, already hanging by a thread thanks to the travails of the day and the effects of the potion, finally snaps under the ill treatment you've received from these pixies. As the few remaining survivors flee from your wrath you turn it on their town, screaming and crying as you completely wreck up the joint. Pixie houses, despite being made of stone, are hastily constructed using indentured labour and aren't up to code at all. Their paper-thin walls are no match for your boots and fists and by the time the sun has risen you've thoroughly and permanently lowered the property prices of every piece of real estate in the Glade.

Your unrestrained savagery has netted you a fine collection of Pixie Bits which you may add to your Adventure Scroll. You also find 5 Bilgeton Guilders in hard currency on the corpses of your enemies - add this to your Adventure Scroll. Unfortunately, a fire you started mid-rampage spreads to the Lodge of Travellers before you get a chance to investigate it, and being full of dry hay and flammable potions it explodes spectacularly. Your curiosity remains unslaked but this meaningless destruction is all very cathartic. Restore 5 EFFORT.

Starting to come down hard from the potion you decide it's time to get out of this depressing pixie slum. If you'd like to head back more or less the way you came through the swamps to the south then turn to 426. If you'd prefer to follow a thin track leaving the Glade to the east then turn to 914.

1306

The guard shudders as you describe your encounters with Them! and their horrifying queen.

"There was an infestation of Them! under the province? I guess that explains what happened to all our cattle, and also all those hobos who went missing around Bilgeford. I suppose I haven't heard that weird warbling sound for a little while either, now you mention it. You've done Bilgeton a great service by ridding us of those ants".

After dotting all the is and crossing the ts the guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink : you are now permitted to enter Bilgeton through the Trader's Gate in future adventures. With that done the guard escorts you out of the office and through to the other side of the gatehouse. You step through the exit and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

1307

You somehow rouse yourself to put the fire out. It's now dark and cold and it takes a while to get comfortable again. The bird gets annoyed at your restlessness and gives you a pretty hard peck on the noggin which makes you furiously angry and far more awake than you'd like. By the time you've calmed down the temperature has fallen even further and you're absolutely freezing. Teeth chattering in the frosty night air, you eventually get exhausted enough to pass out.

You wake just a bit after midday. Annoyed by what is an early start by your standards, you rise groggily to your feet. You didn't sleep all that well what with the shivering and being outside and all, but at least your conscientiousness with regards to fire safety spared you from any unpleasant night time encounters. Restore 10 EFFORT as you mount up your bird and begin another day's ride.

Turn to 1455.

1308

You approach the front of the hovel and knock on the door. A few moments later the door opens a crack and you behold the trademark weathered features and snaggletooth of an ancient human farmer.

"What are you doing at my door? Have you any idea of the hour?" the senile old coot barks.

You honestly don't, and you tell him so. The peasant glares at you for a moment before deciding you're no threat. He swings the door wide open.

"Best come in then. Can't have a weed such as yourself out at night round these parts - there are elfs out in those woods you know".

He's on to you! No doubt he has some horrible mischief in store for you. If you're too smart to fall for his wiles then turn to 1458. Otherwise if you're sure such a simple chap means you no harm then you can step inside - turn to 93.

1309

If you still had a nose you'd hold it as you take a run up and leap off the shore into the Bilge. The current soon carries your buoyant bones downstream towards the county capital.

Soon the walls of the city are looming high above you and not a guard to be seen! But just as you're congratulating yourself on another skeletal success story you realise you forgot to take something into account - the humans, foreseeing the risk of people and things trying to get into Bilgeton via the river, erected a set of bars across the river entrance against which a great pile of flotsam and jetsam has built up. You're about to join it! Luckily you look like any other pile of garbage washed down this river so the guard waiting in the archway above doesn't spot you as you slam into the trash heap.

Once you've untangled yourself from the rubbish you take a closer look at the mess you're in. The good news is that the bars are close together but they're only close enough to stop most humans and their type - as a skeleton you might be able to slip on through even if not all of your gear is going to make it through with you.

TIGHT SQUEEZE: DIFFICULTY 8

Add 1 to the difficulty for every item that you have equipped or in your inventory. You may discard (but not use) items now to reduce this penalty - delete them from your Adventure Scroll. This must be done before you roll to see if you pass the Hassle.

If you succeed then turn to 839. If you fail then turn to 1575.

1310

Rummaging around, you locate a cache of sacramental hooch which you pour liberally all over the floor and furniture in this dump before moving back into the doorway and chucking one of the lanterns into the pool of flammable liquid. You barely have time to step through the doorway before a huge fireball comes roiling out. The church is engulfed in flames instantly.

Soon the whole town is on fire - Busted Hill is full of coal, and the intense heat from the inferno causes the coal seam to ingite, setting fire to every hovel in town at pretty much the same time. The few nobolds who escape the flames are too busy with their futile attempts to put out the fire to pay any attention to you. You start to search around the town for loot and a way out of here.

As you're ransacking the tavern (add cash worth 3 Guilders and a Bottle of Booze) you notice a trapdoor in the floor - if you think that's a possible way out then turn to 507. If you'd rather not risk being roasted alive in a cellar then you'd better keep looking - turn to 1686.

1311

Naturally, you half-ass the task and fumble the jar. It falls to the ground with a loud smash, and as you flail around in panic you knock a wide variety of jars, alchemical equipment and bottles full of magical reagents to the floor where they also shatter, releasing their contents. The fumes mix and react with one another, generating magical sparks which set the roiling and toxic mixture ablaze....

Do you have a shield equipped in your arms or on your back? If so turn to 548. Otherwise turn to 340.

1312

You kick the golem over and, weakened by the night's activities, it collapses completely, the ancient spell holding it together weakened beyond repair. You sift through the bones in hopes of finding something worth a damn but unfortunately you come up empty. One of the bones - a jawbone, by the looks, has a cute little skull stamp on it, but that doesn't make it worth carrying it around with you. Perhaps if you come this way again it might help you join a few dots but for now you chuck the worthless bone back on the heap.

Having dealt with this nocturnal nastiness you pull up another patch of gravel (not too close by). You don't sleep all that well - the gravel's not comfortable and you're worried that the golem might pull itself back together and come after you, but nothing else goes wrong and you wake up alive the next morning. Picking the gravel and bone shards out of your back, you continue along into the mountains. Restore 10 EFFORT and turn to 521.

1313

You have principles to uphold! You might be a grave-robbing scumbag (albeit a failure of one), but all of a sudden it's a point of pride that you're not a liar. You admit to the guards that you were planning on digging up some dead humans to see if there was anything of value on their corpses.

Usually this kind of misdemeanour carried out with the level of ineptness you displayed would merely get you kicked out of Brunnenfeld. However, you broke the law on the expensive side of town in front of a bunch of rich people, and they demand your head. The guards, well aware of which side their bread is buttered on, oblige.

1314

You soon find yourself in the throne room of the splendid Goblin King - a tall, mostly-human looking fellow with a huge flowing mullet, a billowing cape and an impressive package protruding from his skin-tight silver leggings. He's sitting more across his throne than in it, one leg thrown over a high arm of the chair. He swirls a crystal orb around in one of his palms.

"Well. Here we both are" he says, smirking wryly. "Usually I send intruders who make nuisances of themselves in Gobholme into the Swamp of Perpetual Putridity, but it just so happens that today I could use someone expendable to do something dangerous for me."

The goblins gathered around laugh hysterically. Before you can interject the Goblin King cuts you off.

"My favourite codpiece has been soiled, and I need to order a new one. You will travel across the Mist Steppes to see Bhad the Black, guardian of the lonely Alp of Abandonment and the greatest blacksmith in these lands. He, and only he, can make a new codpiece that meets my exacting requirements. Place the order for me and your crimes will be forgiven. Or fail, and, well, that would be a pity."

If you agree to do this thing then turn to 1597. If you're minded to refuse, turn to 565. If you'd prefer to go completely berserk then you can launch yourself at the Goblin King - turn to 1550.

1315

You pride yourself on knowing when it's time to split. Regrettably that time was some time last night, perhaps before agreeing to lead this caravan. Despite this blow to your professional reputation for abject cowardice, you can still recognise when a situation can only get worse. This is one such time. Without yelling so much as a goodbye to your besieged wagons you kick the flanks of your steed and gallop for Bilgeton.

Unfortunately the archers lining the road might have something to say about this. You're not out of this by a country mile:

GAUNTLET: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2

Each time you lose a round you've been accurately hit by one or more arrows and must roll a die: on a 1 or 3 your steed is hit and you must turn at once to 1405. On 4 or more you are hit and lose 1 ÉLAN from being arrowed. No surrender is possible - the increasingly panicked mount will flee until it's either brought down or its rider is killed.

If you succeed you eventually make it through the maelstrom of arrows. You're moving fast enough that the elfs aren't at all interested in pursuit, and in any case they're distracted by all the loot they've raked in. You'd feel bad about failing Aggie but you've never felt bad about half-arsing a job in your life and you're not about to start now. Make a note that you've disappointed her on your Adventure Scroll and ride on towards Bilgeton.

Before you forget about all your PROBLEMS, how many do you have? If you've got 3 or fewer then you're in the clear. Turn to 294. If you've got 4 or more then turn to 1443.

1316

Panting, coated in blood and completely insane with bloodlust, you stare wildly at the pile of pixie corpses. Then a thought flicks across your mind. You couldn't... could you?

EAT THE PIXIE - turn to 976.

If you're still reading, the bloodlust fades before you do something even you might one day regret. Turn to 333.

1317

Since you have no chance of defeating these men whatsoever, you clamber back out the way you came in. The household guards shout for assistance but the lazy sentry that was playing with his book seems to have drifted off to sleep. While he's still rubbing his eyes you vault back over the side fence, race through the front garden and make your getaway.

You run all the way clear of the Noble District and back over the bridge to the less-patrolled poorer areas north of the Bilge. It's only then that you become satisfied that you're no longer being pursued. By the time you've caught your breath you realise how late it is and how tired you are - it's time to go find your father and that place to crash at long last. Turn to 1793.

1318

Displaying an unusual amount of singlemindedness and stick-to-it-iveness you throw rock a third time. Kaspars does the same.

"Well, this is getting nowhere and I'm getting mighty thirsty. Let's call this a tie and grab a drink".

Looks like you failed to solve Brunnenfeld's drinking problem and now have one of your own!

Turn to 485.

1319

You politely beg the Malrog to let you pass.

"NONE PASS. ALL DIE."

Well, that went as well as could be expected. Turn to 242.

1320

According to the scrying orb he's trying to sell you drugs.

Remove one of the scrying orb's charges. With that out of the way, if you want to buy drugs from some hippy you stumbled across in the woods then turn to 601. Otherwise you inform him that winners don't use drugs and strike out back towards the road to Bilgeton - turn to 1623.

1321

Utterly miserable and lost, you wind your way gently uphill for a long time, babbling about your infinite sadness to yourself and to any passing creature unfortunate enough to have ears. The rest of the day slips away and nightfall finds you still roaming the forest, still bemoaning your fate and rueing the day that homewrecker Jeff slithered into your life. All reason has fled from you to the point where you forget to take a meal, a matter you're usually quite punctilious about.

Late at night you begin to hear running water and you emerge from the forest next to the shore of a beautiful placid lake. After such a hard day's crying and hiking, your legs won't allow you to go any further. You collapse on a patch of ground not far from the edge of the lake. The relaxing sound of water lapping at the shores temporarily takes your mind off your sorrows and you are lulled into a deep sleep.

Turn to 992.

1322

You commence to rummaging through the skeleton's possessions but before you can find anything useful a bony hand reaches out and grabs your ankle, wrenching you off your feet! You pull yourself upright only to find that the skeleton has reformed and seized up his weapon again!

JAUNTY SKELETON: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

Did you win? If so turn to 1500. If you lost, turn to 61.

1323

Showing an uncharacteristic level of industriousness, you really get down to work and shovel away just enough stoneware to allow a trickle of water to flow through the remaining rubble. The humans of Brunnenfeld can come up here and do the rest if they want to. With the water flowing your work here is done, and just in time: after nearly half an hour of work and four hours of sitting around recuperating, the sun is coming up over the mountains. You don't think you've ever seen a sunrise before. It's horrible.

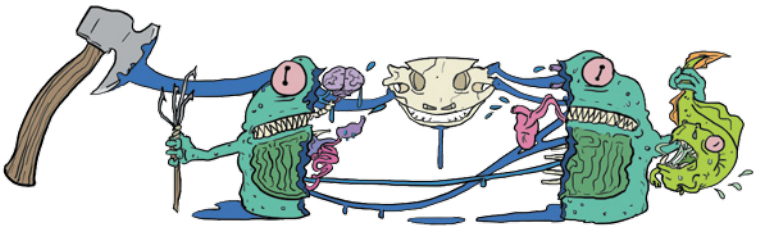
If the time is right to return to Brunnenfeld to collect your lavish reward then turn to 270. If you feel that your fate lies in the big city rather than in the first provincial backwater you came across then you forgo your reward (for now) and move on. Turn to 955.

1324

When The Waits' timpani player didn't return from his last crowd surf you figured he was off somewhere taking a leak, but you were wrong! Instead he circled around behind the stage to creep up on you. You only realise your error when you feel your arms wrenched hard behind your back and held in an agonisingly painful lock!

"Bilgeton is The Waits territory" hisses a man's voice into your ear, his breath foul with the smell of Bilgeton street food and medieval standards of dental hygiene. "You've had your fun, now it's time to piss off". He begins to march you back off the stage. The skeleton security guards take no notice of this rough handling - they're on their hourly smoke break.

You try to wriggle free but the timpanist is a big man with strong arms from beating his timpani all the time. You're not breaking out of this hold - unless you've got a dagger, steak knife, lore-wardening key or other small, easily concealable blade somewhere on your person. Turn to 1373 if you have such an implement or turn to 556 if you're unwilling or unable to slice a man up over a music contest you've involved yourself in for no good reason.



1325

Tightening the straps and closures on your bag as a precaution, you put on your most boastful airs and lay on the guard a triple serve of bullshit about how you've captured the brownies that were menacing Brunnenfeld. The brownies scream and moan about the folly of trusting a guy called "Bastard" but it's too late for them - the guard takes your bag away into a nearby gate-house to be "processed". A few minutes and some muffled high-pitched screams later your bag is returned to you, brownie free and smelling pine fresh. Remove Joe Louis from your Adventure Scroll if you had him along for the ride.

The guard grimaces at you in his best approximation of a smile. "Ye have our thanks, kind sir. Them brownies were the bane of our town. Took us months to get the blighters out and they kept trying to sneak back in. These belong to ye", he says, handing you the collection of tiny Enchanted Tools that the brownies brought along (add this item to your Adventure Scroll).

"Well, ye've got the freedom of the town, sir. May I recommend you step through the gate into the market square and perhaps avail yerself of the fine ales in the local tavern before sampling the other delights of fair Brunnenfeld. Don't worry yerself about the barkeep though, he's a right tosser. Oh, and one more thing. Sir Witold will wish for ye to call on him. Ye'll find him in the mansion at the north end of town," he says.

You thank the guard and wander over to the bustling market square which lies just ahead of you. Turn to 16.

1326

What would ordinarily be an afternoon well-spent following the path of least resistance is spoiled when, shortly after you begin your stake out, garbage starts raining down from the top floor of your tower. As you look on in horror, Jeff hurls armload after armload of your worthless but potentially collectable possessions out your bedroom window!

You yell up to him, calling him all the foul words you can recall and a few you made up. Jeff scowls down at you, displaying all the contempt expected of an elf who wandered into your home and thought he could pretend to be your dad, and summarily instructs you to piss off.

With Jeff seemingly serious about permanently moving you out, your plans are ruined. There's no longer any point hanging around Elfsdale Downs.

As your useless property rains down from above you must decide - will you leave town via the road to Bilgeton (turn to 643) or, after due consideration of the bleakness of your situation, will you freak out and flee into the forest? If the latter appeals to you then turn to 785.

1327

You convince Bessie to stop, draw your weapon, climb carefully down from the cart and race towards the shambler, ready to save the damsel in distress. By the time you accomplish all this, Nilde has thoroughly defeated the shambler and is already wiping the foul-smelling blood off her blade by rubbing it against the skirt of her thick peasant dress. She notices that you tried to save her though. She gives you a warm smile and a kiss on the cheek as you stand there uselessly.

"I wasn't sure that we would be right for each other but I'm starting to warm to you, hubby", she says. "Let's go get our marriage made official!"

While she climbs back onto the wagon you investigate the shambler corpse and find nothing worth taking, though you could pull its teeth out if you're not feeling too squeamish. Add 32 Zombie Teeth to the cash section of your Adventure Scroll if you're so inclined.

Having completed this inspection you clamber back on the wagon next to your happy wife, who recommences telling you her turnippy tales. After a little while you make camp, have a nice sleep (on your own, since Nilde is still rejecting your advances until you're safely married in the eyes of her precious K-NG) and continue your slow but steady journey down the road to Bilgeton annoyingly early the next morning.

Restore 20 EFFORT from the rest and turn to 1455.

1328

The wizard scoffs.

"You can't even pronounce it correctly, so I doubt you can afford it. And even if you could, what would you do with it? Your limited palate could hardly begin to appreciate the craftsmanship that goes into my exquisite creations".

If you insist on getting your drink then turn to 262. If you're growing weary of this wizard and this horrible place you could just leave - turn to 1532.

1329

With the wagon loaded, you hop aboard while the goblin teamsters hitch up the weird bipedal steeds they use for everything. Soon the drivers give the creatures a whip and you're away, finally putting Gobholme behind you.

The journey takes quite a long time - the heavy carriage moves barely faster than walking speed and takes a winding path - after passing through the Mazyrinth by the most scenic route imaginable, picking up more trade items and supplies, the wagon slowly trundles through the hills and circumvents the great Schleimwald forest along its northern boundary. The carriage stops for the night in a field near the forest before setting off again in the morning. From the sounds of roaring, screaming and screeching emanating from the dark and tangled woods you're glad you didn't try to pass through there. Restore 20 EFFORT from the night's sleep and remove any negative effects from alcohol or poisoning that might be afflicting you.

You're lying atop the luggage having an early-morning nap when you're heaved off like a sack of garbage, landing hard on a cobbled road. Jolted awake, you gaze for the first time upon the walls of Bilgeton. Standing over you is a human guard, dressed in the trademarked kettle helm and padded armour of the human soldiers of the region.

"E's with us", says one of the goblin merchants but the human shakes his head.

"You know the rules. You lot are ok, but he's got no paperwork. He'll have to get a residency scroll like everyone else if he wants to come in".

The goblins don't look particularly apologetic as their wagon trundles in through the gatehouse. Once the heavily-loaded vehicle is safely inside, the guard hauls to your feet. He gives you a searching glance, his flowing moustache twitching.

"Join the line for the gatehouse, when you're ready" he says, releasing you. "Not that I'd bother by the looks of you".

With that he turns away to bother the next wagon waiting to get into town. Turn to 681.

1330

You tell the farmer that you just happened along.

"Well, afraid I can't help you then, friend", says Hurensohn, "My co-pilots have to come recommended. Too many bad trips with the wrong sorts of people, if you know what I mean."

You're sure you don't have the slightest idea of what he means, but no amount of pleading convinces him that you're worth bringing along on the trip. If anything your annoying behaviour hardens his conviction not to bring you along. You really need that ride though, otherwise you might have to walk to Bilgeton!

If you're prepared to take what you want by force then turn to 388. Otherwise there's nothing to do but move on: turn to 268.

1331

It's late at night by the time you finally emerge from the forest and out onto the paved road to Bilgeton. You're exhausted and the only thing you can think of is getting some sleep. Ignoring the danger, you lie down in a patch of grass right next to the road and before you know it you're snoring happily away.

You're wakened in the mid-morning by a horrible slurping and crunching sound. You jump to your feet in shock as soon as you spy the cause: a gigantic shelled horror is crawling towards you through the trees! The colossal forest snail has been slowly hunting you since you passed through the swamp and is gradually sliming its way through the forest verge in your direction! Luckily it's as slow as it is unstealthy so you've got plenty of time to pack up your stuff and get out of the way before it catches up to you. Despite the rude awakening you had a nice sleep: add 20 EFFORT.

Bidding the hungry snail a fond farewell you continue along the road to Bilgeton. Turn to 1446.

1332

You stammer out some obvious lies mixed in with a few half-truths, impressing no one.

"He's clearly just a human with elf ears stuck on", shouts one of the brownies. Surrounded by heavily armed little people with their painful-looking artillery aimed squarely at your groin, you're in a world of trouble. You slump and submit to your fate.

Luckily the brownies are more civilised than you probably are and, after lashing you to the ground with their thread-like ropes they merely relieve you of all your possessions (remove all items and currency from your Adventure Scroll). You break free of the flimsy bindings as soon as the brownies have disappeared back into the woods with all your stuff. While it's tempting to go after them to get yours, you'd rather not risk embarrassing yourself on such a grand scale again. Instead you decide to put this awful place behind you and, following the edge of the forest, you continue to make your way east. Turn to 214.

1333

Unlike everything else in the forest, this tree is pleasantly free of slime. Despite your lack of interest in climbing trees in your youth and consequent lack of upper body strength you're still able to clamber up its branches to a thick bough about ten feet off the ground. You reckon it might be just wide enough to support you while you sleep so long as you don't toss and turn too much. Too tired after the trek and the climb to fuss much you lie down on this precarious perch. Your butt is cossetted by a patch of moss and your head lays on a soft, furry pillow...

You jolt upright and find that you'd just been resting your head on the forepaw of a huge, bear-like creature hanging from the branch that you'd selected as a bed. In your exhaustion you didn't notice the camouflaged creature - a Greater Drop Bear if your old Bestiary (available from a small selection of reputable bookstores and petrol stations world-wide) was any guide. This creature, a disarmingly fluffy marsupial the size of a regular brown bear, hangs upside down waiting for travellers to pass underneath, at which point it drops from the tree and onto its unsuspecting victim. This one has noticed you and is regarding you from beneath the bough with its beady black eyes. Unhooking a mighty paw from the branch it points down to the ground as if demanding you get down. Seeing that you're still gawping at it instead of doing its bidding, the animal emits an unsettling snarl, revealing a mouth full of huge, razor-sharp teeth.

If you'd rather not be up a tree with this thing then turn to 1545 to get down. Otherwise if you're still accompanied by the Dire Wolf then turn to 1474. If you have the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes then it might help - turn to 498. If the best option is just to stay put, turn to 829.

1334

The crowd boos as you lie on the ground. Someone throws a mug of stale piss which lands near your head, splattering you with its beery contents. Fistface roars in anger.

"Get up!" he shouts. You shake your head vigorously.

"Mediogre!" shouts the boxer before kicking you hard in the head, a move which is patently illegal in boxing but which seems to be fine with this crowd. You black out to the sounds of wild applause. Lose 1 ÉLAN from the cracked skull and turn to 852.

1335

"YOU BUGGERING BASTARD OF AN ELF. I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU FUCKING RUE THE BLASTED DAY YOU WERE BLOODY WELL BORN", shouts the warlock. This stream of billingsgate staggers you momentarily and the dangerous necromancer seizes the opportunity to attack with a combination of dire spells, worse oaths and what looks like a regular old meat cleaver.

🔪AGGIE THE WARLOCK : DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2

There'll be no mercy for you here - you'd better win or it's curtains for you. If you defeat the warlock then turn to 1361.

1336

As you try to withdraw the shank from your filthy burlap tunic it gets tangled in the weave. The guard watches you suspiciously as you try to wrench it free.

"What's wrong with you then? Lice? Scabies? Rat in your tunic? Well I'm here now, let's have a look at it" he says, leaning forward. This is the time to strike! In desperation you pull hard - too hard - and with a tear the sharpened shiv rips free of the tunic and plunges deep into your own buttocks. You let out a wild scream and begin to dance around in agony as you scramble with both hands to get the thing out!

The guard's eyes open wide with horror. "You're possessed! I'll fetch the priest!". Forgetting his earlier surliness in the face of this emergency he races off, locking the door behind him. You finally work the toothbrush free but that only makes the problem worse - a jet of blood sprays out, soaking you, your clothes and most of the floor. You quickly pass out, your hands clutching at the hole in your bottom.

You've been weakened by such a long incarceration so by the time the guard returns with the priest you're not showing any real signs of life. The priest, drunk as a lord as usual, doesn't notice that you're still breathing shallowly and pronounces you dead. The guards do what they do in all such situations - they haul you out of your cell, drag you through the city to the poor quarter and dump you on the infamous food pile in the alley out the back of the Dribbling Wand.

In the event you didn't die - your firm grip on your buttocks plugged the wound before all your blood could leak out. You awake to find yourself on a pile of various unidentifiable meats and half-rotten refuse somewhere in Bilgeton. Luckily for you it's still morning when all this happens and the chefs have only just clocked in to the Dribbling Wand's kitchen: they haven't had a chance to check the new stock for choice cuts. Summoning all your strength you slip off the pile and stagger away.

Lose 2 ÉLAN and 10 EFFORT from this horrible, nearly lethal ordeal. If you're still alive then maybe you'd like to stagger into the pub to recuperate your strength - turn to 1497. On the other hand, since you're broke you don't think you'll be able to afford anything even in a dive like the Dribbling Wand. If you'd prefer to explore Bilgeton a bit first then turn to 1364.

1337

You gallantly offer to accompany her to Gobholme. She smiles and claps her hands in delight (whether at the prospect of more of your company or because she's saved a couple of Guilders, you're not sure) and soon all four of you are setting out through the north gates.

You soon have cause to regret your offer. Eilika knows the way through the mountains but you're the one who has to carry all the packs and supplies for the four of you, as well as lugging the two dwarfs along behind you by a rope tied around their wrists. It's a long slog and takes days, and no matter how many times you set up Eilika's tent she doesn't invite you in. You sleep shivering in the cold, not having a tent of your own.

Lose 10 EFFORT from these exertions. One morning you wake up sore, stiff and miserable to find the camp completely abandoned, aside from a note written in a flowery cursive script:

"Dearest Bastard,

You are slowing us down so we have gone on ahead. Please pack up the camp and bring our supply packs to "The Gobl Inn" where we will be staying at the heart of the Mazyrinth of Gobholme. You'll get your reward there.

Eilika".

She's kissed the paper right above where she wrote her name, leaving a bright red mark. You're still in with a shot!

If you wish to do as you're asked then add the Heavy Packs to your Adventure Scroll (note that you will have -2 ÉLAN while you're carrying the things), otherwise you crumple up the letter and just leave the supplies for whatever scavengers would want cheap camping gear. Whichever way you've decided it's time to move on. Turn to 505 to venture deeper into the mountains.

1338

You claim to work for Witold.

"Well, that's a Brunnenfeld uniform all right. I guess they'll take anyone these days. Well, in you go. Just remember: you're a private citizen in Bilgeton! Don't wander around armed and don't try to arrest anyone! Here's your Residency Scroll with all your details on it."

The guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink: you are now permitted to enter Bilgeton through the Trader's Gate in future adventures. You will start each game with this item from now on. With that secured, the guard gives you a salute which you return sloppily before stepping through the exit of the gatehouse and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

1339

You trudge back the way you came. Upon returning to the cave, you notice that the bat lady has taken the opportunity to sneak away. Maybe she was scared of her feelings for you.

Mildly heartbroken, you leave the cave and consider where to go next. Remembering the bat lady's directions, you could make your way back to the road to Bilgeton by cutting south through the forest via the Glade of Pixies. Turn to 520 if you want to do this. If you don't want anything to do with glades or pixies you can take the high road instead and traverse the Big Rock Goblin Mountains in the east. Turn to 453 to give this a shot.

1340

The hooded figure shakes its head in disgust and turns away. With all hope gone, you collapse into a miserable, screaming wreck, pounding the platform and hollering about your terrible fate. So repulsive and pathetic is your tantrum that not only do the slavers give up all hope of selling you, they no longer wish to have anything to do with you at all. Left to your own devices now, you spend the rest of the day and the whole night weeping, moaning and gnashing your teeth. It's only in the morning, as the sun rises on the open plains, that you realize that you're completely alone. The nomadic taurcents literally packed up their yurts and moved on just to be rid of you. They didn't even take your stuff - you find your backpack ditched nearby, with all your worthless garbage in it, though they did relieve you of your cash - deduct all currency from your Adventure Scroll. Sadder about the loss of a handful of leaves and coins than you are happy about regaining your liberty, you begin the long trudge back in the direction of Bilgeton.

It's not until late night, several days later, when you finally complete your trek across the Endless Plain of Fortune and return to the road to Bilgeton, exhausted, miserable, cold and generally a lot poorer for the experience of being enslaved and then chucked away like a piece of garbage. Lose 1 ÉLAN from the chagrin.

You're just about ready to pass out right on the road when you spy a light shining in the window of one of those wretched wattle and daub farmhouses that rural humans seem to enjoy dwelling inside. While under normal circumstances you'd prefer not to associate with anything so uncouth and rusticated as a human peasant, the prospect of a warm meal and a roof over your head after a long slog is very appealing compared to the idea of another night under the stars.

To go up and knock on the door turn to 1308. If you want to skulk around and case the joint out first then turn to 1343. If you'd rather sleep in the great outdoors then turn to 1433.

1341

Ignoring the spreading flames and the screams of the roasting witch and the terrified children, you look around for something to steal.

Pick one from the following list and add it to your adventure scroll: Familiar Cat, Scroll of Witherdick, an issue of Better Bones and Graveyards, Potion, Healthy Poultice, Bottle of Milk, Witch's Broom.

Now will you free the kids (turn to 1465) or continue looting (turn to 1090)?

1342

What do you look like, a half mountain elf? You're not going up there. You demand payment now. Eilika pouts.

"Oh very well. Come here". You lean in closely but if you were expecting a great reward you're disappointed: all you come away with is a peck on the cheek.

Seeing your expression and misinterpreting its cause she sighs. Reaching into the neckline of her dress she retrieves a tiny pouch which she throws to you.

"I see you're a professional after all. Here's your payment. Farewell, traveller".

The little bag contains the princely sum of 2 Guilders - add this to your Adventure Scroll.

Having completed your noble quest but failed to get anywhere with Eilika, you decide to get away from these capricious humans. Leaving the city once more by the southern gate and passing the still-smoking remnants of the witch's cottage you continue towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 1581.

1343

Disdaining to announce your presence, you sneak around the side of the hovel for a nosey around the back. There's not a lot out here, it being a medieval subsistence farm. It's little more than a small dung-covered plot out the back of a dilapidated old dive. The only structures out here are an old outhouse (a kind of rustic version of tossing your waste out of the tower window like a civilised being) and an old wooden shed on the other side of the muddy field. No lights burn in there: it might be an ideal place to spend the night, being neither outside nor probably infested with humans.

If you'd like to check out the shed turn to 1702. If you're more interested in the treasures contained within the outhouse then turn to 840. If you'd rather give up on all this creeping around and knock at the hovel's door then turn to 1308. Otherwise if you don't like the look of this place you can abandon it altogether and go find somewhere else to sleep along the road: turn to 1433.

1344

You carry on for so long and in such a demented manner that Jeff can no longer restrain your mother from coming to your aid. She pushes past Jeff and flings the door open. The smug grin you've developed thanks to your success is wiped off your face when instead of your mothers embrace you are instead embraced by the contents of a chamber pot, flung at you with brutal accuracy by your own mother.

DUCK: DIFFICULTY 11

If you succeed then turn to 1082.
If you fail then turn to 440.

1345

You decide to pull over and see which way the fight goes. It takes a few minutes but Nilde overpowers the monster and jams her knife in its skull, felling the grotesque beast. She returns to the cart looking a bit ashen faced and clutching her shoulder.

"Why didn't you help me?" she asks with a hurt expression on her face. "Don't you care about your wife at all?". She gives up waiting for your assistance and climbs up onto the cart by herself. You suspect that she'd like to give you a proper bollocking, but she's too tired, injured and depressed to do anything of the sort and instead goes to sleep in the back of the cart. You whip the reigns and order the wagon onwards. Turn to 1455.

1346

The Malrog looks impressed by this gibberish.

"WELL IT SEEMS YOU ARE LEARNED AFTER ALL. TELL ME, WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE FOR THIS ASSERTION, DRAWING ON EVENTS FROM THE CRISIS?"

You're completely at wit's end here, having produced the previous answer from betwixt your buttocks.

If you'd like to make up any old bullshit then turn to 1486. If you think it'd be safer to admit that you don't know then turn to 1298.

1347

The tunnel continues for a very, very long way. Led on only by the phosphorescent scum glowing on the walls you have no idea whether it's day or night outside and your frequent stops to take a rest or a nap only confuse matters more. Restore 10 EFFORT and remove the effects of potions or booze, if any.

After a seemingly endless number of twists and turns you start to hear noises up ahead echoing through the tunnels - metal smashing into rock. As you approach you also begin to hear the sound of annoyingly high-pitched, screechy voices - goblins, judging from the clatter of the heavy armour the creatures seem to feel compelled to wear at all times. From the racket, the area ahead of you is utterly lousy with them. You begin to see lights moving around in the tunnels ahead - do they know you're here, somehow? Are they coming for you?

There are no branches off from this tunnel - you're going to have to get through the goblins one way or another. If you want to charge in while you might still have the element of surprise then turn to 170. If you'd prefer to boldly stride forth and blag your way through then turn to 176.

1348

You've never liked elfen rations - they just taste like leaves to you - so it's with a certain amount of reluctance that you go rummaging around in your pack for the unsatisfying snack. Feeling the crinkling of the dried leaves used to either wrap or form the outer portion of the meal (you're never sure which), you pull it out of the bag and commence to pick at it. It's only then that you notice something's weird about this one - it's no elfen ration at all! Your mother, knowing your dietary preferences, has put a special surprise in there for you! You brush away the leaves to reveal a slab of unevenly-cooked meat of unknown provenance. Your mom is no better with human food than you are with the elfen stuff, but it warms your heart to know she still cares about you even if she took that darn homewrecking Jeff's side and let him kick you out of home.

Remove the Elfen Ration from your Adventure Scroll and add Meat, then return to the page from which you came.

1349

You're exhausted, more tired than you've ever been, but your evil brain won't let you sleep. Thoughts and insane things attempting to pass as thoughts keep flashing burning lines through your skull. When you close your eyes you see fire, blood and geometry. When you open them your hands leave rainbow traces in front of your eyes. Your hands - you ogle them for a while - how on earth did they get so dirty? And then you remember what you intended to do. What you were always going to have to do from the very start.

You start to haul the pixies away but the chaos of what was wrought by your wroth appals even you. Heads here, gizzards there. It's chaos. But symmetry must be maintained. Life is symmetry. Sacred geometry. The bloody mandala. Then all the souls will be released, the spirits will forgive, and sleep will come.

Hours of hacking, slashing and meticulously careful placement later you've made something truly horrible out of assorted pixie parts. No one would believe the pixies did this to themselves, but luckily for you no one cares about pixies except other pixies, and they're not coming anywhere near you after this.

Having completed your craft project to your demented satisfaction, you set about scavenging the leftover bits that had no place in your artwork. You fill a sack with assorted Pixie Bits, and, still full of nervous energy, you stitch together a stylish Pixie Hide Cloak to keep you warm on these long psychedelic swamp nights. Add all these to your Adventure Scroll. You also pull 50 Pixie Teeth before you grow tired of that bloody work - add this to the Cash section of the Adventure Scroll.

Finally that pixie you ate starts to wear off and you crawl into the centre of your horrible mandala to come down and sleep off your excesses. You are no longer affected by your pixie meal or potions you may have imbibed - regain any ÉLAN points lost to these causes.

Unfortunately for you, you have a habit of gibbering in your sleep, and the thing you've built bears a striking resemblance to Shamhat the Horrible's Greater Daemoniacal Circle of Unsealing. At some point in your nocturnal orations you mutter something similar enough to a Word of Summoning and all Hells literally break loose.

You are jolted awake shortly after dawn by a sound very much like the gateway between worlds being rent asunder. A fiery red portal opens in the ground just a few feet from where you are lying. This is followed shortly thereafter by a sound like a thunderclap mixed with the furious trumpeting of a chorus of angels as the gods slam the gate between worlds shut again.

In the intervening time, something has managed to cross over and is currently alarmingly close to you. You spring to your feet, rubbing the sleep from your eyes, and try to figure out how to save your skin.

If you'd like to see if you can get any wishes out of whatever appeared and you're pretty sure that the proverb about curiosity only applies to cats then you can stick around - turn to 861. If you'd prefer not to meet a thing from a plane of existence rumoured made out of fire and hate then you decide to leg it. Turn to 1077.

1350

Waiting for the Queen to bring her kisser right up to you, you quickly retrieve the bubbling pouch of toxic slime you've made from your backpack and jam it into her slavering maw. The effect is instant - she rears back and emits the loudest ant warble you've heard today before toppling over backwards, her legs kicking uselessly in the air as the homemade ant poison does its deadly work. The loathsome little fairies flee, knowing their cushy arrangement has come to an end and you follow them, ducking around the legs of the Them! who brought you here. The bug now just looks confused and lost and stands there motionless as you run right under it and out of the Queen's chamber.

Outside of the chamber, the tunnels are almost collapsing as more of the Them! rush about, completely leaderless. As you proceed you find several in their death throes - they can't survive without their Queen. Climbing over their twitching thoraxes isn't a lot of fun but you need to get out of here in a hurry. Despite the falling dirt and rocks and the occasional dying ant lying in your way you keep up with the fairies, following their wan glow as they flit through the tunnels looking for a way out. Eventually they find an exit - a long tunnel which leads gently upwards for a long time before terminating in a small brick room full of human (or at least, humanoid) skeletons. The fairies are flitting about a heavy wooden trapdoor at the top of a dusty staircase. They're unable to escape so you ignore them for a second while you search the bodies.

Judging by the thick layer of dust that's settled on the bones they've lain here for a long time and your inspections reveal that they have little of value on them, but you do find a Regular Shortsword in reasonable condition which you may add to your Adventure Scroll if you like. Pausing only to mash the horrible little fairies against the trap door with the flat of your new blade, you fling the door open and climb out into the blinding light.

You've slain the Queen, ridding the realm of a seriously dangerous Them! infestation! Make a note of this feat. You are already taking on the swaggering and boastful airs of a hero - add 1 ÉLAN. Remove the Ant-Rid from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 739.

1351

The town is erupting into utter chaos as it begins the process of burning to the ground. Townsfolk and guards are racing to and from the fire and they pay no attention to you. You slither your way up the road, past the high-walled mansion at the top of town and over to the northern gate. You find the small gate leading out of town into the mountain pass is wide ajar and the gatehouse empty - you guess you're not the first person to get the idea of beating it.

As you slip through the gate you feel a horrible burning sensation on your back. At first you think you may have caught fire but as you're rolling in the dirt trying to put out the non-existent flames you get the dread feeling that perhaps your church-burning antics might have attracted the ire of whatever god was being worshipped in the place. Make a note that you've angered The K-NG! From now on whenever you roll a 6 on any of your FIST dice it will cost you 1 EFFORT (two sixes will cost 2 EFFORT and so on).

Picking yourself up you resolve to put as much distance between yourself and this town as possible. Turn to 1698.

1352

After some window shopping you approach a vendor about an "I Heart Bilgeton" tunic. The design is very clever because instead of the word "Heart" there's a symbol which humans use to represent the word "heart". Anyway you must have it. You ask the merchant how much it costs.

"One groatfather" he replies. If you have the Pouch Full of Shrapnel then turn to 753. Otherwise you pull out a shiny gold Guilder from your purse. The merchant sucks in his breath sharply.

"Can't change that. Do I look like a lord to you? I bet I do, you rusticated tourist. Get out of here before someone cuts your throat for that fortune" he warns, turning his attention to someone who isn't trying to buy a t-shirt with a week's wage.

You go around to all the other stalls but no one's willing to change the vast sum of money you're waving around. Apparently if you want change you're going to have to go to the bank, located a few streets back in the merchant district on the western side of the square - turn to 1201. Otherwise you could try to sell your animal or monster teeth for change at the animal supplies store you saw earlier - turn to 63 to go there. If you'd rather check out the upmarket shops surrounding the market then turn to 1154. Otherwise you could try hawking your stuff right here if you haven't already - turn to 526.

1353

You skirt around the enchanted elfish clearing of your childhood, staying near to the slightly less dilapidated towers on the rich side of town. Somewhere behind one of these cobblestone follies is a good time in progress, and not being invited has never stopped you crashing the party before.

Following the sound of witty elfish banter (you assume, you never got the jokes) you soon come across the source of the merriment: an impromptu party next to the stone heap around the back of Pete the Elf's tower. There are about a dozen elfs there and, letting yourself in by hopping over the low stone wall, you go to join the festivities.

Turn to 988.

1354

You didn't figure on getting married less than a day after leaving your home town but it's preferable to getting forked. You tell Aldrecht you agree. Nilde squeals with joy and the old man's expression softens from a furious grimace to a cheerful grin, but you notice that the pitchfork continues to point directly at your vitals.

"Well isn't that great news! We're going to have a wedding! It'll be first thing in the morning. Of course, can't have you getting cold feet. You'll have to come with me, son."

With this Aldrecht marches you out the back of the hovel at pitchfork-point, prodding your backside whenever you drag your feet. He herds you a short distance across a muddy field and into a small and rancid-smelling wooden outhouse. He latches the door shut behind you and you watch through the crescent cut out in the door as he pulls a stool up against the door and takes a seat. You're stuck.

Unwilling to sit and unable to sleep standing, you spend the hours before dawn leaning against the outhouse walls and trying not to breathe in the odours of this farmer's bog. Finally, dawn's light arrives and Aldrecht rises. He flings open the door and grins a gap-toothed grin.

"It's marryin' time!"

Turn to 1671.

1355

As you continue into the tunnels, the shaking becomes more and more regular until it's nearly constant. Numerous tunnels branch of from the path you're taking, which also begins to twist and turn. Suddenly you experience something like an earthquake - the tunnel shakes so hard that you're flung to the ground and part of the ceiling collapses, covering you with dirt.

This saves your life - seconds later several of Them! (semi-mythical giant ants which you previously thought were lies made up by mother elfs to stop their children wandering in the forest, not that your mother ever really discouraged you from wandering off alone) race down the corridor, trampling over your shallow grave. You manage to wriggle out of the way of most of the ants but the last of the beast's legs steps right on your gut, causing you to emit a loud "oof". The rest of the ants proceed away but the last one stops. You hear it turning around in the tunnel with a loud scraping noise as its shell grates against the walls. From the sounds of it, it's huge.

You could potentially use the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes to make the monster leave you alone - turn to 275 to try this out. If you have a Flagon of Ant Goo then turn to 413. If you have neither of these items then turn to 1173.

1356

Benny sniffs. He knows you're not on the level but you're dressed too well to be a common scumbag. He opens the door for you but emits a bestial snarl as you walk in.

Turn to 699.

1357

You give up. What's the point? No one's going to want to buy you. Jeff was right about you all along. Tears run down your face as you begin sobbing, taking big, ragged breaths as you heave out all your sorrows.

Throughout the day the remaining slaves sell one by one until you're the last one on the stand. No one's interested in the pathetic, tear-stained figure you cut, and the merchants all drift away until the only one standing there is a figure concealed in a richly embroidered green cloak, his or her face concealed under the voluminous hood. He or she seems to be examining you carefully. The bored taurcent slaver, desperate to close shop, whinnies to signify that you're going cheap. You'd better pull yourself together if you want to get out of here:

GET IT TOGETHER: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then turn to 1222. If you fail to get your emotions in check then turn to 1340.

1358

Worried that the surviving brownies might regroup and come after you, you plunge into the dark forest on the other side of the clearing. Deep in the woods and with no recognisable landmarks your map isn't much use. You become hopelessly turned around as you hurry to put as much distance between you and your crimes as you can before anyone or anything comes after you. Lose 5 EFFORT from the exertion.

If you're still going you eventually judge that you've gone a safe distance and slow to a more normal pace.

Turn to 527.

1359

Bidding the skeletons wait, you quickly survey the battlefield. Most of them must have gotten away during the fighting as disappointingly few elfs litter the ground. You rummage through their pockets, pouches and satchels but like most elfs they don't have much of worth. Lucky you didn't accept their offer! You do find some sticks and leaves that might either be elfen currency or rations, you can never tell.

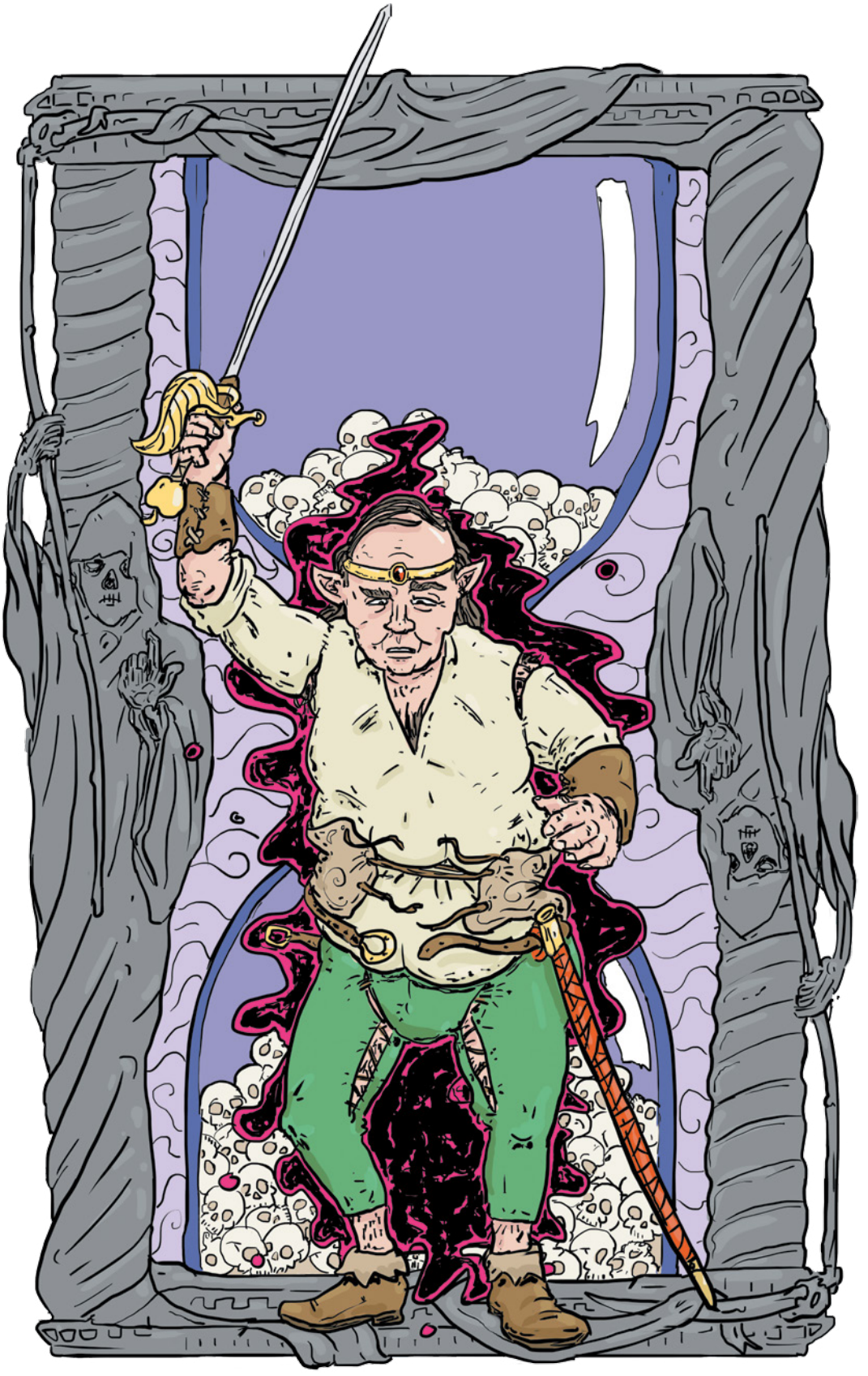
Roll a die: on 1-3 you gain an Elfen Ration, on 4-6 you gain 100 Leaves in currency.

If you've got a Lorewardening Key equipped then turn to 790. Otherwise turn to 128.

1360

Wandering through the tunnel you arrive at another cavern. This relatively small chamber is difficult to navigate around as the ceiling is barely above head height and the room is lousy with stalactites and stalagmites. You find tunnels branching off to the east and south, but as you're feeling your way over to the northern wall you step in something with a loud crunch. Striking a brief flash of light from your flint you see that you're standing in a pile of musty old bones - the remains of several humans or elfs or something like that. Behind this ad hoc ossuary lies another dark tunnel heading north, the floor of which is also littered with bones for as far as you can see in the brief flashes of light from his flint.

To head north into the ominous bone-filled tunnel turn to 853. Otherwise if this sounds unpromising turn to 792 to go east or 1301 to go south.



1361

You slay the mighty Warlock of Warlock Tower, releasing the deathly grasp of this necromancer over the land of Nonce and its surrounds! Well, more or less - the skeletons will still be around, she just won't be making any more of them. Still, you did good. Your chest swells up with pride as you imagine the songs the bards will sing of your deeds. Make a note that you've slain the Warlock on your Adventure Scroll.

As you're busy planning your future as a celebrity your lack of attention to detail bites you in the arse yet again. The warlock, apparently not quite dead, uses the last of her life force to blast you with a terrible death spell. As Aggie expires with a final swear word on her lips you feel the icy hand of death gripping around your heart and you age a hundred years a second - a span of time which would be an instant death sentence for a human but which merely propels you with your half elf blood into middle age. Your clothes feel tight as your paunch expands at the same time as your hairline recedes. The beautiful long locks fall off the top of your head, leaving your reflective dome shining brightly in the darkness. Your lumbar start annoying you and you suddenly develop an opinion about inheritance tax. In short, you get older and it counteracts the benefits you would have gotten from the boastful airs you've now adopted as a hero of the realm. In addition any outfits and belts you might be wearing no longer fit your chubby form and must be discarded - remove these from your inventory.

You decide a spot of looting will help you process this tragedy. After a quick search around the tower you decide to take any two of the following items:

The Robe and Wizard Hat, Aggie's Staff, Book of Unknowable Secrets, Glowing Jar, Healthy Poultice, 20 Guilders worth of gold and gems.

Having looted to your heart's content (and your arms' carrying capacity) you stagger out through the heavy oak door at the base of the tower and emerge into the cool night air again. If you agreed to help those elfs from earlier and wish to see them again then turn to 325. If you left them on bad terms or just want to get on with the adventure then you make your way over to the road and continue on your way towards Bilgeton - turn to 294.

1362

If you've got a Skeleton Hand then turn to 518. Otherwise you point to the Westerned Draft logo.

"Righto, tinny of Westerned Draft it is", replies Bruce. "The croweater clan loves that stuff". The nobold reaches into the esky, pulls out a cannister with the corresponding colour scheme, rips off the top and hands it over.

"Here ya go, mate. Get that inna ya". Bruce downs the entire contents of his cannister and emits a foul belch. You look with some trepidation at the tin full of metallic-smelling, flat amber liquid that you hold in your hands.

WESTERNED DRAUGHT - DIFFICULTY 6

If you manage to get it down then turn to 1275. Otherwise turn to 1042.

1363

You start to lumber in the general direction of the amenities building.

"No!" shouts the pixie with a mouth almost as loud as his choice of clothing, "that's a prize for the best diggers. Only those who pocket the most gold are allowed to avail themselves of the conveniences of the Glade of the Pixies. Why not prove yourself worthy and win some fantastic cash prizes while you're at it?" he says, returning your attention to the shining gold boulder, "Quickly! Before they get it all!" he concludes, waving at the elf, dwarf and human burrowing away in there.

If you'd like to do what this suspiciously pushy pixie is saying then turn to 1085. If you're going to insist on checking out the inn then turn to 492.

1364

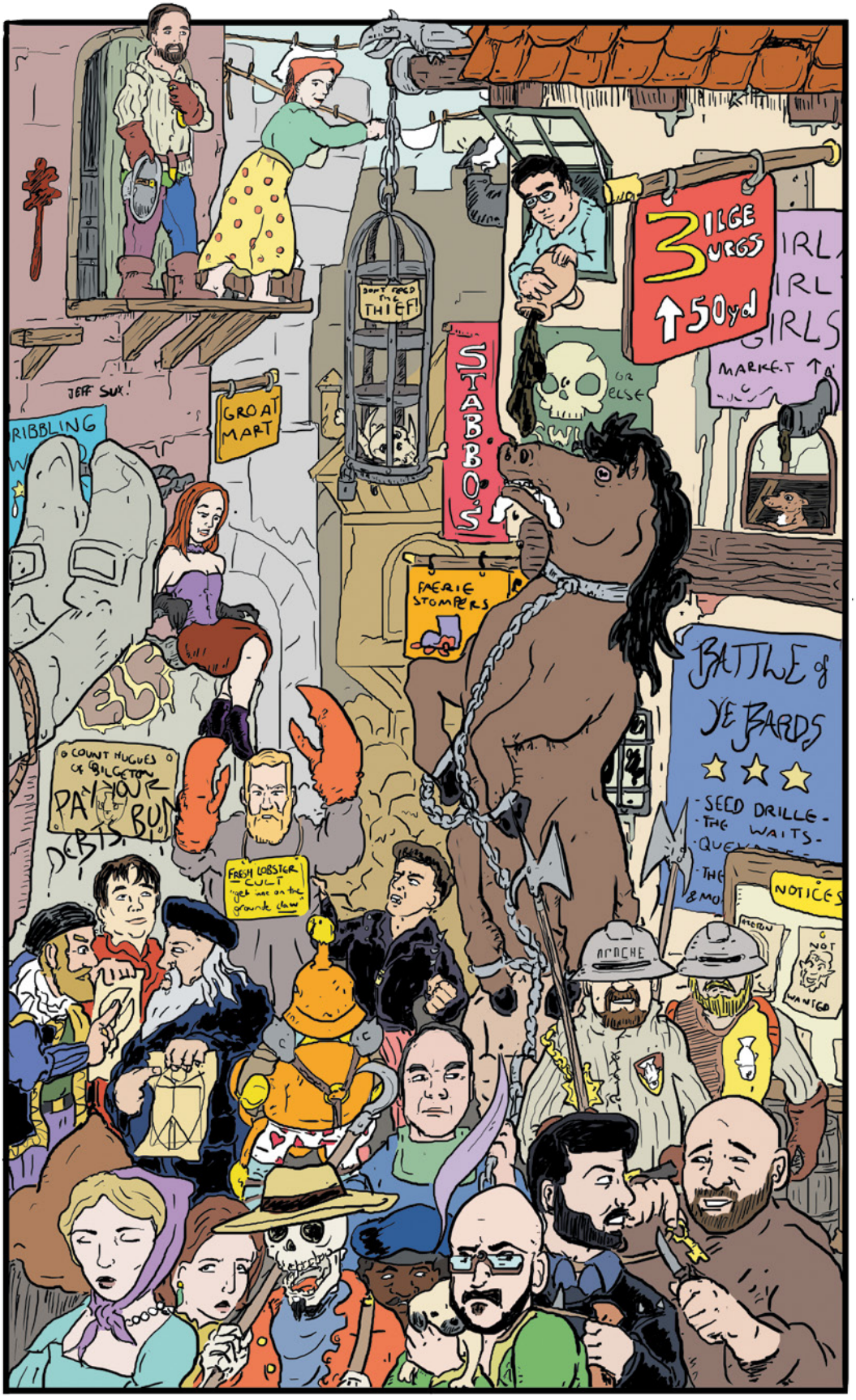
Bilgeton - the largest city in the Southern Swamps region - is a huge and bustling metropolis of 5,000 souls. Anything the heart desires can be found here: the produce of the entire county of Nonce and the surrounding lands are gathered here before being shipped to the human kingdom to the east. Also to be found here : all the pollution, foul smells, filth, disease and inconvenience of an overcrowded, unhygienic town with an (at best) partially working sewage system. For now it just smells like home. You've arrived! Restore up to 10 EFFORT. You grab a handy tourist map of Bilgeton from a noticeboard - check in the map section of this book if you want to take a look-see at what's going on around town.

For now it's time to relax! According to the tourist map and the town criers who are paid to scream out adverts at passers-by, there are a couple of place you can go to unwind. You could go to the Dribbling Wand which, as the cheapest, nastiest tavern in town, seems like the sort of place you might belong. There's even a fighting tournament a bit later - you might get to see some lunkheads knocking each other's skulls together for your amusement if you stick around long enough. Turn to 1497 to head here.

If your tastes are a bit more expensive then you could go to the Palais de Dance, some kind of highfalutin dwarfen-style establishment. The tourist map assures you that only the crème de la crème of Bilgeton society attend this exclusive sensory experience. Turn to 606 to call in at the Palais de Dance.

Otherwise, if you're too excited to chill out (or have some errands you particularly want to run in Bilgeton before the game ends) you can instead explore the busy market square and its surrounds - turn to 941.

Finally if you're carting around the Elf Bastard, his struggling is starting to get really annoying - this would be the time to try to wheedle a reward out of the town guards in exchange for this criminal before you go about your business in town - turn to 246.


JEFF SUX!
RIBBLING
GROAT MART
DON'T FEED the THIEF!
STABBO'S
3 GILGE BURGS
↑50yd
OR ELSE
MARKET ↑
GIRLS
FAERIE STOMPERS
BATTLE of YE BARDS
- SEED DRILLE -
- THE WAITS -
COUNT HUGUES of GILGETON
PAY YOUR DEBTS, BU
FRESH LOBSTER
CULT
NOTICES
NOT WANTED

1365

You can't overcome these odds, so you wheel your steed around and yell at the wagon you just freed to get a move on. As you kick the flanks of your ride to get it to hurry up after the carriage, an arrow whizzes right over your pointed ear! The raiders behind you aren't letting you go easily! You try to get your mount to weave around as you retreat, dodging the storm of arrows:

DUCKING AND DODGING : DIFFICULTY 10

If you fail this hassle then an arrow finds its mark. Roll a die - on 1-3 the arrow strikes your steed - turn to 1405. On a roll of 4-6 the arrow strikes you, hurting you badly! Lose 1 ÉLAN from the painful wound (you can use a shield equipped on your back or armour to prevent this damage, if applicable). Should you succeed the arrows swish by you harmlessly. Whether you avoid getting hit or you take your lumps you're soon out of range.

The lead wagon is still under attack from the archers. If you like you can leave with the wagon you just saved - turn to 1710 - or use your momentum to charge into the skirmishers on your way past - turn to 427.

1366

You decide to surrender rather than risk a bolt in the spine, but too late - the guard has already raised his crossbow and fired. His aim is true and the bolt slams right into your back!
If you have an item of body armour or a shield slung on your back you may roll to see if the damage is negated as normal - if so then the bolt lodges in your protective gear and you live to surrender another day - turn to 788. Otherwise the well-aimed bolt strikes something vital, killing you instantly and ending your adventure here.

1367

Pretty drunk already, you scatter your currency on the bar, accidentally dispensing too much of your possibly hard-earned coin. Deduct double the amount for this drink (10 leaves or two Guilders). If you don't have enough to cover this then deduct as much as you can.

Your prodigality doesn't go unrewarded because you and the gnome proceed to drink several more rounds. By the end of this goblet the gnome's too drunk to care about money so he just keeps topping you up, ignoring the other customers, roaring bawdy jokes and uttering amazingly obscene gnomish obscenities as he stumbles over every obstacle behind the bar. You're now utterly hammered - lose one additional ÉLAN until you can get some rest.

Suddenly the good times come to a disastrous end. The gnome, trying to get the last dregs out of the ancient aelfwine barrel, wrenches it out from under the stairs. This cask was a load-bearing barrel that was holding up the spiral staircase which, now completely unsupported, gives way and tears a chunk of the exterior wall out with it as it comes down. The annoying sounds of elfish revelry turn into screams of terror as the whole structure, already critically weakened by the removal of all the internal supporting walls and beams, begins to collapse. The floor above drops down in a rain of timber and rock and the whole tower crashes inwards, burying you and the entire population of the elfish village under a mound of cobblestones and splintered wood.

Turn to 1245.

1368

You wisely drop the pouch into the terrifying scarecrow's outstretched hand. It briefly looks into the bag, gives you a searching glare with its burning red ember eyes, and intones:

"You're acting weird. Is there something unusual about these mushrooms....ah forget it, the Guilders are here. You're Bilgeton's problem now. Get out of Bilgeford".

Not able to comprehend the arcane meaning of this cryptic gibberish but understanding that it's time to move on, you attempt to tip your hat to this odd being (whether you're wearing one or not) and stumble back to the wagon where Hurensohn is waiting for you.

"Thanks man, I can't deal with the cops right now" he says. "Anyway, better lay off the stuff for a while. That trip was way wilder than I expected. It's an unusually potent batch. Thanks for being cool".

Someone thinks you're cool! It's the nicest thing anyone has ever said about you. Add 1 ÉLAN until the next time you fail a Hassle and reveal this wild compliment to be completely untrue. In the meantime you climb aboard the wagon and it rolls on from this strange place.

Turn to 1066.

1369

Reckoning that you and your easy ride are doomed if the taurcents break through, you steel yourself for battle and charge into combat alongside the guards. Seconds later you're regretting this hasty decision as a hideous piebald taurcent picks you out as an easy mark. You watch in horror as it swiftly wobbles over to you and launches a blistering attack, all four hooves kicking down at your head while he jabs at your guts with a trident grasped in its human hands:

🔪**PIEBALD TAURCENT: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you defeat this enemy then turn to 983. If you're compelled to surrender to the thing then turn to 1765.

1370

The skeletons in the caravan look nervous as you tell them your plan and leave them in the lurch. But you are what you are, and in your heart of hearts you're a borderline kleptomaniac who can't bear to leave any battlefield carrion unplundered. Heedless of the danger you plunge into the woods along with any of the caravan guards you've decided to bring along.

After some loud crashing through the undergrowth (and nervous chittering and jittering from the terrified guards, if you brought some along) you eventually find the scout tangled up in a bush with an arrow sticking out of his back. Not wasting any time, you get down to looting. Like most elfs he's pretty broke and mostly carrying worthless garbage but you can relieve him of his Cloak of Elfish Invisibility, a Lorewardening Key and some Extra Buckles if you wish.

All this pillaging takes a while and a small group of elfs has come out looking for their missing scout. They're not too happy to find you picking over his corpse and rush to the attack while you're still defenceless! If you have at least one guard with you then it sacrifices its unlife for you, taking a heavy club blow to the skull which knocks it to bits temporarily but long enough to render it useless for guard duty - reduce your GUARDS by 1. If you're alone the club finds your skull instead - lose 1 ÉLAN as you're sent sprawling with a serious concussion. Despite their successful surprise attack, the dense foliage prevents the elfs from surrounding you and attacking you all at once, so as soon as you recover your wits you find yourself on a more equal footing. You must fight:

🔪**ELF PATROL: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

These elfs are reasonably well-armed compared to the mob you met last night and are making a real attempt to kill you and your companions! Each time you lose a round of combat you must lose 1 GUARD as your guards are taken out one by one.

If you win turn to 116. If you can't defeat this band of troublesome elfs then you do what you do best - turn to 1288.

1371

You hand over the Guilders (deduct them from your Adventure Scroll). The wizard waves his hands around in the air for a little while, mutters a few words and generally does a few unnecessary actions to make it appear as though his actions have any meaning. Moments later there's a flash of light and an ornate silver chalice appears in your hand, full to the brim with an effervescent, odourless liquid. You lift the drink and find there's no heft, and as you bring the liquid to your lips you find there's no taste either - in fact the chalice passes right through your jaw! It's completely illusory! And far from impressing the nobles dotted about the room, they're all laughing at your naivety!

Furious, you turn to the wizard. He gives you an extremely smug smile.

"What did you expect? Our clientele isn't so crass as to actually drink alcohol. They're purely illusory - the nobles just hold them to impress each other with how much they're spending on impressing each other. I knew you'd be unable to appreciate such a luxury".

DON'T HIT THE WIZARD - DIFFICULTY 10

If you succeed then turn to 1033. If you fail turn to 1641.

1372

You manage to muscle free of the golem's deathly grip and stumble clear of what would almost certainly have been a grisly demise.

The golem lurches into an upright position and reaches for you with its three arms but, deprived of its midnight snack, it doesn't have the energy to do much more than keep its bones together. It slumps forward, its jaw resting on its sternum, and is still.

Without a head it will continue to act on its undeathly instinct to feed on the life force and warmth of living bodies that are stupid enough to pass out directly on top of it, though it'll be many years before it sinks back beneath the gravel enough to be unnoticed by even the drunkest of campers. You feel sorry for it, or at least as sorry as you can feel for anything that isn't you.

If you want you can smash it down and loot it for parts by turning to 1312. If you think you can repair it and you have the Azari PCS with 4000-in-1 Games Cartridge then turn to 995, or if you have the Scrying Orb with at least 1 charge left then turn to 682.

1373

The timpanist is as sloppy a grappler as he is a percussionist and he lets one of your arms slip just enough for you to reach the handy blade you keep concealed under one of your many belt buckles. Gripping the haft, you wrench it free and stab the drummer repeatedly in his sides with furtive, snake-like movements. He screams in shock and releases you as he slumps to the ground in a rapidly-spreading pool of his own blood. Noticing the outcome of their little plot the band stops playing abruptly and flees as you walk out onto the stage once more to belt out your next hit.

JAILHOUSE ROCK: DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 1

If you succeed then turn to 111. If you fail then the audience, disgusted that you've chased off the headlining acts only to produce this mediocre entertainment, rushes the stage and tears you limb from limb before the town militia can arrive to do the same. Your adventure ends here.

1374

As you're thinking about the possibilities that lie ahead you suddenly become aware that something is very, very wrong. The air has become heavy, almost sweet with the smell of decay, and thick with buzzing black flies. The sky has taken on a decidedly red cast, and you hear a loud explosion, the sounds of crunching masonry and the yells and screams of townspeople, distant at first but growing louder as the mysterious source of all this commotion draws closer.

Throughout this adventure you couldn't shake the feeling that you were being followed, and the reason why now comes lurching into view - a demonic colossus of corpses, a shambling amalgamation of the pixies you ruthlessly butchered as well as numerous other beings that crossed this mountainous meat golem's path as it lumbered across the land seeking you out. It's an eight-foot tall, shapeless hill of discombobulated pixie, human, goblin and elfen arms, legs, torsos and heads, all mouthlessly screaming for your blood. A dense fog of flies enshrouds this unliving nightmare, keeping their thousands of compound eyes peeled for you and generally doing the monster's bidding. In short, your come-uppance has come. You've been pursued all this time by a demonic Revenant. It has battered its way through the thick walls of Bilgeton, absorbed a platoon of guardsmen and is now making a beeline right for you.

You're in a tight spot! The demon has you dialled in - no matter which way you flee you find yourself beset by a veritable wall of pitch-black corpse flies, and you soon find yourself backing up to the high, channelized bank of the Bilge. The water there is so horribly polluted that even the flies can't tolerate its stinging vapours, though the demon is still happily advancing along the bank, its many arms reaching out for you. It's still far away, but it's coming steadily closer...

You don't want anything to do with this thing and you sense that you don't stand a chance in hells against it in combat. Your only hope is if you have a companion or prisoner (the Dwarfen Troupe, the Elfish Prodigy, Shinsplints, Nilde, Brenda, the Elf Bastard or the 10-Foot Pole) - turn to 554 to put a cunning plan in motion. If you have no friends then you're in serious strife. Turn to 488.

1375

You overcome the urge to smash everything for long enough that the lich manages to grab his phylacteries off the stand and into the tub. You involuntarily raise the mace in response but too late - the lich points a bony finger at your hand and a beam of searing purple energy crackles out, turning the mace into ash and molten metal and completely skeletonising your hand! Remove the Crowing Club from your Adventure Scroll, add the Skelehand and lose 2 maximum and current ÉLAN from the crippling loss of your sword hand (this cannot be treated with the Healthy Poultice or through any other means). At least you can still make a fist with the collection of bones, you guess.

As you stare at your skeletonised hand, opening and closing it slowly, the lich emerges from the bath, dons a bathrobe and beckons for you to follow him before disappearing through a doorway on the other side of the room. His phylacteries, now safe, clink together as they dangle from the bathrobe's cord. Still gaping in shock at your new skeleton hand in shock you follow him.

Turn to 1670.

1376

Of course you start looting the graves. Why not.

As you might expect from a place called the Graveyard of Kings, it's been thoroughly looted already by greedy treasure hunters over the years. What little was left with the dead was taken along with the corpses when they dug their way out of the ground. As a result your hopping from grave to grave is fruitless.

You're about to give up when, at the bottom of the very last grave you inspect, you find a beautiful steel mace with a gold wire wrapped haft lying at the bottom of the hole. Though partially covered with dirt, the steel flanges of the mace head shine supernaturally with something more than the reflected light of the moon, and the glittering handle seems to call for you to pick it up. Honestly it's kind of weird that it's been left here.

If you're carrying the Confessor's Shovel it's not to be - you can't unhand it to equip a new weapon, especially not this one which seems to repel the digging implement. Otherwise you have a choice - will you take the mace (turn to 1492)? If you choose not to pick up the mace (or if a bossy tool isn't letting you), you leave it where it is and resolve to find something less overtly suspicious inside the barrow. You make your way in through the forbidding entrance and down a long and narrow staircase into the heart of the crypt below: turn to 471.

1377

Congratulations on your purchase of the Screaming Skull on Spider Legs! This miserable being is enchanted to bring you many years of ear-aches and regret. In fact, it comes with a Life Time Guarantee (the skull's life, not yours) that if you ever lose, misplace or break your skull a new one will be provided to you free of charge.

From now on until the text specifies otherwise you will start the adventure with the annoyingly loyal Screaming Skull on Spider Legs instead of one of the other item picks (you will have the skull plus two items). It can't be deliberately dropped but it can be destroyed or lost through the adventure as normal. Please not that you cannot have two Screaming Skulls in your inventory: to ensure the quality of the endless screaming is not compromised, the old one will leave when you decide to purchase a brand new skull, and the new model will follow you around from then on.

From tonight onwards you'll never sleep properly again. Whenever the text tells you to restore EFFORT from resting or sleeping, deduct 5 from the amount restored (to a minimum of zero) thanks to the loquacious skull screaming all night. On the other hand, once per HASSLE you may use the Screaming Skull to lower the Difficulty of all opponents by 2 for the round at an immediate cost of 5 EFFORT.

Thank you for your purchase and all the best for a long, scream-filled life with your new companion! Now turn back to the page from which you came.

1378

Whatever's outside your hut tries the door a few more times, but the latch holds. You cower in your sheets as whatever's out there bangs on the oak door with a wet slapping sound and then gives up. The footsteps flip-flap away, eventually receding into the distance and disappearing into the mist.

You're so anxious about the possibility of whatever it was returning that you don't manage any more sleep at all that night. Restore only 5 EFFORT from the broken rest. As soon as day breaks and you're completely certain the coast is clear you depart, leaving these ruins behind in the dimly-lit mists.

Turn to 22.

1379

The Gobholme Mazyrinth (not trademarked and legally distinct from other intellectual properties which it may bear the slightest passing resemblance to) is famously a huge pain in the arse and you're not certain it's worth getting lost in that mess for hours just to possibly catch a passing glance at the Goblin King's codpiece. Putting this classic children's fantasy adventure behind you, you carry on in what you can only assume is in the general direction of Bilgeton.

Turn to 1151.

1380

You have a restful if boring stay in the oubliette - restore your EFFORT to its maximum - but you're beginning to despair of ever being released. Luckily about two months after you were first jailed a guard comes to open your cell door.

"You're free to go", he mumbles before shuffling off. You leave the oubliette, free once again!

Annoyingly, you find that while you've been gone the guards have taken the Elf Bastard and the mount is nowhere to be seen. Worse, neither bounty nor compensation for your lost steed is forthcoming.

Grumbling at the waste of time you've endured just to learn a heavy-handed lesson about human society you pick up your stuff and leave, only to notice that the guards have pilfered at least half of your Guilders too.

Remove the Elf Bastard and any steeds from your Adventure Scroll. Also divide your Guilder total in half (rounding down to the nearest half Guilder).

Your stint in jail has made you mighty thirsty - will you now go get hammered at the cheapest, most violent-looking tavern (turn to 1497) or turn to 606 to mingle at the fanciest, most exclusive of Bilgeton's inns. Otherwise if you're too excited by your freedom to sit still for even a moment you can go explore the market square where you can squander your remaining currency and maybe complete some errand or another that you've been given - turn to 941.

On the other hand if the half elf gave you some directions before you betrayed him horribly you could cut out a bunch of late game content and go do what he said by turning to 226.

1381

Your victory against this decrepit old man is short-lived. You're just beginning to gloat over your fallen adversary when your back explodes into paroxysms of pain as the farmer's daughter kicks open the outhouse door, catching you hard in the spine. You fall face down in the mud next to the farmer but don't get to rest there long - the woman, apparently over her initial shock at seeing you, begins laying into you first with her sturdy boots and then with every farmyard implement that comes to hand as she tans your hide all around the farmyard. This rude treatment continues until you crawl out onto the road. The woman's last shovel handle breaks and her rage subsides for long enough for her to remember her old father left in the mud in the back yard. Cursing you and sinking one last boot into your side for good measure, she departs, leaving you battered but still partially alive. You crawl painfully under a bush hard by the roadside and pass out. Lose 1 ÉLAN due to your debilitating wounds from this thrashing.

You awake in the early morning. Fearing that the woman will come back and finish you off you stagger out of the shrub and limp along the road in the direction of Bilgeton.

Turn to 1446.

1382

The going is slow over the wastes but fortunately none of the various evils that dwell out here are particularly interested in a scrawny, limping half elf. After about a day and a half of hobbling you pass through a thick copse of trees and suddenly find yourself standing on a wide paved highway running east to west. A weathered milestone assures you that this is the Count's Road which runs directly to Bilgeton! You continue limping east with a renewed spring in your damaged step.

Although your luck seems to be turning around you're tired and hungry from the difficult hike and as a result don't regain any EFFORT from the rest you snatched during the long journey. If you'd known fantasy adventures involved this much walking you probably wouldn't have signed up for one, but at least you're most of the way there now.

Turn to 1455.

1383

Nilde approaches the altar to speak to Bedüdelt.

"Your excellency, I'm Nilde Elf née Aldrechttochter" she says with a curtsy, "We were married by my father Aldrecht on the family farm, and we have come a long way to solemnize our wedding vows".

You haven't paid her much mind on this adventure, but now that you look at her before the altar she's very pretty, positively glowing in the light cast down from the tower and reflected from all the gold surfaces in the Synod.

Were you nice to her during your journey, or at least not actively horrible? If so turn to 1153. If you hit on other women in front of her (successfully or not), tried to walk into a brothel or left her to fight off the undead on her own then you were definitely not nice to her - turn to 257.

1384

Your shield bears the device of Sir Tedbald of Bilgeford, a knight errant of the realm. While he's mostly known for his monster hunting, he's not above shaking down every peasant and yeoman he sees to fund his feudal version of a gap year. The Free Brothers mistake your wearing his logo as meaning that you're in his employ and proceed to try to thrash the hells out of you:

THE FREE BROTHERS: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 2

If you win then you're able to beat a retreat without getting your face too badly punched in.
If you lose you receive a sustained walloping before you can crawl away, with heavy boots and switch handles raining down on you as you crouch behind your shield and beg for mercy. Lose 2 ÉLAN, though roll for the shield's effects twice - each time you succeed you lose 1 less ÉLAN.

Win or lose, your suspicions about humans are confirmed by this encounter - they're violent, irrational savages and you hate their guts! From now on you gain 1 FIST when you're fighting humans (or a group including at least one human) but lose 1 FIST whenever you're faced with a hassle involving talking to or peacefully interacting with them.

Assuming you survive the drubbing you receive you dust yourself off and head south through the wood before continuing along the plains. Although you're slowed somewhat by your bruises you reach the Count's Road just after nightfall - it's a paved highway which, according to a handy way post, leads to Bilgeton eventually if you follow it to the East. Crawling under a nearby shrub you pass out. You wake in the morning, stiff to the point of rigidity from yesterday's ordeal. After some futile stretches you limp painfully onwards towards Bilgeton. Restore 20 EFFORT and turn to 1445.

1385

The girl eventually has to take her eyes off you to wrestle with a particularly unruly ferret, and while her attention is diverted you take the opportunity to raid the till. Unfortunately the business is clearly going under but you do manage to grab a sack full of loose change and breeze out of the store before the young lady has the critter under control. That should come in handy in the marketplace, if nowhere else.

Add the Pouch Full of Shrapnel to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1475 to step back out into the market to spend your ill-gotten change.

1386

You hand over a Guilder (remove it from your Adventure Scroll). The patrol leader smiles and withdraws a small notebook and a quill from within his gambeson and starts assiduously taking notes. Once you're done he puts the notebook away. but the patrol doesn't seem in much of a hurry to get after the guy. Instead the men squat down where they're standing and start playing gutter craps. You ask the leader why they don't start searching the markets.

"Well now, our shift is nearly over after all. If we started searching now it would take us into overtime, which could be quite expensive. No, best we wait until tomorrow afternoon and start out fresh".

You ask him how much overtime might cost.

"There's three of us, so 3 Guilders", he says with a straight face (as far as you can tell under that helm).

If you have the money and are willing to pay then turn to 654. If you're done being mugged off then you leave the guards to their game and get the hells out of the marketplace - turn to 827.

1387

You're a depressingly stringy prospect as far as dinners go, so almost anything would be an improvement. You hurl the food as hard as you can out of the nest (remove whatever you threw from your Adventure Scroll) and the owlets go waddling after it clumsily, flapping their relatively little wings as they walk. They look quite cute when they're not about to rip your flesh apart and you absentmindedly wonder what one of these things would fetch at the Bilgeton markets.

You couldn't. Or, could you? If you'd like to sneak up on these miniature monsters while they're enjoying their meal and kidnap one of them to sell to whatever unscrupulous human will buy them then turn to 1614. If you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes and for whatever reason didn't use it earlier you can simply command one of them to come with you - turn to 302. On the other hand perhaps you're worried that by kidnapping a monster you'd become the real monster (or you're concerned that the big owl will come looking for you) - in this case you decide to leave the critters to their snack. Creeping off to a safe distance, you crawl under a bush and pass out. Turn to 386.

1388

You're impressed and tell the good man that you'll take the axe.

The shopkeeper is evidently used to dealing with musicians.

"Naturally, and as usual, I gotta take an IOU", he says.

Add the intimidatingly expensive Fender Lute to your Adventure Scroll! You'll be working to pay this off for a long time, unless you make it big!

Slinging the instrument over your shoulder, you strut out into the marketplace. Turn to 244.

1389

Just as your new acquisition is about to emit an ear-piercing scream, your skull comes to the rescue. Sensing its own kind it skitters out of your backpack and down your arm. As the two undead demons or monsters or whatever they are lock empty eye sockets on each other all thought of screaming leaves them. It's love at first sight. Your skull claws its way painfully along your arms with its sharp little legs and bumps its teeth against the teeth of the skull in your hands. Disgusted by this public display of affection you hastily place the skull on the ground. It clatters away to some dark corner and your buddy follows, disappearing behind a pile of dusty old tomes and scroll holders. You're sure they're going to raise some horrible brood of screaming skullbabies in there but you're just glad to be rid of the thing.

Permanently remove the Screaming Skull on Spider Legs from your Adventure Scroll - it will no longer take up valuable pack space at the start of your adventures. Now, having survived that ordeal, will you get out of the tower while you're ahead? If so turn to 1685. If you're ready to take on the warlock then turn to 637 to sneak upstairs.

1390

You simply let yourself go to pieces and tinkle to the floor where you lay motionless, probably for months. Eventually the guards need the cell for another prisoner and find your heap of bones cluttering the floor. Prisoners dying and turning into skeletons is pretty common in these kinds of places, especially since they don't bother keeping records of who they have interred. They clearly forgot all about you as well.

Missing the distinction between dead and undead, a guard scoops you up in the burlap sack you were wearing and dumps you in the trash in the guard room, then returns to the cell to help get the new arrival settled in. You take the opportunity to recombobulate (it's kind of painful, after months of mouldering on the floor) and after a quick stretch you jitter over to the evidence locker to retrieve your stuff. Using your little finger as a skeleton key you spring the lock and have a rummage. They've stolen about half of your cash - return half the Guilders you had, rounding down, and you only have time to retrieve three other items of your choice before you hear voices and boots stomping up the stairs. Slipping out the front door you make a clean getaway and disappear into the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

1391

You lie right to his face.

"Yeah 'daddy-o', I'm 'with it'", you sneer, stressing the words you think are druggie shibboleths in an entirely forced and unnatural way. The hippy looks relieved at this transparent falsehood.

"Well man, you've come to the right clearing. I'm Radabastard the Brown and I tend to this groovy grove. Are you looking to score or just digging the scene?"

If you have the Scrying Orb and it has any charges left you can use it to figure out what the hells he's talking about: turn to 1320. Otherwise you can just say yes (turn to 466) or no (turn to 935), or you can make your excuses and get away from this guy by turning to 1623.

1392

You try to say something vaguely positive about the elf's music but it's clear you don't know the first thing about it. The musician rolls his eyes.

"Great, another fan. Fine, I'll give you what you came for".

Before you can protest the elf produces a quill and dips it into an ink bottle which wears around his neck. In a single fluid motion he traces his signature across the entire front of your outfit in an indelible elfish squiggle, completely and permanently ruining your look! Until you change your outfit by unequipping your current garb or equipping something new you suffer -1 ÉLAN from the shame of wearing an advertisement for a crappy band on your person! Having thusly marked you, the elf returns to his unbearable tootling and refuses to acknowledge your presence any further.

Horrified, you slink off to the bar to drink away your shame. Turn to 594.

1393

Your rambling tale of heroism and manliness in your quest to make a name for yourself in this world fails to impress Magistrate Beltz, and in fact implicates you in a number of other serious offenses. After a while with no end to your story in sight the judge cuts your defence short.

"Enough! In all my years of judging I've never heard such an incoherent and patently false account given in a court of law. I sentence you to two deaths, to be carried out concurrently. My The K-NG have mercy on your soul".

The crowd cheers as you sullenly give the giant Wheel of Punishment a couple of spins, resting on "Decapitation" and "The Gibbet". A guard leads you away - the next time you make a public appearance will be as a kind of piñata for the city executor. Your adventure ends here.

1394

You stumble along for a while longer looking for anywhere not miserable and swampy to put your head down. As luck would have it you eventually trip and fall through yet another tangle-bush, but this time instead of face-planting into some black mud you fall flat on your face into a clearing. The moon, high overhead, illuminates a small elfish village - Aelfsburg, according to the big white letters affixed to the trees on the other side of town. You see about ten towers, roughly as poorly-built as the ones back home and made of the same materials, and just like Elfsdale Downs there's a large tree in the middle of the clearing which presumably houses the semi-famous Aelfsburg School of Lorewardening, hateful old Jeff's alma mater.

All the towers are dark - in fact, the village seems abandoned. If your upbringing in Elfsdale Downs was any guide, elfs don't bother putting out lights or torches when they go to bed, a fact which accounts for incineration being one of the leading causes of death among elfs, just behind getting murdered by knights and getting murdered by other elfs. It's pretty clear that no one's been here for days. You wonder if the elfs were involved in the incident back on the road a couple of days ago.

This might be a good opportunity for some revenge-based looting - turn to 696. If you're just grateful to find somewhere to sleep then turn to 1714 to find someplace warm to curl up.

1395

Perceiving that you don't have time to run, you bravely stand your ground as the dragon blasts you and your steed with a searing jet of blue flame. The donkey seems to be the main target of this attack - with a final braying hee-haw it's reduced to nothing but ashes. You tumble down beside the remnants of the donkey and struggle to right yourself as the fire washes over you.

Are you equipped with a shield? If so you manage to steady yourself - turn to 1646. Otherwise with no protection from the scorching fire you're roasted to a cinder in seconds. Your adventure ends here.

1396

The wolf keeps you at bay for long enough to allow The Spectre to get the upper hand in his fight with the golem. He gives it a hard tap on the jaw, leaving another one of those natty skull imprints next to the first one. As the bone golem explodes into its constituent bits again, The Spectre turns his attention to you.

Before you can explain that you're not with that skeleton, the costumed crusader exclaims, "Take that, evil-doer!" and clocks you right on the jaw with his ring! The imprint made by this ring never fades, marking you for all time as an evil-doer! Draw a little skull IN INK on your Adventure Scroll.

As The Spectre's fist connects with your glass jaw there's a brilliant flash of light followed by a world of darkness as you slump to the ground.

Turn to 1571.

1397

Objects of such pristine perfection are not meant to be owned by man, but merely appreciated at a distance. As you pass by, giving the orbs a respectfully wide berth, they seem to follow you, waving and dancing around as though possessed of a deep yearning for you. You'd like nothing more than to fondle those orbs but you feel they may be a distraction from your true goal, which is to reach the mystical road to Bilgeton which will lead you not only to that city, but also to your true destiny. Not without a profound sense of loss, you carry on, leaving the enchanted orbs to dance for no one in the wilderness behind you.

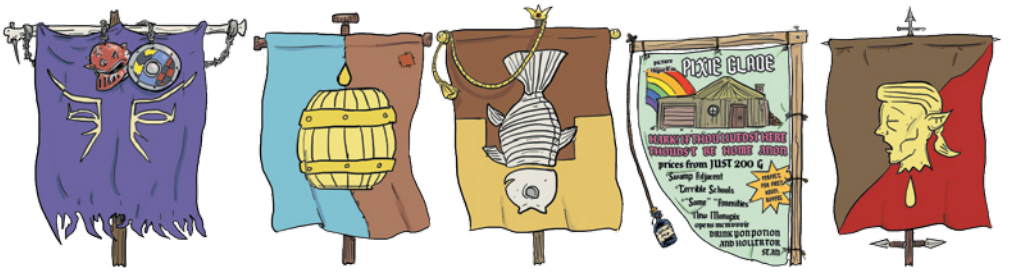
Turn to 1331.

1398

The flight is uncomfortable but very fast, and at these prices who's complaining? You see the various features of Nonce rolling away far beneath you - you shudder at the thought of having to walk through that crap - and soon you can make out the features of the great walled city of Bilgeton sitting astride the filthy brown river for which it is named, the Bilge.

As you approach the city the eagle swoops down low over the walls and releases you at rooftop height above an alleyway. What could easily have been a bone-breaking plummet is arrested by one of the many, many piles of rotting garbage which accumulate all over Bilgeton. You lie on your back among the filth as the eagle ascends high into the air, and then with a loud keen of farewell it's gone before the town guards can so much as aim a crossbow at it. You suppose you'd better get a move on as well. Awkwardly extricating yourself from the garbage pile you brush off as much of the filth as possible and stride out of the alleyway into the streets of Bilgeton.

Turn to 1364.



1399

The ill-fitting armour offers the elf little protection against even your attacks and you soon send the bandit sprawling. And not a moment too soon! As the elf screams and falls into the dirt the woods on both sides of the roads erupt with a swarm of elfs. With a shout they begin to race towards the wagon - you've fallen into the most obvious possible elfish trap! This doesn't stop you taking the time to yank the dagger out of your enemy's cold, dead hand.

Add the Elfen Dagger to your Adventure Scroll and while you're there add 2 to your PROBLEMS. Now turn to 1200.

1400

Rattling nervously, you get up to leave. The rep walks you to the door.

"Nothing personal", he chitters jovially, "but if the union hears about you working in this town we'll break your legs. But just so there's no hard feelings, have this milk. It's good for the bones, and you look like you're going to need it".

He hands you a Bottle of Milk from beside the door. Add this to your Adventure Scroll if you wish and rattle back out into the marketplace, a bit at a loss as to what to do next.

If you want to investigate the market stalls then turn to 244. If you just want to get your business in Bilgeton done as soon as you can then turn to 827.

1401

The eagle would clearly rather just give you a prize but you insist on a lift.

“Alright, fine. Where can I take you?”

If you want to go straight on to Bilgeton then turn to 1027. If you like the look of that single spike of a mountain glittering coldly in the distance along the Mist Steppes you could ask the eagle to take you to the Alp of Abandonment by turning to 841. If, more than anything, you just want to go back home to your old tower then turn to 1266.

1402

You kick Brenda, hard and on purpose this time, and she goes down for the count. You can swipe the Elfen Dagger if you like - add this to your Adventure Scroll should you choose to pick it up.

As soon as you’ve despatched your opponent the grand front door to the Academy bursts open and a white-haired old elf wearing a grass green robe storms out. You recognise him from your studying days as the grasswatching grandmaster, Robert. Ignoring you he yells at the softly groaning but otherwise inert Brenda,

“Good technique, sloppy execution. C-minus. See me after class”.

He then fixes you with a gimlet eye. Robert never liked you much.

“What the hells are you doing here, bastard? Got the academy’s money at long last?”

The fees you owe this institution are eye-watering. Never having worked a day in your life either honestly or dishonestly there’s no way you can afford even a percentage of what you’re on the hook for. Then you suddenly have an idea - if you can bullshit this old coot into accepting you back as a resident you can kill two birds with one stone - find a place to crash and avoid having to do any work for a few more years. If you want to give this a whirl, turn to 1649. Otherwise you blurt out your apologies and leave, being careful not to stumble over any more students on the way out - turn to 1284.

1403

In answer to the strange warrior’s question you turn neatly on the balls of your feet and flee into the wood. When properly motivated by the correct amount of danger you’re probably the fastest land-being in Nonce: you make a clean getaway, eventually emerging unscathed from the southern side of the forest.

If you had any pursuers you left them behind in the wood, but just to be on the safe side you continue to leg it until the trees recede into the distance behind you. Finally content that no one’s coming to slice you in half, you slow down to a walk once more.

You continue trekking along the plains until evening when you finally reach the paved road heading towards Bilgeton. Stowing yourself under a large bush a short distance from the highway you pass out for the night, awaking refreshed relatively early the next morning. Restore up to 20 EFFORT and turn to 1445 to get underway once more.

1404

Seized by a devilish impulse or perhaps just keen to prove that you've really earned your moniker, you relieve your frustrations by picking up the torch and using it to set fire to the tapestry. As the dye in the cheap reed fibres used to make the thing is extremely flammable it goes up like a volcano, spraying sparks and cinders everywhere. So intense is the heat that the trees supporting the tapestry burst into flames and the fire begins to spreads to the tops of neighbouring trees. Plumes of smoke billow up into the sky where they take on an orange glow as they're bathed in the light of the setting sun.

This may have been a senseless act of vandalism but it sure was cathartic. Restore 5 EFFORT. With your daily quota of mischief achieved you decide to hightail it out of there before you get caught up in the spreading blaze.

If you'd like to run along the path marked out towards the Glade of Pixies then turn to 520. If you'd prefer to take the straightest line out of this forest and head straight south then turn to 456.

1405

Your progress is cut short as one of the elfen arrows punches into your steed's head, killing it instantly and flinging you clear off its back. You land heavily on the paved road, electing not to execute a graceful roll in favour of landing flat on your back.

As you lay there groaning in excruciating pain, several elfs approach woth vicious smirks on their faces. You're going to have to prepare either to fight to the death or put on the most shameless display of grovelling ever attempted in the history of the Kingdom of Palaver. You make your decision and steel yourself for what you must do. Turn to 816.

1406

You rap on the door twice swiftly with your knuckles. The door fails to respond. What's next?

To give it one more quick knock turn to 1267. If you want to give it three hard thumps then turn to 1564. If you think bashing it four times hard is in order then turn to 299.

1407

It's going to take more than you've got to defeat these guys, especially since you've played your entire repertoire already. Luckily you've found favour with The K-NG and He puts the words of a new ballad on your lips. The words mean nothing to you but the holy lyrics tumble from your mouth nonetheless as your band strikes up the strange but infectious tune. The K-NG helps he who helps himself, though : you'll still need to muster up the chops to win this Battle of the Bards:

VIVA LAS VEGAS: DIFFICULTY 12 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2

Do you succeed? If so turn to 974. If not turn to 122.

1408

Even you don't know whether your intentions are any good as you boldly stride down from the path to meet with the noble ladies and gentlemen who are taking their repast. Spotting you lumbering awkwardly through the bushes, the nearest group of guards cease leaning upon their weapons and raise them warily.

Check your inventory and make a quick note of what you've currently got equipped. Now make a tally:

Give yourself one point for each of the following: each equipped weapon or shield and the Full Harness of Steel Plate (whether or not it's equipped).
Add two points for each critter parts item (eyes, "bits", corpses, and so on), the Massive Helmet (if equipped) and any uncured animal hides you might be wearing.
Add three points for the Humanhide Whip, Pixie Hide Cloak or the Screaming Skull On Spider Legs, or if you're wandering around completely naked.
Add a further point if you did not get a full night's sleep last night and another if you're under the influence of (suffering an ÉLAN penalty from) booze, a potion or some other hallucinogen.

If your score is less than 5, turn to 75. If more than 5 but less than 10, turn to 1196. If somehow your score is 10 or greater then turn to 430.

1409

This section of woodland is called the Schleimwald and it's one of the two great forests in this part of the world. It's also a pretty gross place as the name might suggest - the filthy river Bilge runs right through it and the pollution has spread to the trees which are twisted, deformed and diseased. They drip with fungus and slime which sticks to your clothes and hair and generally feels icky. Going is slow through the tangled trees and the marshy, muddy forest floor and you soon find yourself filthy and exhausted. You fall frequently as you trip over hidden roots and sink into knee-deep mud pits which are completely invisible in the darkness of the forest at night. As you proceed you're accompanied by a cacophony of hooting, roaring and screeching as the dangerous nocturnal woodland animals begin to become aware of the presence of a meaty half elf snack roaming through their hunting grounds. Suddenly you trip over a tree trunk and fall right into a thorn bush where you become stuck. As you slowly work your way free of the tangled vines you reflect that it might be insanely dangerous to continue onwards through the dark, though sleeping out here until morning is a mighty unpalatable thought.

If you'd like to press on as fast as possible in hopes of finding some safe place to rest then turn to 1799. If you feel it'd be safer not to stumble any deeper into this morass then you decide to crash right here - turn to 56.

1410

The guard notices that you're wearing a military uniform.

"Sorry about the search, friend, but you never can be too sure these days. There's a lot of crooks going around impersonating militiamen, even though it's an instant death sentence! Say, what outfit are you with anyway?"

You begin to sweat bullets inside that heavy metal helmet! You'd better think of an answer, and fast!

If you're working for Sir Witold of Brunnenfeld then turn to 1338. If you're subordinate to Sheriff Teasle of Bilgeford then turn to 911. If you're serving Count Hugues of Bilgeton then turn to 1282. If you're your own man, or elf, or whatever, then turn to 71.

1411

More time passes and you continue to rot away in your cell. How long have you been here now? A year? Two? Five? Time stops having all meaning as you forget to mark off entire weeks on your cell wall. Still, beats walking around the entire county, getting eaten by monsters or attacked by brigands and town guards, you guess. You settle in for an extremely long stay.

One day your restful prison vacation comes to an end: the door slams open and standing before you are a pair of jailers.

"Wait... what, are you still here?" says one of the guards incredulously. "I thought you were executed yonks ago. Well, we need the cell so out you get!"

You can't believe it...freedom, at long last! You stagger out of your cell beaming widely, but your celebrations are cut short as the guard slaps some iron manacles on your wrists.

"No one gets out of here without a trial. Time for your day in court".

Blinking in the bright light of day you are dragged out into the streets of Bilgeton and over to a nearby courthouse, an impressive building as tall as one of your towers back home but many times wider. You don't have much time to gawp - you are hauled straight inside and presented to a clerk.

"He's not on the books", snivels the clerk. "And we've got a full schedule today".

"Too bad. He needs his trial, now" replies the lead guard. The clerk sniffs pointedly. The guard, rolling his eyes, produces a handful of coins from his pouch. As soon as these are presented to the clerk the scheduling problem seems to vanish.

"Ah, we have an opening right now with Magistrate Beltz" says the clerk, penning something into a ledger. "Court A".

The guards nod to the clerk and haul you to the courtroom. The more talkative of the pair chuckles at you as they march you through the courtroom doors.

"Beltz, huh? He's a real hard-arse. I wouldn't want to be you right now. Or ever, really now I think of it. Well, this is your stop. I hope you enjoyed your stay at the Tradegate Dungeon".

Before you can reply with your glowing review they plonk you down in the defendant's box and depart, leaving you to your fate. Turn to 46.

1412

Maybe it's your elfish blood, or maybe you did pick up something from your perennially disappointed teachers back in Elfsdale Downs. Either way, as you go around the circle of helplessly drunk trolls, working the stout, razor sharp blade of the stabbing tool through cracked rock exteriors and into their vitals, you've discovered that you have something of a talent as a lore-warden, your human heritage notwithstanding. Soon all the trolls are dead and you commence to harvest their corpses for treasure. Since they're all beings made mostly of rock they have very little use for material possessions other than their booze, but you do recover 100 Rock Troll Teeth and, after a lot of very unpleasant prying, something euphemistically called a Big Rock Goblin Mountain Oyster. Add these to your Adventure Scroll. Hoping to cover up for your crimes, you soak the trolls with their poisonous liquor and, striking a spark from the flint you keep on your person, light the whole lot of them on fire.

As the blue flames lick over what was once on the map as the Big Rock Goblin Village you must decide what to do after this cold-blooded act. If you're on a mission from Witold of Brunnenfeld you might want to investigate the problem with his water supply - turn to 205. Otherwise you should simply move on - turn to 843.

1413

You're half-human so I suppose it shouldn't come as a surprise that you've adopted at least some of their ways even in the brief time you've been around them. You pull off the impressive feat of waiting in a line for hours without annoying, offending or pickpocketing anyone. By the time you reach the front of the queue you've even begun to find the gossip about the Duke of Fickmühlen's haberdasher interesting. As the ladies ahead of you are refused access and are sent off you finally step forward to implore the guards to let you in. The pair of skeletons eye you warily (you think, it's hard to tell what those empty eye sockets are looking at) and the one with the scroll scans the list slowly and deliberately.

He doesn't find your name there but just as he's about to chitter the bad news to you the ballroom starts emptying out anyway, disgorging the richest of the rich out into the garden where they commence to yelling for their manservants and coaches and the like. It seems the party's over - the royal couple never attended their own engagement party! With your new-found interest in the affairs of human royalty piqued you listen in to all the gossip. Apparently the lady Amelie de Fraude was an imposter and had looted the Count's already-struggling coffers dry, to which the Count responded by sending his guards to rob the estates of everyone who attended the party and then hightailed it out of town! The nobility of Bilgeton is pauperised!

The ball ended before you could get in so you failed to make your debut into Bilgeton high society, but from the sounds of things there's no high society left to speak of. Whistling a jaunty tune, you leave the estate and go off in search of your father and a place to crash at last.

Turn to 1793.

1414

Anything beats trying to go anywhere in your state. You accept Kaspars' hospitality. If you're on a mission from Witold you've forgotten all about it by now - make a note that you've failed him.

The rock trolls live in caves scattered around the mountains nearby but they spend most of their time either in the drinking circle on the mesa or distilling the brutal liquor they drink while in the drinking circle on the mesa. You spend several months with Kaspars, sleeping in his cave and learning his people's hard-drinking ways. Due to the aforementioned drinking you don't remember much else, but you develop a fearsome tolerance to alcohol - from now on you no longer suffer an ÉLAN penalty from drinking alcohols or potions, though any other effects apply as normal. You also gain 1 FIST whenever you'd ordinarily be drunk.

You intend to stick around longer but as your ability to drink reaches nearly trollish levels your hosts tire of you. You were OK at first when you passed out during the first round but they've tired of your shaggy dog stories about Jeff and wish you'd just bugger off. You've also hit on every woman in the henge at least twice, though the ones that aren't already with someone seem to be burning a torch from some mysterious milkman from Bilgeton. Despite the fact that rock trolls drink nothing but their booze they seem to accumulate a lot of milk bottles, though you never see the man coming or going. As the only person around that can stomach the white liquid it winds up becoming your main source of nutrition, and the interesting smell this imparts on your breath makes you even less popular.

In short, though it famously takes trolls a long time to form an opinion on someone they eventually decide that you've worn out your welcome and that it's time for you to hit the road. Bidding the thoroughly relieved trolls farewell you leave, returning to the taking a flask of booze and a bottle of milk with you as mementos. You soon find yourself back in the seemingly endless mountain range which stretches as far as you can see in the direction of Bilgeton. Restore your ÉLAN and EFFORT to their maximums, add the Trollbräu and the Bottle of Milk to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 955.

1415

Flagging a caravan down doesn't sound so hard, and you'll get the best loot since you'll be close to the wagons. You eagerly volunteer.

The half elf gives you a weird look.

"I don't know, there's something odd about this one", he says, scrutinising you closely. You begin to sweat, a dreadful affliction of your human half which Jeff repeatedly humiliated you over by demanding you bathe almost once a week. Lose 1 EFFORT. Luckily, before you blurt out something stupid the elf who you spoke to at the bar notices that you're getting the stink eye and intervenes on your behalf.

"He's not from round here. He's a grasswatcher who's come from Elfsdale Downs".

This explanation seems to satisfy the half elf, whose expression softens a little.

"Long way from home, huh? Welcome". he says. "Now, here's the plan..."

Turn to 1677.

1416

As much as the enraged pixies would enjoy killing you, they can't tell if you're an elf or a man and the last thing they want is another raid from the Bilgeton militia searching for missing humans. They settle for running you out of town, beating you mercilessly about the calfs and buttocks as they herd you down the last uncongested road leading out of the Glade: a thin cart track winding through the trees to the east. Having jobs to get to they stop pursuing you once you reach the city limits and leave you to nurse your wounded arse as you sullenly continue onwards.

Lose 5 EFFORT from the wild beating. If you're still going then turn to 914.

1417

You awake with a sudden crash as you're hurled into a huge pile of flattened cans, quartz debris and assorted garbage. Everything's white and you're convinced that you've gone blind until your eyes adjust - you're outside in bright daylight, lying in a heap of tinnies in what looks like a garbage dump at the bottom of a canyon, completely boxed in by cliff walls belonging to impossibly tall mountains which stretch into the sky in every direction. You get up and brush yourself off in time to see a mule-drawn wagon driven by a team of nobolds disappearing back into a hole in the side of the mountain. What's happened is that a team of nobold garbage lizardmen (or "garbos" as they call themselves in their weird dialect) had found you sleeping in the tunnel while doing their rounds and, mistaking you for a filthy sack of garbage, hurled you into the back of their trash wagon bound for the dump. You were too tired or lazy to move and so you find yourself in your present predicament. Of course, there's no way for you to know this so you're more than a little bewildered to find yourself outside once again.

There's nothing here worth stealing so you look for a way out of this canyon that doesn't involve heading back to the tunnel and dealing with more nobolds. The only plausible way out of this high-walled ravine is a goat track winding up the side of one of the mountains. With no real choice you struggle through the sea of garbage and make your way to the path. After a tough uphill slog you find yourself winding among the nearly trackless peaks of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains, heading towards a particularly intimidating-looking spire.

Turn to 1772.

1418

You're about to leap down from your steed to magnanimously offer your fallen foe your hand in friendship, but in doing so you accidentally jostle the bird's flanks. The tiny-brained creature interprets this as an order to giddy up and it charges forward, stomping Biff into a paste before you can bring it to a halt.

This wanton, if accidental, act of cruelty draws cheers from the caravan guards who have finished running down their elfs. Oh well, you'll take your victories where you can get them. Gain 5 EFFORT from all the positive reinforcement. You help the guards chuck the elf corpses off the road while you wait for the rest of the caravan to catch up. As soon as it arrives you hitch up the bird to its wagon and climb up into your spot in the rear carriage. Shortly afterwards Hulagu yells a command in his rough language and the caravan moves off again, the rattling of the cobblestone beneath the wheels reassuring you that you're well and truly on your way to Bilgeton.

Turn to 1124.

1419

The locals here are suspicious of you - after all, it's not every day that a random kind-of-elfish looking drifter from the other side of the county wanders into the local. You overhear snippets of conversation about an upcoming lorewardening expedition, but as you approach they leave off their petty bickering and pompous rants and stare at you sullenly.

Are you equipped with at least two elfish items (The Elfish Cloak of Invisibility, the Bastard Sword of the Elf, the Lorewardening Key, the Bow of the Woods, The Elfen Dagger or the Fly Hat - you can also count Brenda as one equipped item if she's with you)? If so, you look elfish enough for these guys - turn to 886.
If you don't have two elfish items equipped, or if you've got the Knightly Shield equipped regardless of the amount of elf junk you're wearing, then turn to 1141.

1420

You listen attentively to Rouge-Gorge's speech, laughing at all the jokes (especially the ones you don't get) and cheering loudly whenever he says something even remotely optimistic about venturing into that hole. You fail to impress the men with your enthusiasm, but they do come to think you might be deranged, which more or less achieves the same effect. They decide to shelve their mutinous plots until after you've helped them knock over the lich and they've finished looting the place clean. The fop finishes his speech, you let out another demented cheer and the men roar a battle cry as they follow the pair of you into the barrow.

The ruckus that you were all making outside roused the attention of a small army of ghouls, skeletons and shamblers who serve as the lich's household staff. No sooner do the men make it to the bottom of the stairs into the crypt under the barrow than they are beset from all sides. The Merry Men are giving it all they have and Rouge-Gorge is as impressive as always, but you can't see how they'll stand against this sea of the undead which seems to spill out of the darkness all around you.

If you want to get out of this mess then turn to 900. If you think your only hope is to fight on then turn to 30.

1421

The troll's eyes narrow with a grinding sound. You suspect you've made a mistake.

"What? You don't want to drink with us? Our trollbräu not good enough for you? You saying we drink too much? What the hells is your problem?"

One really easy way to offend a rock troll is to refuse their offers of hospitality. "No thanks" is about the most insulting phrase in the rock troll lexicon. No matter how you backpedal, you've hurt this monstrous creature's feelings. The other trolls turn to face you, hostile expressions seemingly carving themselves into the beings' rocky faces.

Now might be an ideal time to flee - if you'd like to run for it then turn to 605. If you'd like to stick around and retrieve the situation despite the mounting signs that this might be a tall order then turn to 586.

1422

The crowd boos at your lack of sportsmanship. The magistrate rolls his eyes.

"Fine. There will be a recess of half an hour while we find a lawyer for this guilty felon".

It takes a few minutes for the court to round up a lawyer willing to defend you for a price the court is willing to bear. You wind up with a very young human, still a child as far as you can tell, who claims to a "freshman" at the University of Bilgeton's law school. You suppose that must be like one of the elfen academies but for humans, although you don't really know what goes on inside those either.

In any case this "freshman" doesn't seem very competent - you can tell that he's losing the crowd as he constantly consults legal scrolls, brings up precedents from fusty old past cases, objects to assertions from the prosecution that would unfairly incriminate you, tricks the judge into admitting that he doesn't know what he's trying you for and criticises the entire corrupt legal system as little more than a glorified circus designed to entertain the city's poor even as it helps the Count extract the last groats from their purses to cover his gambling debts. As a rotten tomato sails through the air from the audience, followed by a cabbage, a barrage of turnips and a boot, you realise that you'd better take control of this situation before this young human gets you killed!

If you shove him out of the way and take on your own defence then turn to 52. If you want to see where he's going with this then turn to 1711.

1423

"So yer a vagrant, eh? Well, you got no business 'ere. I ougtta take yer back to jail but what's in it for ol' Fergut, eh? Well, today's yer lucky day. I'll just whip ye back up the ravine and we'll be even."

With this the old guard lowers his bow and draws a blunt, rusty sword, with which he lambasts you with unholy enthusiasm. Before you can help yourself you're fleeing back up the ravine with the old man hot on your heels, thrashing at your calves, buttocks and back with the flat of the blade whenever he comes within reach. He doesn't let off until you're back at the warning sign at the start of the ravine. Once he's sure you're well and truly on your way he turn back the way he came.

Lose 5 EFFORT and 1 ÉLAN from the chagrin of this shameful experience. Trying to put this all behind you, you limp on through the mountains heading now towards the spire you saw earlier.

Turn to 1772.

1424

You move away to a safe distance, putting that miserable scene behind you.

If you agreed to help the elfs for whatever reason then you can go seek them out - turn to 879. If you took a more hostile tack in dealing with them or don't see the point in hanging out with those losers again you can leave them to their fate and continue back on the road towards Bilgeton: turn to 294.

1425

You yell to the guards to indicate that you've surrendered.

"PULL OVER TO THE SHORE!", shouts one of the guards that has just emerged from the city. There's what looks like a platoon of them up there now and they all have crossbows pointed right at you. There's no way they're going to miss so you do as you're told. No sooner have you grounded your vessel on the southern bank than one of the guards grabs you off the boat like you're a stuffed toy and throws you to the ground. After a customary judicial beating you're clapped in irons and dragged through the impressive noble gates on your way to prisoner processing in the Tradegate dungeons on the far side of town. As you're hauled through the streets of Bilgeton you get a chance to look around first at the prosperous noble quarter and then, on the other side of the Bilge, the rather shabbier quarters set aside for merchants and the numerous poor of the city. You don't really make much of the sights - the city is mindbogglingly huge to your countrified, forest-dwelling brain, the guards are hustling you along too quickly and the numerous passers-by are pelting you with refuse.

It's almost a relief when you arrive at the Trader's Gate gatehouse where you are handed over to the dungeon guards. They lead you in through the guardroom where you are strip searched before all your gear is confiscated. You watch it being secured in a wooden evidence chest at the back of the room (keep it on your Adventure Scroll for now, but none of it's available for you to use). You're finally unshackled before being given your Prisoner of the Count starter kit - a couple of filthy sackcloth tunics, a toothbrush with only one bristle left and a pot to piss in (don't bother adding these loathsome items to your Adventure Scroll). Now that you've been formally inducted into the Bilgeton prison system a couple of the surly prison guards march you down a narrow spiral staircase to your new home.

Turn to 49.

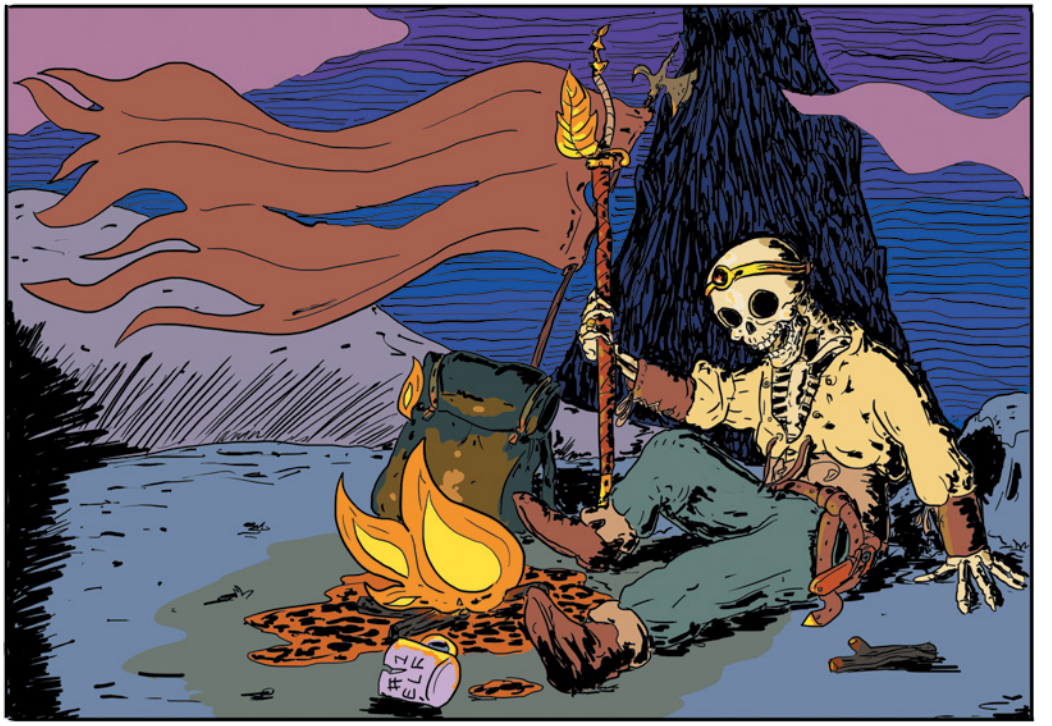
1426

Busking is only barely tolerated as one step above begging in Bilgeton, but since there's no one with money in the Drudgers' Quarter the militia don't care if people are playing tunes out on the street. As such it's the perfect venue for the Battle of the Bards - an annual congregation of the great, the good and the terrible music makers of Nonce and the surroundings lands. Bards, troubadours and troupes vie for supremacy in a musical contest, where victory means the possibility of fame, fortune or at least a booking at one of Bilgeton's premiere establishments like the popular Dribbling Wand or possibly even patronage from a passing Count or even a Duke if there's one in town.

In short, it's a big deal and a lot of people are gathered together in the disused Drudgers' Quarter stone quarry which doubles as an amphitheatre when the residents aren't hurling garbage and smashing empties into it.

If you've got no inclination to get involved you can join the audience and watch the show - turn to 887. If you're ready to rock you could try to sign up - turn to 21. If this really isn't your scene you can go off in search of your father and that place to crash instead - turn to 1793.

1427



Throwing caution to the wind you approach the skeleton. Somehow there's something awfully familiar about the undead abomination. It wears a baggy white tunic with loose green leggings, with several belts tied tight about it in an almost elfish manner. A gold circlet with a patently fake gem, sparkling in the fire light, sits atop the thing's skull. As you approach it looks up at you, staring into your eyes with its deep black sockets. It chitters something at you, teeth clicking as its jaw works up and down.

Do you have the Skeleton Hand, Skeleton Friend or the Screaming Skull on Spider Legs? If so then you somehow understand these chitterings, your skeleton buddy writes what's being said onto cue cards or the Screaming Skull stops screaming for long enough to translate: turn to 1064. Otherwise your lack of comprehension irritates the skeleton and, drawing a long, thin blade with a stupidly ornate, flimsy-looking hilt, the undead horror leaps to its feet and attacks!

🔪**FAMILIAR SKELETON: DIFFICULTY * - FISTS ****

*This skeleton has the same DIFFICULTY as you have ÉLAN and it has the same number of FISTS as you do.

If you defeat the skeleton then turn to 290. If you lose then turn to 1477.

1428

As someone who's spent their entire life in a forest clearing you haven't had any practice riding, and you don't feel like cutting your teeth on this gigantic bird. The preparation time puts you off wanting to sink your teeth into the bird itself either. Leaving the animal to its fate you head on south down the now-paved road to Bilgeton. Turn to 614.

1429

With the trolls snoring merrily away it's time to get out of here. Clutching your mostly-unfinished bottle of Trollbräu (add this to your Adventure Scroll), you sneak off through the fallen monoliths and clamber down the side of the mesa. Travelling through the mountains at night is incredibly dangerous so as soon as you're out of earshot of the trolls' snoring you find a safe place to hole up. If you were on a mission from Witold of Brunnenfeld you've failed it - make a note of this on your Adventure Scroll.

You rise early in the afternoon the next day and continue your hike through the mountains.

Turn to 935.

1430

Well, it's indoors.

Rather than go through all the effort of getting out you stay exactly where you are and quickly adapt to a life of near-total darkness. Subsisting on a diet of phosphorescent fungus and mildly radioactive stalactite water your pallid skin begins to glow subtly. Before your bones have completely knitted up from your fall you've adapted completely to the dark and would probably burn if you went into direct moonlight, let alone the full glare of the sun. Although you work out a few corkers for riddling at hapless adventurers most of them are more interested in fleeing from you than chatting so you never get to crack any of them out. Word soon gets out that there's some ghost hobbling around near the entrance area of the abandoned Drowsdeep Mine and this plus the complete lack of anything worth stealing down there means that even that pool of company dries up fast.

You never do get back at Jeff or even see the sun again, but at least no one's on your back about getting a job anymore, so chalk that up as a win I guess.

1431

You're disappointed to find that you've dug up some pauper's grave and all you can find are worthless rags and a few old bones. Not wanting to leave empty handed you can, if you wish, take the Pauper's Skull.

Add this item to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1193.

1432

Leaping nimbly (enough) into the saddle, you pull the reigns hard. As the horse rears back kicking at the sky, you shout "It was I, Jeff of Elfsdale Downs, who has done this terrible thing to you!". And then you're away, galloping hard towards the road and freedom. The horse, probably remembering where home is, turns towards Bilgeton when you hit the road and won't entertain any opinions you have on the topic. For now you're just glad to be moving away from those guards though you eventually figure out how to get control of the horse, more or less.

Ignoring all distractions, you ride as swiftly as you are able along the road to Bilgeton, hoping to put as much distance between you and the inevitable pursuit as possible. Although you are reasonably sure that bloody Jeff - how DARE he tell YOU to get a job, the prick - is going to get the blame for your crimes, you would still prefer to reach Bilgeton ahead of the news of your exploits.

Turn to 1455.

1433

Exhausted, you slump along the road until the hovel is out of sight behind you before finding a nice soft patch of grass to lie down in between the road and the forest verge. It's been a long and exhausting day so you pass out pretty quickly despite your misgivings about sleeping outdoors.

Some time a bit later in the night you wake up to find a couple of horrible little fellows running around your sleeping area. One's dressed all in blue, the other all in green, and both of them have a sack slung over a shoulder. They're both wearing identical fixed grins as they skitter around the campsite, presumably looking for anything worth stealing.

You stagger to your feet and confront them:

🔪**BLUE THIEF: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 10**
🔪**GREEN THIEF: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 10**

This does not count as a Multiple Hassle since they're not attacking you.

Every time you successfully hit the Blue Thief it drops a Blue Pot from its sack. Every time you hit the Green Thief it drops a Meat. Add these items to your Adventure Scroll as you accumulate them.

If you somehow kill one or both thiefs then turn to 680.

Otherwise after three rounds the thiefs scarper away giggling obnoxiously. You're about to go back to sleep but then you notice a dim glow flickering in the woods to the north. If you'd like to investigate then turn to 1796. If you just want to rest up for whatever's in store for you tomorrow then turn to 91.

1434

Huddled under the puke-green cloak, as far as the hydra's concerned you look much like any other piece of worthless detritus that makes its way down to the sewers. Although it can detect your foul aroma, the sense of smell is not traditionally the most developed faculty in sewage monsters and it's not able to pinpoint your location no matter how much it sniffs. In the end it gives up and satisfies itself with a couple of the corpses which have been dumped down here while you drift safely over to the weir on the other side of the chamber.

Turn to 1633.

1435

No amount of weeping or begging slows the dwarf ladies' stomping boots, not after you ruined their hen party by simply existing. Lose 10 EFFORT from the bruising assault. Luckily for you, before these angry young women can finish you off the troll bouncer you saw outside earlier lumbers up onto the stage to save you. Grasping you hard by a leg he drags you away from the shouting women and out through the side door behind the bar. You briefly see the inside of an overheated, overcrowded and filthy kitchen before the rock troll drags you out an open door on the other side of the room and out into an alleyway. Here the monster casually tosses you like a rag doll into a mountainous heap of garbage, rotten vegetables and unidentifiable meats.

"I better not see you around the Dribbling Wand again", he says in a deep voice like boulders grinding against each other, "or I'll break your legs". With that he returns to the tavern, turning sideways to fit through the kitchen door.

It's already getting dark out here, and as appealing as lying on a mountain of garbage all night would be to you, you decide to work on some other course of action. You stand, brush off the filth and get to work.

Turn to 827.

1436

Certain that you've licked it this time, you rummage through the heap of bones. Assuming you haven't already taken these items, you can take your choice of 2 Guilders, a Skeleton Workers Union card made out to something called "Greenbones" and a pleasingly gaudy class ring. Add 2 Guilders, the SWU Card or the Class Ring to your Adventure Scroll.

By the time you've crammed the item into your backpack the skeleton's pulled itself together again. It lunges at you!

🔪**GREENBONES: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2**

If you can't defeat a foe that won't stay dead then turn to 1784.
If you win, you can leave the churchyard behind before any other terrible thing happens. Turn to 1236 to head on up the lane. Otherwise you're pretty sure it's done now - if you'd like to finish looting the remains then turn to 1468.

1437

Radabastard looks a bit bored at how uncool you're being.

"Yeah, the majesty of nature. Far out, isn't it. Welp, bye."

He goes back to scrabbling around in the dirt. Even the birds and rabbits in the clearing seem to be a little embarrassed to be seen with you.

If you don't want to leave empty handed you could try snagging a few of those poisonous-looing mushrooms growing around the clearing - turn to 124 if you think you can grab a few while the hippy's back is turned. Otherwise you decide to head on back to the road - turn to 1623.

1438

Seeing that you're going to do whatever you want anyway, the sheriff's attitude changes instantly from false chumminess to officious hostility.

"Where the hell do you think you're going?" he demands. Seeing that you're more transfixed on wandering into town than answering his questions he leaps down from his wagon.

"Lemme see your papers. Wait a minute. Those ears. Those razor-sharp cheekbones. Your lack of respect for authority. You're a K-NG-damned elf! You're under arrest! You hear me? Now put your hands on the cart". His hand strays to the hilt of a hand-and-a-half sword.

"How you do it, you decide. Right now!"

🔪**SHERIFF WILHELM TEASLE : DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

If you win then turn to 1568. If you're beaten or otherwise give up then turn to 1218.

1439

The battle over, the fop who you first encountered addresses you while his rougher-looking companions set about relieving the dead of their property and hacking grisly trophies off the reverse-taurcent.

"Well fought! I am styled Rouge-Gorge de Florid-on-Bilge, perhaps you may have heard the songs".

Seeing the look of confusion on your face he continues,

"Non? Eh bien. Well, I lead the Merry Men, a band of adventurers who have taken on the duties of Sir Tedbald of Bilgeford. Since he has been missing these many moons", he says, twirling his long moustache, "the monsters of this realm have become somewhat rambunctious. The Merry Men and I have been commissioned by the Count Hugues himself to rid the land of Nonce of this filth. You have acquitted yourself well and I see a bright future in the monster hunting business for you, my good fellow."

He reaches into his pouch and withdraws some currency, which he hands to you. You stuff it right in your pocket (add 5 Guilders). You notice some of the men eying this exchange with some hostility.

"That's your share of the work here, and there's more where that came from. We are on the way to rid the land of Aethelcruel, the horrible witch who plagues the Brunnenfeld plains hard by. Will you join our band?"

That sounds dangerously like a job offer! If you want to come along then turn to 924, or turn to 1548 to decline the invitation.

1440

You try to run but you trip over in the ice slime's slick and fall flat on your back. No amount of begging will spare you - the ooze crawls over you, trapping you within its acidic yet icy body! Luckily for you the creature is a vegetarian so you're relatively unharmed but all your clothes, money, weapons and food are lost! Remove all the Equipment, Junk and Cash from your Adventure Scroll. Fortunately the critter fills up on the contents of your backpack and you're left with a few rags to cover yourself with when it eventually spits you out onto the cold, cold ground.

You lie there smouldering for a while as the horrible creature finds some other place to be without so many Bastard Elfs stomping around. Eventually the ground becomes cold enough that even your burning shame can't keep you warm anymore and you stagger to your feet. Wrapping the ragged remains of your outfit around you as best you can you stagger on into the mists: turn to 1803.

1441

The guard points to a poster of you pasted to the wall next to the entrance. It's a pretty good likeness of you: they even captured the slightly hunted look in your eyes and the exact smarminess of your smile.

"Is that you? Sir Witold of Brunnenfeld sent a messenger who told us to be on the lookout for some timewasting lowlife who scammed him out of a suit and nicked off without doing the job he was paid for".

You try to weasel away but the likeness is damning. You are swiftly apprehended and dragged through into the guardroom where prisoner are booked in. You are strip searched and all your gear is confiscated. You watch it being secured in a wooden evidence chest at the back of the room (keep it on your Adventure Scroll for now, but none of it's available for you to use). Finally, you're given your Prisoner of the Count starter kit - a couple of filthy sackcloth tunics, a toothbrush with only one bristle left and a pot to piss in (don't bother adding these loathsome items to your Adventure Scroll). Now that you've been formally inducted into the Bilgeton prison system a couple of the surly prison guards march you down a narrow spiral staircase to your new home.

Turn to 49.

1442

You sort of try to listen to whatever the hells the dragon is trying to tell you but it's just too boring and you pass out, sliding off the back of the dragon. Bhad, unaware of your sudden absence, flies on, prattling pointlessly as it goes.

Luckily for you there's a dense forest down below so your fall is broken by branches and leaves rather than hard ground. Still, as you plunge towards the marshy floor of the Schleimwald forest you get a bit hacked up by the gnarled and twisted boughs that you fall through - lose 5 EFFORT and remove one randomly selected equipped item from your Adventure Scroll as it's torn away from your grasp. You hit the floor of the forest with a loud thud and a weird slurping sound as you sink a decent depth into the swampy ground.

Eventually extricating yourself from the lifesaving, if disgusting, filth at the bottom of the forest, you move on through the dimly lit woods. Slime glistens on the twisted and tangled trees as you walk on in what you hope is the direction of civilisation.

Turn to 1095.

1443

Suddenly you hear an almighty twang coming from somewhere behind you. Before you have a chance to turn around you're thrown clear of your mount. Landing heavily on the road you roll over once or twice before struggling to your feet and looking around in bewilderment. Behind you is your steed, stone cold dead with a huge arrow protruding from its back. Way behind that, amid the horde of elfs tearing apart the skeleton wagons you detect the source of your mishap: a crewed siege engine of a type the humans call a ballista, looking for all the world like a giant crossbow. The green-clad elfs serving the weapon are already loading another bolt into place. You have no idea where they even got that thing from but Aggie must have pissed them off pretty badly if they brought artillery along. As this thought crosses your mind you realise that they're aiming for a second shot. Panicking, you ignore your injuries and flee screaming into the wood alongside the road, hoping to put as many trees and other solid objects between you and that dangerous weapon.

Lose 1 ÉLAN from the injuries sustained from the fall and remove your mount from your Adventure Scroll.

Eventually you realise you're not being pursued and begin to calm down. Forgetting about your GUARDS and PROBLEMS you count your blessings that you're still alive... for now. Because after another two mercifully uneventful days of limping and stumbling through dense undergrowth and increasingly swampy and foul-smelling woodlands you find yourself wandering late at night, lost among a pitch-black, slime coated forest of twisted trees…

Turn to 1409.

1444

Unfortunately for you, your coach mate Batu notices that you're not around and rushes back to the carriage to find you.

"Come!", he shouts in enthusiastic but heavily accented Palavan Humanese, "You would shame you to miss fun battle!"

You, being no stranger to shame and not sharing the warrior's enjoyment of battle, politely refuse by telling Batu to fuck off. Still smiling, the huge guard clambers up into the coach, grabs your ankle and begins dragging you bodily out of the wagon.

🔪**BATU: DIFFICULTY 11**

If you successfully rebuff Batu, turn to 874. If not, he hauls you out of the carriage: turn to 4.

1445

Most fantasy adventures involve hours, days or weeks of just walking from A to B and The Sword of the Bastard Elf is no different. Without a mount of some kind the road to Bilgeton is kind of long and uninteresting. You generally slog along the paved highway, getting out of the way for the occasional cart that refuses to pick you up and sometimes stopping for a rest along the side of the road where you eat whatever unsatisfying junk is in your backpack and wish harm on Jeff for sending you on this long, arduous and boring trek when you could be inside not walking anywhere or eating handfuls of seeds out of a rucksack.

This is all a long way of saying "time passes", which it does, and another late evening finds you still on the road. Breaking the monotony somewhat is an odd smell - sickly sweet, like rotten flesh, which is wafting down a weedy and overgrown dirt path which runs off to the north through a break in the tree line. Set in the ground near this junction is an ancient, weathered marker stone which reads, "GRAVEYARDE OF KYNGES". Just beyond this stands a signpost of decidedly more recent vintage with a notice written on parchment nailed into it; "PILGRIMAGE SITE CLOSED ON ACCOUNT OF LICH INFESTATION. I HAVE PLEDGED MY SWORD TO RID THE REALM OF THIS FIEND NO LATER THAN THE SUMMER OF THE YEAR OF OUR K-NG MCMLXXXII." It's signed by a Sir Tedbald and bears a grisly wax seal depicting a decapitated elf head. You're not sure you ever want to meet the guy if that's his trademark.

Anyhow if a night-time romp in a graveyard sounds like fun you can make your way up the path by turning to 1007. If you'd rather just continue your journey without risking an encounter with a lich then turn to 1802.

1446

You follow the road until the sun is high overhead. It beats slogging through the wilderness but Bilgeton is still at least three days hike away by road, and you're already getting blisters. Lost in such thoughts you only notice the group camped out alongside the highway when you're almost passing by them. It's some human nobility out for a picnic by the looks. Like all nobility they're pretty self-absorbed so you haven't been spotted yet. This is your chance to pick up some supplies and maybe hitch a ride - if you're careful. They have several armed guards with them so annoying the humans could be hazardous.

If you think you have little to fear from these people you could approach them directly for a conversation (turn to 1408) or would you prefer to skulk in the undergrowth and plot some kind of mischief against these travellers (turn to 193)? Alternatively if you know trouble when you smell it you can just trudge on by and leave these poor bastards alone by turning to 1120.

1447

You unfurl the magazine and hurriedly flick through the pages, hoping something in here will help you out of your current mess. Shitty Bob's Bone Zone - too worthless. A spread on Demon Summoning - too much preparation. Ah! As you frantically scan through the pages your eyes settle on Finger of Death, a novice necromancer spell that requires no previous knowledge to cast.

You point at your enemy and read off the spell, and a crackling black bolt of dark lightning flies out from your fingertip and strikes your opponent. You may remove 1 TOUGHNESS from one opponent, ignoring any special saves or other effects they might have protecting them.

The magazine, having been used up, crumbles into dust and all that's left in your hand is a sample scroll from Good Wizards Weekly. Remove Better Bones and Graveyards from your Adventure Scroll and add a Scroll of Dispel. Now turn back to the page from which you came and complete the battle!

1448

Holding your axe aloft you strike a note on it every bit as loud and obnoxious as the ones just played by the demon. He hisses in rage and launches into a blistering solo, but you match him note for note, skill for skill. As the remaining audience realises that Queynte is going to stand up for the world against this demonic interloper they gather around, cheering for their saviours.

JAMMING WITH THE DEVIL: DIFFICULTY 15 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3

You had best succeed - if you fail the world is doomed. Should you manage it then turn to 212. If this is too much for you then the demon graciously accepts your surrender and, once he's done making you lick his hooves until they sparkle he clicks his fingers and destroys the entire world, ending your adventure abruptly.

1449

You pretend not to have seen the thief's gesture, even though you're looking right at him. The rogue gives you the finger for your rudeness and runs on.

Your obnoxious shoving earlier played a fairly minor part in this episode - although you helped the adventurers escape you receive no credit, as per usual. While this stings your pride somewhat it doesn't sting as badly as being chopped in half by a goblin poleax would. Instead of getting involved in whatever hijinks this adventurous duo has in mind you watch them leave town and, taking advantage of the distraction of the goblins who are hustling about after them, go find a handy out-of-the-way place to cower while you wait for everything to blow over. Soon everything more or less settles down and you emerge from your hiding spot, slinking out of an alleyway and whistling nonchalantly. No one pays you any mind.

Turn to 218.

1450

You are what the locals would call "ropable". Accordingly you engage in a sickening rampage, going door to door and committing unspeakably (and, more importantly, unprintably) violent acts against the terrified and more or less helpless populace. By the time your petty rage is spent the entire population of the town has joined your earlier victims in the lizard hells they believe in. You finish your crimes by torching the church and, as you finally begin to calm down, you start ransacking the tavern in search of loot. Add cash worth 3 Guilders and a Bottle of Booze to your Adventure Scroll but deduct 5 EFFORT due to all the frenetic work you just did. If you were sent here to get rid of the priest and you hadn't done so already, this will have done the job.

While you're fossicking around, the fire spreads from the church and into a coal seam inside the eponymous Busted Hill. Dense, toxic smoke floods into the tavern. You figure it's time to leave town. Just at that moment you make a fortuitous discovery: there's a trapdoor set in the floor behind the bar. If you think that's a way out then turn to 507. If you'd rather not risk being roasted alive in a cellar then you'd better start looking for an escape route before the town burns down with you in it. Turn to 591.

1451

You've got nothing to say to that jerk or his cronies. He bullied you mercilessly in Elfsdale Downs and you're just glad to be putting him and his gang of lunch-money-stealing thugs behind you once and for all. You cross your arms and stare fixedly away from him, hoping to insult him by making a big show of ignoring him.

This turns out to be a mistake! Probably angered by this slight, Biff and his crew begin pelting the caravan with rocks. The barrage is utterly fearsome and causes the birds and drivers to panic. The first two carriages speed up and get clear but yours is not so lucky. Being the last in line it now draws the combined fire of Biff's entire gang and one of the rocks strikes a wheel, smashing it to pieces. The carriage tilts over and crashes hard onto its side, throwing you and a large amount of cargo clear as it comes to a grinding halt in the dust. You land heavily but quickly stagger to your feet. If you'd hoped that wrecking your ride would mollify Biff, you're out of luck. As soon as he sees you stumbling towards him he flicks another cobblestone at you with alarming accuracy, striking you hard on the forehead. You slump to the ground and the grovelling apology you intended to slime out dies on your lips as you sink into unconsciousness.

You wake up some time after dark with a terrible headache. You touch your face - it's covered in dried blood but the important features still seem to be intact. You've gained a painful egg on your forehead though: lose 10 EFFORT. You sit up and take stock of the situation: you've been dragged into a ditch by the side of the road and robbed. Biff and the others are gone and you've been relieved of all of your cash and any loot you're carrying (remove these from your Adventure Scroll), though you still have your rations so long as you haven't eaten them yet. Food is the last thing on your mind right now though - you're nauseous from the concussion. The wagon looks to have been torn to pieces as the elfs searched for valuables to take away. It's now nothing more than splinters of wood and bits of metal scattered all over the road. You won't find anything of value in there.

You lurch to your feet and wobble violently as the stars wheel crazily overhead. You manage to begin staggering south onto the cobbled road towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 25.

1452

Sven looks miserable.

"We really just wanted to do a one hand helping the other thing here. Oh well, you're free to refuse, of course. But I really wish you'd reconsid..."

You smile smugly and turn away while Sven is still talking. This is the final straw! From now on Sven will be using his considerable power over the animals of Nonce to make your journey harder. From now on any Hassle involving an animal will be at +1 DIFFICULTY and +1 TOUGHNESS! Make a note of this.

Unaware for now of the curse you've called down on yourself and ignoring the sudden growls, hisses and screeching of the caged beasts you stride out of the shop and to the end of the Trade Lane.

If you've released the brownies into Brunnenfeld then turn to 612. Otherwise turn to 1236.

1453

Mountaineering is a dangerous hobby, as you find out all of a sudden. You're edging along a goat track running alongside a deep ravine when one of the dead plants you're gripping on to for dear life pulls out of the rock face. You trip and tumble off your perch, smashing into the cliff side and bouncing off numerous rocks and crags on your way to the bottom, landing heavily in a conveniently-placed slagheap. It's overgrown with vegetation so the landing is softer than it could have been, though the pain is still excruciating.

The numerous pummelings may have slowed your fall, preventing an untimely if well-deserved demise, but they've also shattered several bones and you can barely move without searing pain. Remove 1 ÉLAN and 10 EFFORT from the brutal tenderising you've received.

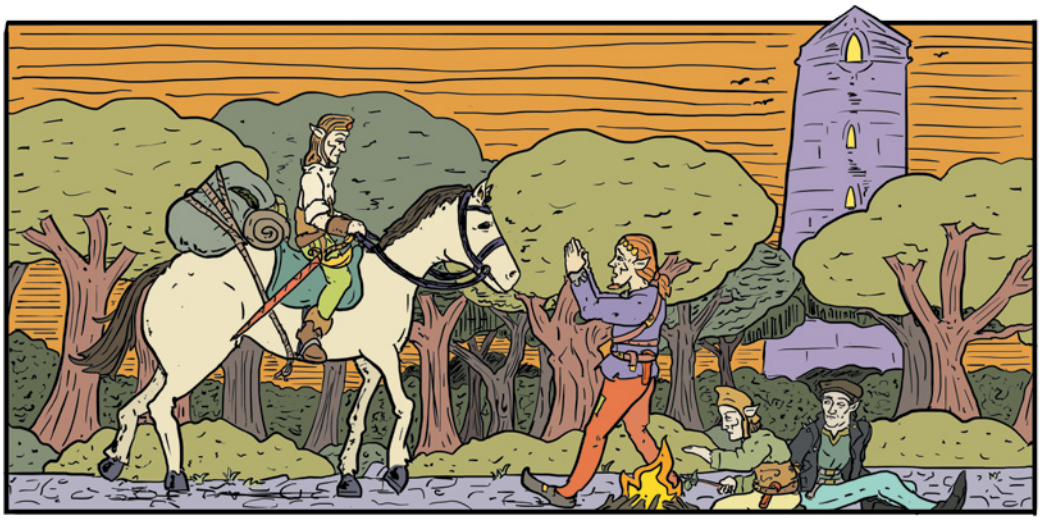
Assuming you're still going you extricate yourself from the heap of discarded refuse and weedy mountain vines and look around. You've landed outside a mine shaft cut into the side of the mountains which rise up in a great wall all around you. Based on the rusted rails leading into the deep black hole, the broken and rotten mining tools left to decay on the ground and the vegetation growing all over this site, it's been abandoned a long time. There's a path leading away with a rusted iron sign laying on the ground next to it. It reads, "Drowdelf Mine. Wear Correct PPE At All Times. Emergency Assembly Point: Follow Access Track to Gobholme". The overgrown and debris-strewn goat track of a path heads sharply uphill, disappearing over a saddle between two mountains.

If you'd like to proceed to Gobholme along this road then turn to 1022. If even the thought of climbing another mountain in your state makes you feel ill then you can instead take your chances in the mine: turn to 1281.

1454

Do you have a lorewardening key equipped? If so turn to 1620. Otherwise, turn to 345.

1455



Late in the evening you spy a small group of elves in ragged clothing huddled by the side of the road. Spotting you, the leader stands and hurries over to you. He implores you to help - the eponymous warlock of the nearby Warlock Tower has been harassing the honest working Elfen-folk of the region with his skeleton hordes, and as a result these elves haven't gotten so much as a jot of whimsyflicking done in weeks. The elf leader offers you a surprise magical treasure as a reward in addition to whatever you can loot from Warlock Tower if you'll take care of the spellcaster for them.

Do you offer to assist your half-brethren in their hour of need? If so turn to 120. Alternatively if you're pretty sure this is just a greasy elf scam that you want no part of then turn to 173.

1456

You continue to float down the Bilge, marvelling at the huge stone walls of Bilgeton which soon appear in the distance. The end of your quest is in sight, probably! The rolling plains around the city are dotted with farmsteads and clusters of workers' cottages, each of which seem to be dumping an unholy amount of waste into the river. By the time you're maybe an hour upriver of the looming walls of Bilgeton, the water, which was pretty foul to begin with, has become utterly noxious with the heady mix of manure, sewage, cottage industry runoff and other unidentified effluviant from all this human settlement. The fumes burn your lungs and you begin to choke. Time to get out of this soup, at least for a little while.

Paddling over to the northern bank you emerge from the water and take a short breather. Restore up to 5 EFFORT. As you rest up it occurs to you that since that little town earlier was so hostile to your attempt to pass through it via the river, it's likely that Bilgeton will be even better defended against the same approach. It might be worth trying another way in.

If you want to give up on the water approach you can begin to walk overland on the north side of the river, heading through farmlands, by turning to 229. If you'd prefer to walk in from the south bank where, not too far away, you can see a line of flag poles with heraldic banners fluttering, then you cross over and jump out on the other side - turn to 213. If you'd prefer to continue not having to walk then it's the river for you - turn to 1750 to resume your journey downstream.

1457

Accepting their hospitality, you're soon seated on a felled tree near the fire, chewing on some kind of roasted forest meat and laughing at lumberjacking-related jokes that you don't quite get but which are told with an infectious gusto. Restore 10 EFFORT. It turns out that these are woodcutters who travel the woodland area of central Nonce, hacking down trees and carving loathsomely twee wooden tchotchkes that they trade for whatever they need. For humans they're quite good company! All except the wounded man, who is silent aside from the occasional groan, and his grim companion who gives you the stink eye whenever he notices you looking at him.

"Don't worry about Briggins", says Simon, forestalling your questions, "He's... well. Never mind Briggins."

Suddenly the man known as Briggins convulses violently, almost falling right off his log. The jovial Simon suddenly looks flustered and leaps up from his perch.

"Time you were leaving, friend", he says sternly. "Now". His posture has gone from relaxed to extremely threatening with overtones of imminent violence. The big man looms over you and the others stare at you with a coldness that wasn't present just moments ago. Behind Simon you can see Briggins - now strangely misshapen - as he jerks to his feet and lurches awkwardly in the direction of one of the horses. The beasts whinny nervously and a pair of the lumberjacks start running towards Briggins, shouting for him to stop. Your lollygagging is clearly annoying Simon - he looks like he's barely restraining himself from punching you in the face.

If it's time to leave then you head back into the wood, leaving this charming scene behind. Turn to 1554. If you're willing to hazard sticking around then turn to 1541.

1458

This bumpkin might look like a harmless old country-style imbecile but he's definitely got a nose for elf blood. You've read countless (quite frankly racist) old nursery rhymes about elf children being lured into human houses and being subjected to a terrible fate. Well you're too well-read for that: you're not going to chop wood in return for your supper!

"Are you coming in or what? I don't have all night. Well, I do, truth be told. But I'd rather not stand here at the door waiting for you to decide if you're in or out."

If you'd like to take this old coot down before he asks you to do a chore in return for feeding and sheltering you then turn to 321. If you'd rather flee screaming into the night then turn to 1062.

1459

Sighing, you take off your backpack and strip off down to your under hose. Gathering all your crap together in a heap you hand it all over to the human bully, who grabs it ungraciously and waddles off back to his guardhouse. Still wheezing he waves you through the gate and you emerge mostly naked, alone but alive on the mountain pass to the north of the human settlement. Hoping to put your humiliation behind you as soon as possible you set out quickly through the Big Rock Goblin Mountains.

Remove all items and cash from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1698.

1460

You're proud of your heritage. You inform the human guard that you're an elf.

"Well piss off then. No elfs in Brunnenfeld", he says, pointing to a notice fastened to the gate. "All you lot do is beg and steal."

You know when you're not wanted! Well, not really, otherwise you would have left Elfsdale Downs shortly after you were born. More accurately, you know when you're not wanted so long as an armoured man holding a polearm is shouting at you to piss off. Since making a big deal of this would inevitably lead to you being sliced in half you decide to leave without making a fuss. Instead you set off to the south through the Brunnenfeld plains.

Turn to 372.

1461

The band - a trio of dwarfen performers - are making some unbearable noise with their strange instruments. They deliberately refuse to acknowledge you as you approach, but evidently your wincing and loud demands to play something good get on their nerves and between sets the lead shawm player deigns to acknowledge you.

"You clearly have no taste for culture" she says, quivering with barely repressed anger. "Perhaps you would enjoy the pedestrian slop they'll be serving up anon at the Battle of Ye Bards in the Drudgers' Quarter, but in the meantime I would ask you respectfully, kind sirrah, to please piss off and leave us alone".

If you have the Elfish Prodigy with you then turn to 499. If you have the Dwarfen Troupe then turn to 1745. Otherwise you decide to let the snobbish band get back to it.

You're near the wizard - if you'd like to pester him then turn to 77. Otherwise this place is getting on your nerves - it's time to leave. Turn to 827 to find the nearest way out.

1462

You're not going to be this turd-farming human's patsy! With demented hostility you wrench the reins from the farmer's hands and give them a hard whip, intending to drive the mighty stallion straining at the front of your war chariot forward to battle!

Unfortunately the old horses are completely exhausted from the drug-fuelled ordeal of the past couple of days and this additional excitement is the final straw. Instead of accelerating the animals elect to keel over. The cart rolls to a halt and Hurensohn shoots you a look like thunder.

"I always knew you were a cop! Get out of here, narc!"

You jump out of the wagon to find that the scarecrow and his knights are still coming for you, faster now you think. You feel the tower's gaze boring into your skull. Hurensohn's continued abuse which he hurls at you like bolts of lightning is only adding to the severely menacing vibes of this terrible place. They're not going to take you alive! Screaming your defiance you race right towards the bridge, dodging around the knights and the surprised-looking scarecrow. The tower fires something at you with a twang and a dark projectile ricochets off the rainbow road. You begin running even more erratically to put its aim off but as you approach the bridge your movements get a little too wild and you manage to topple right off the side and down, down, into the torrent of screaming skulls and wailing lost souls below. You are borne away, leaving your former companion to the mercy of the evil town and its demonic inhabitants.

The freezing cold and the stinging fumes of the horribly polluted water of the River Bilge (for that is what you've just submerged yourself in) quickly sobers you up and you soon realise what's happened. While you don't like being soaked in this stuff, at least you're free of the guards who you just encountered - even if they were inclined to chase a vagrant downstream they probably wouldn't be able to catch up to you in the swiftly flowing current. Instead you are borne along to freedom (for now). Turn to 1456.

1463

The gnome takes your cash and wanders over to one of the old casks under the stairs. Turning a tap with some effort he pours you a big goblet of the frothy liquid and gets one for himself as well.

You sip gingerly at the bubbly, dark-brown contents of the goblet. It tastes repulsive but has a kick like a mule.

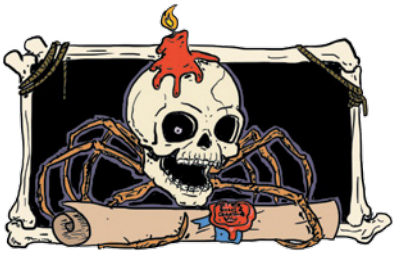
"Ancient aelfwine. It's been here since before this place opened. It's gone rotten but at least you can catch a buzz off it".

Buzz is an understatement. You feel a bit hammered by the time you've reached the bottom of the tankard, as is the gnome who's beginning to look a bit rosy in the cheeks and unsteady on his feet. Still, although he's willing to share some racist jokes about elfs with you he remains tight-lipped about what's going on around here.

Lose 1 ÉLAN from the effects of the booze. The bartender, named Bembo as it turns out, serves a couple of other elfs with a semblance of sobriety before returning to you.

"Whatdya say", he asks, slurring a little, "Got another round in you?"

If you can part with another 5 leaves or a Guilder then turn to 1367. Otherwise you refuse and, bidding the gnome a good night, stagger drunkenly towards the exit - turn to 187.



1464

Having rid the world of one of its nastier denizens you continue your journey. Although the adventurers have left you far behind, by blind luck you stumble across their camp site an hour or so later. Their day of fighting, fleeing and trying to ditch you has left them completely tuckered out and they're fast asleep, snoring loudly enough to shake the leaves off nearby trees. This seems to be scaring off the forest predators as well - either that or even the brainless swamp monsters of the Schleimwald know better than to tangle with these two.

You know what needs to be done. Turn to 1582.

If you've read this far, congratulations! You've managed to bottle up your murderous rage at being disrespected once again just because you don't fit in or ever stop whining or have no real reason to exist. You quickly rummage through their possessions and find the item they've stolen - a beautiful Mighty Codpiece! You also come up with the decent sum of 10 Guilders worth of gems and gold pieces - add these to your Adventure Scroll. Resisting the suicidal urge to kick these two sleeping beauties you decide to press on towards Bilgeton - turn to 1799.

1465

You unlatch the cages and the kids flee the house, nearly trampling you on the way to the exit. Just in time, too - the cottage, mostly made of insanely flammable materials, collapses into a heap of burning logs and twee garbage just as you make it out the door.

The three of you stand around coughing until the smoke's out of your lungs. When your eyes finally clear you realise you haven't saved a couple of kids, but rather a pair of dwarfs with misleadingly high-pitched voices. They introduce themselves - they're a brother and sister called Harman and Giselle respectively. They're musicians who were brought to Brunnenfeld by their manager, ("a fucking bitch who couldn't find her arse with both hands and a scroll of identify" as Giselle puts it), who couldn't land them a gig and sent them away without them earning a hargroat. They were on their way to Bilgeton to work the tavern circuit there but, half-starving as they were when they found this place, they mistook it for a cake, took a nibble and were captured by the witch. At least she was feeding them if only to fatten them up, but if you hadn't come along it would have been curtains.

If you're on a quest to find some missing "little ones" who answer to Harman and Giselle and want to go through with it then turn to 1555. If, for whatever reason, you want to head on down to Bilgeton with them instead then turn to 1257, or you can bid them farewell and go your own way by turning to 1581.

1466

The thing with Simon trying to brain you was a misunderstanding - he was under a lot of stress after all what with one of his men turning into a horrible reverse-taurcent. In any case they gave you a hot meal and don't deserve to be cut down. You draw your weapon (hopefully you do have a weapon!) and prepare to do battle with your strange opponent:

🔪**ROUGE-GORGE: DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 1**

If you win, turn to 1194. If you can't defeat this tough adversary then turn to 1499.

1467

You refuse to pay this outrageous fee. In response the guard places his hand on the hilt of his sword.

"Great, we have a lawyer on our hands. Here's my revised offer, windbag: 10 Guilders flat fee. Take it or leave it".

If you're inclined to take this deal then you pay up: turn to 26. Otherwise turn to 1049.

1468

You rifle through the discombobulated heap of bones in search of valuables. Assuming you haven't already taken all of these items, you can take your choice of 2 Guilders, a Skeleton Workers Union card made out to something called "Greenbones" and a pleasingly gaudy class ring. Add 2 Guilders, the SWU Card or the Class Ring to your Adventure Scroll.

As you're pocketing your hard-won loot the skeleton somehow pulls itself back together, stands up and lunges at you!

🔪**GREENBONES: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2**

If you can't defeat a foe that won't stay dead then turn to 1784.
If you win, you can leave the churchyard behind before any other terrible thing happens. Turn to 1236 to head on up the lane. Otherwise you're pretty sure you bashed it good this time - if you'd like to loot the remains again then turn to 1436.

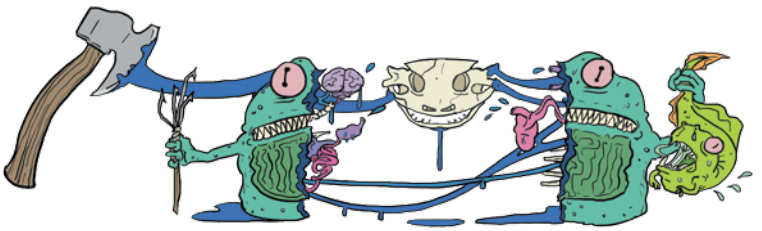
1469

You give your adversaries a pretty sound whupping and they scatter, leaving the exit clear. You leg it, not wanting to stick around to allow them to regroup and come at you again. Racing across the clearing you barge back into the tangled and dark woods of the Schleimwald, heading generally east, and you don't stop running until the angry sounds of pursuit have receded far behind you. Luckily this doesn't take long - elfs cherish their grudges, but they're generally not interested in doing anything about them if it involves much running.

Even so you decide to press on into the darkness of the Schleimwald at night. Turn to 1804.

1470

You've dug around in some ancient warrior's grave and found a corpse still wrapped in the martial treasures of some distant past. A lot of it has rusted away but if you like you help yourself to the warrior's Creaking Maille and his ceremonial Mighty Codpiece. Add any items you've picked up to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1193.



1471

You don the garb of The Spectre, thereby becoming the 22nd Spectre! You suddenly feel the urge to slam evil, starting with that mooching golem who's using what should be your sweet cave as a skull. Unfortunately the golem is waiting for you just inside the entrance and is a pretty tough nut to crack. Your former friend gives you a humiliating thrashing for trying to get inside his head and you stagger out of the cave, your career as a crimefighter already in tatters. Lose 1 ÉLAN from the damage to your pride. As a side note you've ended the centuries-long Spectre franchise in total ignominy.

You stagger away, rending the Lavender Bleggings into worthless rags as you tear them off (remove them from your Adventure Scroll, if you added them). In your grief you don't really care where you go so long as it's away from this cursed place.

If you'd like to retreat from these mountains and allow the shifting vapours of the Mist Steppes to swallow you along with your shame then you set out to the north - turn to 1812. If you think the yawning hell of these blasted mountains is exactly what you deserve then you trudge up the path leading back into the centre of the range - turn to 898. If your grief at the crushing of your short crimefighting career is too great to allow you to make such a weighty decision then flip a coin and let your feet decide which way to carry you until your mood improves.

1472

The cheap militia halberd features a heavy chopping blade on one side and a nasty armour-piercing spike on the other. Despite the way the poorly-made head rattles loose against the haft you're hoping it'll hold for one hard chop. Screaming in terror you race forward with the halberd raised for a fatal chop:

🔪**CHOP!: DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 1**

If you succeed then turn to 1580. If you fail you manage to strike the dragon but the cheap halberd shatters on impact. The iron head flies off and whacks you right on the dome, fortunately with a flat part rather than a sharp part. Still it's enough to knock your lights out and you're unconscious before your momentum even causes you to run into the dragon and bounce off like a rag doll. Remove the Cheap Halberd from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1774.

1473

Trader's Lane is an uphill climb along a narrow street lined with tightly packed houses intermingled with workshops. This is where the tradesmen and day labourers of Brunnenfeld live - the labourers in the more crowded and shabby dwellings nearer the market square, the tradesmen in the nicer places next to their workshops in the middle of the street and the richer merchants towards the top of the road.

As you walk along, brushing shoulders with the hoi polloi as they rush around attending to whatever it is humans do, you look in through the shop windows. You don't see much of interest to you until you come to a weaponsmith about midway up the row. Elf weapons are all very pretty but their shoddy workmanship means they tend to fall apart embarrassingly when used for their intended purpose, so maybe it's time to trade up to some human gear? If you'd like to pop into the store then turn to 1010.

If you don't have the money (or don't want to spend it), you proceed up the road - turn to 1543.

1474

As you're deciding whether to climb down or risk getting eaten your loyal but blundering companion chooses that moment to trot right under the branch. With a snarl the Greater Drop Bear releases his grip on your bough and plummets towards the unfortunate giant dog, who lets out a yelp of surprise as the monstrous arboreal bear slams into him. There's a brief and one-sided tousle before the bear drags the hapless gigantic mutt away for dinner.

Remove the Dire Wolf from your Adventure Scroll. You're too tired and not really interested enough to mourn the unlucky animal's demise though - instead you stretch out on the newly-vacated branch and get some sleep. The Greater Drop Bear's appetite is thoroughly sated by the giant dog so it doesn't come back for dessert: you're able to snooze peacefully through the night without getting munched on by anything bigger than a Bastard Fly. Restore 20 EFFORT.

You wake some time in the morning and climb down the tree. Now that you can see where you're going the journey through the woods is a bit easier and in just a few hours you emerge from the forest out onto a half-paved, half-dirt highway. The great city of Bilgeton, its walls looming large, lies just a few miles down the road to the south east. You strike out towards the end of your quest!

Turn to 1732.

1475

Do you still have the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes? If so turn to 1675. If not you leave the store without incident and stride back out into the market square - turn to 244.

1476

You're cold, filthy, travel sore and miserable but your cowardice and/or cheapness exceeds any desire you may have to be fed, clean or happy. Accordingly you give the town a wide berth, staying as close to the trees as possible to avoid being spotted by the watch tower. Once the town's safely out of sight behind you, you rejoin the road.

The Bilgeton Plains are quite densely populated in comparison to the mostly empty wastes you've been traversing since you left home, and all manner of small farmsteads and peasant huts line the way. You're not sure if it's because humans are as unpleasant as all the fairy stories say or if your mud-coated self reminds the humans of a bog monster, but none of the people you encounter seem inclined to talk to you and you hear doors and windows being shut and barred as you trudge past.

After you've had just about enough of this miserable treatment you find yourself approaching a gate set in Bilgeton's immense walls - the great Trader's Gate. You see the sun glinting off the steel helmets of what are probably guards, and it suddenly strikes you that it may be a challenge to enter the city after all. This might be your last chance to equip your gear for your grand debut and to get rid of anything that could get you into trouble in the city.

Make whatever adjustments you're going to make and turn to 681.

1477

You grovel for mercy but the skeleton has fallen into some kind of horrible berserker rage and cannot hear your miserable pleas. If you didn't know any better you'd think the thing was sobbing as it runs you through again and again with its cheap, oversized fencing foil. You can do little more than curse Jeff for sending you off to this awful fate. The skeleton chitters its jaws in agreement and skewers you once again, this time fatally.

Your adventure ends here.

1478

You're getting exasperated with this inane down under argot. You ask loudly if they speak your language.

Bluey just smiles and hands you a Vegemite Sandwich. Add it to your Adventure Scroll.

f you're pretty sure this is a hostile act then you can reciprocate - turn to 326. If you're sure their intentions are peaceful and you'd like to join them at their "esky" then turn to 672. If you've had enough of these exasperating lizardfolk you tell them to piss off and move on into the tunnels - turn to 811.

1479

You confidently stride down the road, hoping that these guys are too busy to give you the business today. Unfortunately Biff is never too busy to give anyone the business, so as soon as you approach he yells at you to come over. Biff's only a little taller than you and a bit lankier (though he's a colossus by elf standards) but he's kicked your arse so many times that you meekly do what he says. He gives you a nasty grin as you slouch over to him.

"Hey Bastard! Anybody home?" he says brusquely, rapping your forehead with his knuckles several times as though it was a door, "Think, Bastard, think! Do you realise what would have happened if we were whimsyflicking while you were sneaking up on us?"

You probably don't. His goons laugh at your confusion. You've never hated this guy as much as you do now.

"Remember, Bastard, think elf and safety! Now get out of here or I'll throw you out."

You clench your fists

If it's time to biff Biff, turn to 1126. If you want to do whatever Biff is bullying you to do, as always, then turn to 1494 to move on.

1480

It's only a half truth, but you're only a half elf so it all adds up. You inform him that ye be, you mean you are, a man.

"Welcome to Brunnenfeld", he says, and lets you pass by into the busy town square just behind the gate.

Turn to 16.

1481

You let the mace do its thing. Before the lich can grab his phylacteries you swing down hard, shattering the bony arm, and then slam the weapon into the sinister glowing lanterns on the back-swing. The blow shatters them instantly, spraying the walls with broken glass and metal splinters. The souls wail as they're freed, vanishing upwards through the ceiling.

"Dark Gods damn it, I told the ghouls to get rid of that cursed mace. Can't find good help anywhere these days", whines the lich.

Equally furious at you and his incompetent staff, the lich tries to cast something nasty at you from the tub. Since his life forces are draining away the spell fizzles out nearly harmlessly, merely turning your hair green instead of scouring all the flesh from your bones. You raise the mace to finish the monster off but he screams and leaps naked from the tub, using his final act on this earth to drag you into the grave with it.

🔪**HARDMOD : DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 3 - TOUGHNESS 3**

Hardmod's dying but he hits like a charging bull. Each time you lose a round to Hardmod you lose an amount of EFFORT equal to the highest roll he got on his FIST dice. If that number is 4, 5, or 6 then Hardmod loses 1 FIST as the impact shatters the spell holding that arm together.

Should you be defeated here the enraged Lich will not spare you - you will share an admittedly sweet barrow with the ancient evil, but your adventure ends here. If you win then turn to 807.

1482

The only thing you can think of is getting out of here before any of the patrolling guards show up. You clamber aboard the driving board of the dray and whip the reins. The two dun work-horses strain at their harnesses and you're away with the cargo of mushrooms, leaving the farmer behind. Your steer the stolen cart out of the farm and down the dirt road heading south across the fields in front of Brunnenfeld.

After a few hours of very hard riding on an even harder seat you arrive with a horribly bruised bottom on the well-maintained paved highway heading to Bilgeton. The horses are exhausted from pulling the wagon all this way. Since you don't need the cart full of dung and mushrooms and you're not able to motivate the horses to go any further you ditch the thing before anyone comes after you looking for it Before you abandon the vehicle you give it a quick search and find a surprisingly huge bounty of 5 Guilders tucked under the driving post - add these to the Cash section of the Adventure Scroll.

After this brief delay you ditch the cart and walk on along the road towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 1455.

1483

Occupied with counting their coins, Sigbot and his men don't even bother returning your farewells. You continue your journey.

After a fairly long and uneventful stretch of travelling (mercifully excised from this tome to save on printing costs and to avoid further straining the reader's patience, but either way it's taken long enough to allow you to recuperate somewhat: restore 20 EFFORT) the road emerges from the woods at last and you finally see the great walls of Bilgeton in the distance. It's still at least half a day's ride away or twice as long on foot, but the end's in sight at long last! Still, before you lies a long and lonesome road.

Now, have you summoned a Shiny Demon into the world? If so turn to 1574. If not, turn to 897.

1484

You draw the dread sword Calibur and charge at the dragon. The blade glows with an unearthly light and emits a strange singing sound as you bravely and/or foolishly charge forward. The dragon's eyes open wide in shock as it realises - too late - the danger it's in.

Calibur was a sword once wielded by the legendary wizard Merlin which was bestowed on him by the Woman of the Waterhole for the purpose of slaying dragons. Even with this weapon, Merlin couldn't defeat Bhad the Black, who was already ancient when the world was born. Merlin was disarmed and fled to Gobholme, and Bhad hurled the weapon deep into the Mist Steppes where no one would ever find it. It lay in the cold, wet air of the frozen tundra, partly embedded in the rock it landed on, and there it rusted for hundreds of years until the Spectre, a family franchise hero who had sworn to defend the lands to the north of the map, found it and chucked it in his treasure room. And then you in turn found it and restored it to its former glory thanks to the Woman of the Waterhole.

Unware of all this exposition, you swing the enchanted sword at the dragon. The scales seem to melt before the humming blade and you pierce the dragon's heart in a single wild cut. Bhad dies without a sound, still staring in utter disbelief at its long existence coming to an end at the hands of a wretch like yourself.

With the dragon dead you're free to loot. Not relishing the thought of the hard hacking involved in getting the dragon's head off, you can instead retrieve the Dragon Balls for your grisly trophy needs if you like. Looking around the cavern you can take any or all: treasures worth 20 Guilders (which you may add to the Cash section your Adventure Scroll), a Full Harness of Steel Plate and a Palavan Army Knife. Make a note that you've slain the dragon and add 1 FIST for the unbearably swaggering airs you'll be sporting as a result of this exploit.

If you took but two items (including the cash) or less you're still able to haul away a little more. As you're picking over the treasures and the corpse you notice that behind the dragon's bulk is the entrance to an even darker section of cave - if you'd like to check it out turn to 1683. If you've taken more than two items or aren't interested in the cave you leave: turn to 1235.

1485

Humans always seem to enjoy a good queue, and you absently wonder if you're becoming more like them as you quietly join the end of this one and patiently wait your turn to get into the ball.

Evidently you're not all that similar to them after all because after just a few minutes of interminable waiting you begin to get all antsy. The nobles ahead of you won't stop gossiping about the minutiae of their fellow aristocrats' lives, the garden is infested with the same kind of mildly toxic stinging bilgebugs that plague the rest of the city, and most importantly you're bored out of your skull.

If you want to make a scene then turn to 1028. If you'd rather continue to respect your potential hosts by waiting patiently like a good human would then turn to 557.

1486

You free-associate some bullshit about how the magical lenses on the Soviet United Kingdom's magic missile amplifiers weren't camouflaged because the procedures for their deployment in Soviet territory didn't require them to be. This allowed them to be spotted easily by Palavan scryers when they turned their attention to Qu'ba. Although the camouflage issue seems obvious in retrospect it wasn't spotted because it wasn't addressed in Soviet United Kingdom procedures.

This insane gibberish, even weirder than what you spouted previously, deeply impresses the Malrog.

"HMMM. I SEE YOU ARE A MASTER SCHOLAR OF INTER-REGNAL RELATIONS. MY CURRENT TREATISE IS AS YET UNFINISHED BUT IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO SMASH YOU INTO A PASTE BEFORE I GET YOUR THOUGHTS ON IT. WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO COME BACK IN ABOUT A MILLENNIA, GIVE OR TAKE A CENTURY, AND WE CAN PICK UP FROM THERE?"

While you have no intention of ever coming back here, let alone waiting a thousand years for the privilege, you realise that refusal would probably lead to a grisly and instant death. You quickly assent and the Malrog bids you farewell before returning to its work.

Glad to be getting away unpulverized, you make your way over the flimsy rope bridge and through the exit on the other side of the abyss.

Turn to 1347.

1487

Biff quickly loses interest in you and goes back to arranging his gang's assault on the wagon. You sneak past them and continue onwards towards Bilgeton.

Once they're a safe distance behind you, you emerge from the forest and rejoin the road a little further down. This section of the Count's Road is paved and you make excellent time.

Turn to 614.

1488

The Bilge flows quite rapidly from the Big Rock Goblin Mountains and you find yourself swept along the river which enters that forest you saw earlier. Although the water's a bit smelly and contains an abnormal number of dead fish you reflect that it's probably better than enduring yet another tedious forest encounter. If you're worried about Radabastard's wrath you'll be pleased to know that the river is wide enough that drifting down it doesn't count as entering a forest!

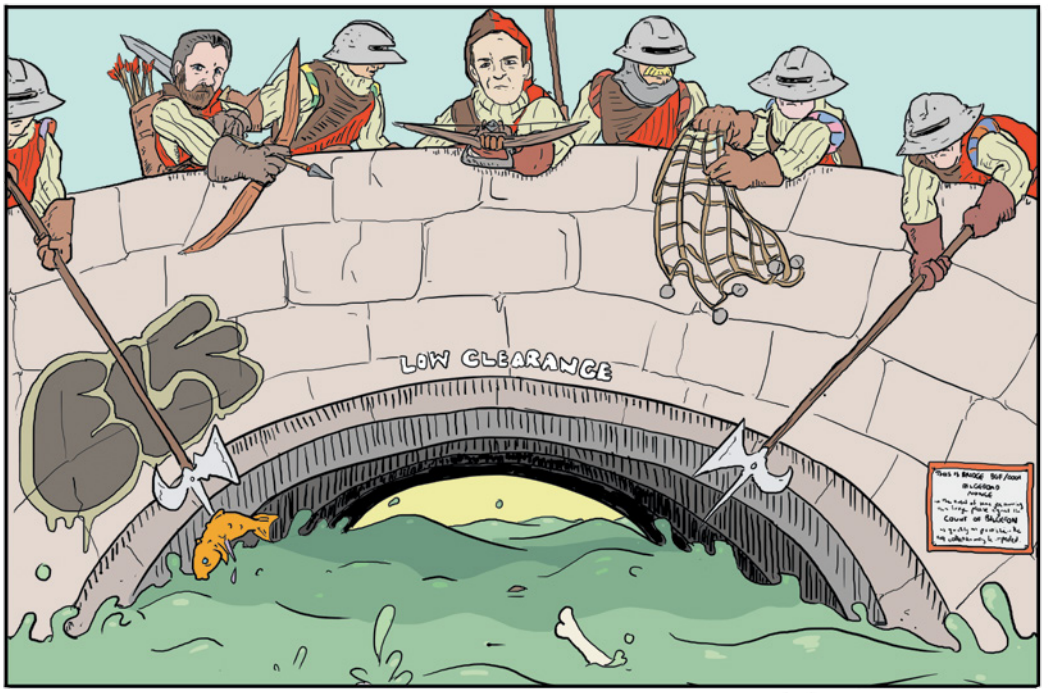
The trees going by along the banks look weird, stunted and slimy but that doesn't detract from the hypnotic effect of watching them as you sail past and you soon drift off to sleep. If you're riding the Glorious Vessel or Drop Kick you may restore 10 EFFORT from this nap, otherwise you're too soggy to really enjoy your sleep and regain no EFFORT. In either case if you're under the effects of booze, potions or other temporary impediments to sobriety then remove these now.

1489

After a couple hours of snoozing you wake to the sound of rude shouting. You've emerged from the forest and are passing right in front of a small human town! Looming high above you in a watch tower on the river bank, a human guard is shouting for nets and bowmen. Not far downstream of you is a bridge - steel-helmeted guards with crossbows and rope nets are rushing there now, but you might be able to make it underneath ahead of them if you try for it...

AN EFFORT: DIFFICULTY 12

If you manage it then turn to 1661. If you fail then turn to 1165.



1489

Otto waves your skeleton caravan through the gates.

"Wait right here. I needs must consult The Almanac of Palavan and Surrounding Realms Sovereign and Noble Houses, Anno MCMLXXXIII. It's located at the gatehouse at the Noble Gate - you know, where it might come in useful. I'll be right back".

Since several other guards are watching you closely there is little you can do other than wave as your payday chitters a farewell and rolls in through the gates. For a while you hope to be able to catch up before it reaches the union office but as the minutes stretch into an hour you realise that Otto has double-crossed you. Instead of checking on your noble heritage, the crook has stolen your caravan and is most likely collecting your pay after all your hard work!

Grumbling, you try to ride in through the gates but the guards cross their halberds in your path and fix you with some very severe glares. You'll have to find some other way in!

Turn to 681.

1490

You look to the Pole for help.

“Him we have nary a problem with”, says the guard, waving Karol in through the gate. “His kind be welcome here.”

The 10-Foot Pole looks at you and shrugs. “Cóż, myślę, że to jest pożegnanie.” he jabbers in that unintelligble gibberish of his.

As he walks through the gates and out of your life he says, “Jeśli pójdziesz do Bilgeton mnie znaleźć w ‘Dribbling Wand’.” Remove the 10-Foot Pole from your Adventure Scroll.

Feeling betrayed and alone you begin to trudge through the plains south of Brunnenfeld. Turn to 372.

1491

You’re worried that this will only work if the rest of the band are half-human half-something else. Maybe you can find a half-goblin somewhere or get a taurcent on the tabor or something...

Turn to 1747.

1492

Yielding to temptation you pick up the mace. Hoisting it free of the dirt you find it’s surprisingly light and extremely well-balanced. It’s also surprisingly clean and free of corrosion despite having lain in a pit for gods know how long. In fact, it feels like it might be magical - a feeling which is confirmed when the mace explicitly tells you to head into the barrow, promising brave deeds and a glorious death. While you don’t feel particularly brave or suicidal, you’re not able to overcome the suggestive power of the mace and your grip tightens on its hilt. It points itself towards the dark entrance of the barrow, bragging directly into your brain as you follow along behind it.

You’ve picked up the Crowing Club - add this to your Adventure Scroll as Equipment, removing any other weapon you have equipped. You quickly realise that this item is cursed, meaning that you can’t drop it until the text says so.

The mace begins to glow as you enter the barrow, softly but still brightly enough to see a few feet ahead of you. This is fortunate because you run into a trio of skeletons hanging out in the hallway at the bottom of the stairs. Before you can even cower or beg for mercy the mace almost swings itself at the unlucky undead!

🔪**SKELETRIO : DIFFICULTY 11**

If you defeat these fragile adversaries then turn to 1781. If not then turn to 1268.

1493

You've heard stories about the Mist Steppes - anything could be lurking in those ruins, from ants (giant) to zombies. Although sleeping rough is by no means safe or in any way comfortable it beats sleeping in a monster lair or, worse, crawling back to Jeff and begging forgiveness. You pull up a patch of tall steppe grass and lie down in the mists.

You wake late the next morning (though still early by your standards) absolutely sodden with dew but otherwise unharmed. It wasn't the most restful sleep - aside from being freezing cold and uncomfortable all night you were bothered by dreams of a glowing ball of light dancing before your face, trying to lure you to a terrible fate. Surely the magic of the Mist Steppes is just messing with your mind? You shake off the ominous feeling of this dream along with the dew but still feel tired. Restore just 10 EFFORT from this sleep and turn to 22 as you continue on into the mists, leaving the town and your bad night's sleep behind you.

1494

You go to walk past Biff but he grabs you by the shirt collar.

"Not that way, Bastard", he growls, "That way". He spins you around to face the woods. His goons laugh.

If you've had more than enough of this jerk then you can hit him - turn to 1126. Otherwise you calmly run screaming and crying into the woods, weeping and gnashing your teeth while Biff's gang has a final good laugh at you - turn to 785.

1495

You warble a pitiful war-cry and rush the guards, an act that earns you the butt of a halberd in the teeth. No matter how brave you are all of a sudden, you're no match for even one armed and experienced fighter who's seen you coming, let alone a bunch of them. Having learned this lesson the hard way, you flop to the ground to the sound of the guards' laughter. You're pretty badly hurt, a fact which doesn't stop the guards trussing you up in irons and whacking your head against the roof of the prison wagon as they shove you in through the door. You lay on the dirty floor of the iron-barred cart groaning as they lock the cage shut behind you.

The injury and humiliation has really dented your pride. Lose 1 ÉLAN and turn to 227.

1496

With the occupant out of the way there's nothing stopping you from looting the dwelling. Regrettably though it's as wretched on the inside as it is on the outside, consisting of nothing more than a dead fireplace cut into the boulder and a filthy bedroll. You find a deck of dogeared Marked Cards - the occupant probably used them for entertainment in this otherwise miserably spare hovel - and a solid Cast Iron Skillet resting on the burned-out ashes of the fire. You can take one, both or neither of these items (make the necessary adjustments on your Adventure Scroll) before moving on - turn to 395.

1497

The Dribbling Wand is the place to go for the thrifty drunk who isn't concerned about the taste of the watered-down swill they're imbibing, nor the reasonably high probability that they will spend a good chunk of their evening picking their teeth out of the gaps between the floorboards. You'll fit right in.

It's a raucous establishment located right next to the docks on the seedy side of town and you can hear it and smell it long before you can see it. Ignoring the bouncer, a paralytically drunk rock troll who is leaning against the wall snoring loudly, you slide in through the saloon doors. Inside it's a dingy hall with rough wooden floors, lots of closely set tables already crammed with various rough looking people and even a couple of living skeletons who no one seems to be unduly bothered by. There's a bar, where a heavily-scarred, one-eyed human bartender is grudgingly serving drinks. Behind him a small door opens and closes as nobolds and more humans in floppy white hats bring out trays of hot...food, you think, though you're hard pressed to consider something that looks like that food. There's a stage at the back of the room from which a colourful fool is attempting to amuse the crowd with merry japes but is largely being ignored. Every so often a tankard sails through the air towards him which he usually, but not always, ducks.

All this keeps you entertained until you manage to reach the crowded bar and get the bartender's attention. "Fight's not on until this evening, but everyone's getting warmed up", he yells over the din. "Before you ask, there's no rooms - need them for reattaching the bits of the boxers that fall off. So, what'll it be?"

Just as you're about to answer a brawl breaks out behind you and you watch as the fool you saw earlier is dragged off stage and mercilessly pummelled by one of the other patrons before being given the bum's rush out through the kitchen door.

"Like I said, warmed up", says the bartender, apparently unconcerned. "So, what are you having?"

If you're here to drink then turn to 689. If you're here to fight then turn to 12. If you've got a band and you're here to find a gig turn to 271. If you're here looking for someone who might have left you earlier then you know which page you should turn to.

1498

You exhort the skeletons to fight, to stand up for their hard-won freedoms and to throw off the shackles of human oppression before screaming a mighty war cry and rushing towards the guards.

Unfortunately for you the skeletons don't have your back - fighting human militiamen is a completely different prospect from defending themselves from elfen raiders, plus they're not interested in becoming outlawed from a city because you're too cheap to pay the road taxes. As a result you charge on alone and before you even get to swing at the guards you receive a punch on the nose from a mailed fist. You go down with tears streaming from your eyes and blood leaking from your nose. Lose 5 EFFORT.

Before you can pick yourself up you're hauled to your feet by the guards. Your hands are wrenched behind your back and your wrists clapped in irons. After a light beating you're dragged into a barred prison wagon. The skeletons watch as the guards hitch a horse up to the cart and drive it off. You're going to Bilgeton, though not in the way you planned! Make a note that you failed Aggie and turn to 227.

1499

You're used to the fists of elfish bullies and (when he caught you rubbing his toothbrush on your taint) the buckle of Jeff's belt, but this guy is something else altogether. While he's appears to be a worthless fop he's actually pretty lethal with that blade of his, and he easily parries your wild and clumsy attacks before effortlessly turning the blade and cutting you down with a vicious slash across the abdomen. Leaving you to die he moves on to assist his comrades.

You lie on the ground bleeding profusely and can do nothing more than whimper and moan as the attackers hack down the remaining lumberjacks, slice the reverse-taurcent into ribbons and then wander around the campsite stealing everything of value. With frightening efficiency that would almost rival an Aelfsburg lorewarden they strip the site bare and vanish, leading the workhorses away.

Luckily you're just a huge wuss and it turns out you've only sustained a painful flesh wound. It'll be really difficult to do sit-ups for a while (lose 1 ÉLAN) but otherwise shouldn't kill you. Once you're sure everyone's gone you painfully push yourself to your feet and take a look around. There's nothing left of value but you hear a noise from the trees and see one of the workhorses returning to the campsite - your attackers must have released it since the mangy, swaybacked beast is probably worth less than it costs to feed. Still, it beats the hells out of walking: putting your dislike of horses aside for now, you mount up. The animal isn't used to being ridden - it's been pulling carts all its life - but it's too knackered to dislodge you and despite your inexperience you manage to seize its reins and get it to go the way you want. Soon you're coasting out of the woods and across the Brunnenfeld Plains at a good canter and after only a couple of hours jostling in the saddle you arrive at the Count's Road heading towards Bilgeton. You whip the reins again and gallop off east along the paved highway towards the big smoke!

Add the Clapped-Out Old Nag to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1455.

1500

The skeleton collapses again. You're pretty sure you know what's going to happen next, though if you string this fight out something interesting might potentially occur.

If you want to wait around then turn to 3. If you'd prefer to get out of here then you make a break for it before anything else turns up: turn to 1424.

1501

You hand over the Guilders (deduct 10 Guilders from the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll). Otto takes on an expression of deep regret, probably calculating how much more he could have charged you. Still, he honours his side of the deal by presenting you with a Residency Scroll which you may record on your Adventure Scroll in ink (you will be allowed access through the Trader's Gate without a fuss in any future adventures, and from now on you will start each new game with this item) before showing you in through the gates. The peasants mutter as you cut ahead but they don't have several weeks' wages to throw away so their mutterings are of no import. Moments later you're inside!

Turn to 717.

1502

Ignoring the road leading to the authorised entrance you roll straight to the main gates, a passage reserved for the nobility and military. Nothing much happens as you jitter down the banner-lined, well-maintained road until you're in bow range of the gates, at which point a guard appears atop the walls. It seems they've seen you coming.

"You! Wrong entrance! Go around to the Trader's Gate!" yells a guard, his helmeted head shining in the sunlight. You try to chitter a reply but he's having none of it. With a final instruction to piss off he disappears back over the walls, leaving you out here on your own.

You chatter out a sigh and begin to go back the way you came when a thought strikes you. When you were at the crossroad before you saw the River Bilge cutting through the middle of the city - perhaps there's a way in for you via the water? As soon as you've put some distance between yourself and the city walls you strike out north and soon are standing at the bank of the River Bilge, already a disgusting, polluted sludge even before it reaches the great human city.

Do you want to jump into this revolting stream in an attempt to get into Bilgeton? If so then turn to 1309. If this all seems a bit risky you can retrace your steps to the crossroad and attempt to enter via the Trader's Gate as instructed by turning to 678.

1503

Perhaps hoping for some extra pay if you spin a sad enough tale about your defeat and the total destruction of the skeleton caravan on the road to Bilgeton, you begin to lay your story on the necromancer. He goes from a blue-white to bright red as he processes what you're telling him.

"So that's why the caravan never arrived! It was you! You stole the money and let them all be destroyed! All those workers... gone! I oughta... I oughta..." he sputters, waving his staff around as if casting a spell. Luckily for you necromantic constitutions aren't all that good and a life of studying tomes all night is terrible for blood pressure. You've angered the agent right into a major heart attack! As he collapses dying to the ground you consider prying his sweet staff out of his fingers but his white-knuckled grip is too tight to easily work loose. You settle for stealing a pouch containing 5 Guilders before legging it, exiting the building just as a patrol of guards are arriving to see what the fuss is about. You slip away back into the market without further incident.

Add the extra cash to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 244.

1504

Did you come here after sneaking the Brownies into town? If so turn to 612. If not, turn to 210.

1505

The guards really just wanted their money so they're a bit annoyed to see you picking up the cards again, but so what. You've got the Mark firmly in your sights. Count Hugues of Bilgeton smiles confidently as he holds his cards in front of him. You wonder what he's up to.

HIGHER STAKES - DIFFICULTY 3 - FISTS 1

Each time you lose a round the DIFFICULTY increases by 1.

If you win turn to 181. Should you lose then turn to 368.

1506

The beggar gives you a sound thrashing but, being a better man than you (don't be so hard on yourself, you're only a half man after all) he doesn't rob you or really stick the boot in once you start rolling around on the ground, begging for your life. He leaves you sobbing in the street and finds somewhere less infested with you to panhandle. If you have any Championship Belts remove them from your Adventure Scroll: enough people saw the Jabbing Jabroni take a shameful thrashing to render your titles meaningless. Likewise you will have lost the Sweet Belt if you had it - it's ashamed to be seen with you. At least while you're down there you find your twig, so restore 5 Elfen Leaves to your Adventure Scroll.

Once you're sure the mean old bum's moved on, you get up, dust yourself off and carry on along the road. Turn to 1019.

1507

Disdaining to make an honest elf of yourself or an honest bat out of her, you nobly scoop up all your things and sneak out of the cave as soon as your lover turns her back on you, making sure to scoop up the Full Harness of Steel Plate and Knightly Shield you saw in the previous page's illustration (add these to your Adventure Scroll). You stop to put your clothes back on only after you've put a respectable distance between yourself and what you've done.

Following the bat lady's directions, you could make your way back to the road to Bilgeton by cutting South through the forest via the Glade of Pixies. Turn to 520 if you want to do this. If you'd rather not encounter pixies you could avoid them by ignoring the road and instead traversing the Big Rock Goblin Mountains in the east. Turn to 453 to give this a shot.

1508

After an eternity of being dragged down pitch black, winding tunnels by this bastard of an ant you are finally flung into the Queen's chamber. The Queen of Them! sits before you, her huge bloated carapace illuminated by a swarm of nasty, glowing fairies who have formed some kind of parasitic relationship with the monster, perhaps cleaning its shell in return for leftovers. The Them! who brought you here releases you as the Queen bends forward to regard you, leaning over her massively distended abdomen to bring her glittering compound eyes before yours. Her head alone is nearly as big as the warrior Them! who now shrinks away as the Queen opens her mandibles wide, revealing a foul, acid-dribbling mouth.

With the warrior behind you and the Queen right in your face you're pretty much screwed. Unless you have the Ant-Rid, that is. If you have Ant-Rid then turn to 1350. Should you lack this item then you're out of luck - the Queen snaps her mandibles shut and makes an unpleasant-tasting, stringy meal of you. That's more than you ever made of yourself in Elfsdale Downs so you can count this run as a success I suppose.

1509

You (incorrectly) consider yourself a patient and tolerant kind of half elf, but after a long, exhausting and shameful day followed by an all-night slog through some gods-forsaken swamp looking for a squalid pixie den trying to pass itself off as some kind of "glade" - well, this painfully obvious attempt to drug you is the last straw. You know for a fact (or you would, if you read that indispensable guide to the world of Two-Fisted Fantasy, the Bestiary - available at all good book stores now!) that pixies aren't the magical fairies depicted in the propaganda which comes out of the pixie press. They're not helpful little sprites who reside in a mythical land that requires an innocent, child-like or altered mental state to perceive: they're greasy, manipulative little creeps that drug travellers and force them to perform free construction work in their grim little back-road commuter hamlets.

Work?! WORK? Jeff would like that, wouldn't he, that evil, home-wrecking prick! You were onto a pretty sweet deal, sitting in your room all day reading choose your own adventure books and scrying pretty girls through the scrying orb - and then he came along and RUINED EVERYTHING! GET A JOB, JEFF? YOU'RE NOT EVEN MY DAD!!!

At some point this internal monologue becomes loudly external, and you leap up onto the tree stump, bellowing in rage. The pixies, terrified by your wrath, try to flee but in their panic to get back to the road to their (presumably near-by) "glade" they run into one another, trip each other up and generally make their location obvious. Bending down, you grab the potion and wing it at the source of the crashing, high-pitched swearing and shouting. It flies into the fog and shatters somewhere out of sight, but from the pitch of the screams it sounds like you got a few of the little pricks.

You leap from the stump, striding forward swiftly through the mist now that you know where the path is. You slay pixie after pixie - some covered in potion and glass shards, screaming about snakes and clawing at their eyes, others fallen and begging for mercy. Some die fleeing, their backs turned to you. One even turns and tries to fight:

🔪**TERRIFIED PIXIE: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 1**

Each time you lose against this opponent more pixies come to its aid! Every time you lose a round of combat it gains 1 TOUGHNESS.

If you crush this pitiful attempt to withstand your fury, turn to 1316.
If you're overwhelmed by the regrouping pixies and completely lose your cool turn to 611.

1510

Unfortunately for you a scrawny, naked, semi-insane half elf is no match whatsoever for a bunch of armed guards, even those of the rusticated variety found outside the big human towns. Your frenzied charge earns you a severe beat down (lose 5 EFFORT) before one of the guards knocks you senseless with a blow from the pommel of his short sword. You are clapped in irons and hurled into the back of an iron-barred jail wagon, ready to be hauled off to Bilgeton whenever the guards have the time.

Turn to 227.

1511

The dragon makes it all the way across Bilgeton before it finally breaths its last and crashes, slamming with unbelievable force into the side of the barracks just on the inside of the eastern walls. Bhad died happy knowing you were holding on until the bitter end, but regrettably for you the end is indeed bitter. The collision is hard enough to knock down the heavy stone wall of the barracks and to snap every bone in the front half of the dragon's body. Not being made of the kind of stern stuff that walls and dragons are made of, you fare even more poorly. The people of Bilgeton will find bits of you and your possessions scattered around the eastern side of town for weeks to come, but your adventure ends here.

1512

Your will to live is not equal to the ghoul's will to un-live it's undeath to the fullest. The ghoul, no longer needing to contain its appetite for fresh produce, rips something vital out of you and chows down on it to sate its hunger. While it's still chewing on your gizzard it stuffs your corpse into its grave-nest for later consumption.

Ghouls, while looking a little like zombies, differ from them in a couple of key ways. One of these is that their bite doesn't make you undead like them but just regular-type dead. While this means that your corpse won't continue to roam the land preying on the flesh of the living, it also means that your adventure ends here.

1513

Whatever was stabbing into you pushes harder. It's blunt but the pressure is strong enough to really hurt and you feel the air being constricted out of you as you snore away. Lose 5 EFFORT.

Your dreams of towers and mattresses are replaced with the near-certainty that you're being dragged into your tomb by a huge bony hand. If it's time to wake up then turn to 1809. If you'd like to hit the snooze button and get a few more minutes of shuteye then turn to 786.

1514

Never one to pass up an opportunity to berate someone, you haughtily inform the guard that you're on a mission from Sir Witold and that unless the guard lets you pass the lord of Brunnenfeld will soon hear about all the impertinence you've had to put up with. The very idea that diplomatic relations between the town of Brunnenfeld and the Big Rock Goblins could stand to suffer because of one stupid guard! Ludicrous!

Are you currently wearing the Dapper Garb that Witold gave you? If not then turn to 1040. Bear in mind that you may not wear it with any armour - if you are doing so then you don't count as wearing the Dapper Garb!

If you are properly attired for a diplomatic mission the guard mutters his apologies and bites his tongue as you continue to lambast him at length. Eventually your tongue grows tired so you leave him alone and continue on your quest: turn to 395.

1515

If you're riding in comfort on the Glorious Vessel or the Drop Kick then your approach is pretty obvious: turn to 1069.

Otherwise, since you look like yet another drowned hobo, the watchmen up on the arch don't spot you and you make it to the grate unmolested. You don't quite make it to the grate, in fact - a huge pile of wooden crap and river slime has accumulated against the bars. You come to a stop, another addition to the worthless pile of debris that never quite made it to the metropolis.

You don't arrive completely unnoticed however - a trio of seedy-looking rogues spotted you joining the heap and now a grinning elf, a horrid and partly decayed skeleton warrior and a bearded one-armed human are wading into the river with knives drawn. Whenever they're not murdering and robbing travellers these noble crooks make their crust picking through the scum that washes up against the Bilge barriers. You'd be two birds with one stone for these guys!

Panicking, you clamber over the heap and try to cram yourself through the bars before the thieves can wade over to you and slice you open. It's a narrow squeeze but perhaps with your lithe half elfish frame you can just get through - if you suck your gut in:

TIGHT SQUEEZE: DIFFICULTY 10

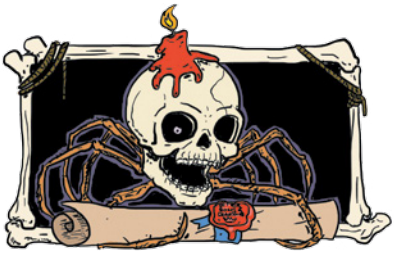
Add 1 to the difficulty for every item that you have equipped or in your inventory. You may discard (but not use) items now to reduce this penalty - delete them from your Adventure Scroll. This must be done before you roll to see if you pass the Hassle.

If you succeed then turn to 284. If you fail then you manage to become helplessly stuck between the bars. No matter how much you struggle and suck in your gut you can't dislodge yourself, and you're easy prey for the murdering robbers who are coming to murder and rob you right now as you read this book. Your adventure ends here.

1516

As evidenced by the dead dragon, manticore venom is dangerous stuff. While clumsily (yet gleefully) filleting the dragon you splash an awful lot of its blood and gore on you. Your first warning comes a few minutes into your impromptu autopsy when the skin on your face and hands which has been coated with dragon blood starts to burn uncomfortably.

Do you have a healthy poultice? If so turn to 442. Otherwise you might have to swig a potion and hope for the best - turn to 818. Otherwise you're doomed - although you've only absorbed a fraction as much of the venom as the dragon did, you're less than a fraction of the dragon's size and have taken a dose many times above the lethal level. Having slain the dragon and found the treasure, your adventure ends here.



DIPLOMA
OF MEDICINE
JEFF THE ELF
I ♥ ELF

1517

The 10-Foot Pole is a fast runner with his long legs but you're no slouch either when you've got a dragon breathing down your neck. You catch up with Karol about a mile south of the Alp, miraculously unburned. Fortunately the dragon wasn't inclined to leave its lair so neither of you die horribly today.

"Wkurwiasz mnie", says the Pole when you finally catch him, "Przestań robić głupie rzeczy. W każdym razie, Bilgeton jest w ten sposób. Chodźmy".

You don't know what any of this gibberish means so you assume he's glad to see you alive and well. Together you continue trekking towards the south.

Were you sent to the Alp on a mission from the Goblin King? If so turn to 114. If not then turn to 889.

1518

Karol Myśliwiec, the famed Polish Egyptologist, deeply resents being used in this way but he recognises when he's in a tight spot. Using the long Pole to shove your way along the river floor you're able to give your home-made vessel an extra boost which allows you to pass right under the bridge and through to the other side before the guards are in position to chuck their nets down on you. They unsling their crossbows but the 10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole and the river's current has pushed you well and truly out of range long before they've even strung a bolt into their weapons. Soon the river curves around and the hostile little town is left far out of sight behind you.

Turn to 1456.

1519

That eye you ate earlier hasn't been sitting well with you - in fact, it's given you a vicious case of food poisoning and the exertions of the fight have jostled everything up to the surface. You open your mouth and eject a pressurised and foul-smelling stream of oily vomit which coats you, the stage, your opponent and much of the crowd in the contents of your stomach. Fistface, who was still trying to get close enough to you to land a punch, slips over on a putrid patch of your yak and topples over backwards. The ground's a long way down for an eight-foot tall monster - the ogre's head bounces off the floor and his eyes go cold. He's been knocked completely senseless. You are the winner!

As you're wiping the sick from your mouth the bartender carefully retrieves the vomit-covered belt from around your fallen opponent's waist and gingerly presents it to you. The part of the crowd that isn't retching boos, but the bartender still lifts your arm in victory,

"I don't think there's anything in the rules about whatever happened here, so the Jabbing Jabroni is the new heavyweight champion of Bilgeton!" he says to a mix of retching, booing and polite applause.

Now that you're the greatest pugilist in Bilgeton you can probably coast on this victory for the rest of your life if you want - turn to 398 to do this. Otherwise you'd better get out of here before any of the local toughs get the bright idea of challenging you for your tittle. Pausing only to collect the purse of 5 Guilders and fasten your Bilgeton Championship Belt, you make a break for the exit. You put the Dribbling Wand behind you and try to work out where to go next.

Turn to 827.

1520

After a tough couple of fights the ground is scattered with eagle feathers and various eagle parts. Well, that could have gone more smoothly but at least you're alive and there's nothing stopping you from reaching the nest at the top of the spire. Buoyed by your victory and no longer worried about being dive-bombed by birds you can now attempt the strenuous climb up to see what they have in that nest:

UP THE SPIRE : DIFFICULTY 10

If you succeed then turn to 1696. Otherwise you're too tired to make the climb or can't really be bothered. Instead you spend a little while looting the bird carcasses, gathering up whatever parts you think might be useful. Add the Eagle Eye to the Junk section and 50 Eagle Feathers to the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll. Once you're done gathering up your grisly loot you continue your journey, leaving the spire behind. Turn to 190.

1521

The snail manages to crawl on top of you, coating you from head to toe in a corrosive digestive slime before proceeding to absorb you.

Fortunately this snail has already eaten a hearty meal in the last week and ,by the time it's devoured all your clothes, your currency and all your possessions along with a layer or two of your skin, it's full. Unable to take another bite it spits you out, still smoking, back onto the ground. You watch the horrible monster slime away before you stagger painfully to your feet, your raw skin smarting with every movement as the ragged remnants of your clothes brush against you.

Remove all items and cash from your inventory. Your ordeal has cost you 1 ÉLAN and 10 maximum EFFORT. Make a note that you're naked as nothing but a few tattered rags and careful hand placement preserves your modesty. Since you're going to be picking the corrosive Snail Slime out of your various orifices you may as well add that to your Adventure Scroll as your sole remaining possession.

Although the snail's gone, you don't want to spend another second out here. You head off towards the road, wincing as you brush against leaves and branches on the way out of the forest.

Turn to 1609.

1522

He means to sacrifice you to his dark lords! While you're sure you'd make an attractive votive offering you're in no mood to die for religious reasons, or any other. Quickly drawing your weapon (or clenching your fist extra hard) you lunge right for the priest and smite him a dreadful blow right in the side of the head. The priest's eyes roll back in his skull and he drops the worthless steak knife he was threatening you with on the table as his talons go slack. You may quickly pocket the Worthless Steak Knife if you want before turning to 1788.

1523

Desperate for approval, you attempt to down the bubbling blue brew. Given that it's a horribly high-proof troll alcohol made by distilling pebbles and flavoured with a hefty serving of cobalt it goes down surprisingly easy. Or at least the first half of the bottle does, after which you succumb to alcohol and heavy metal poisoning and collapse into a pile of bottles to the raucous booming laughter of the rock trolls.

You awaken some hours later with a hammering headache, a ringing in your ears and a horrible pain in your chest. You're lying in a heap of broken stone bottles at the bottom of the mesa. You guess you were tossed down here by the trolls, who are still at it - every so often a bottle sails through the air overhead and smashes somewhere nearby. Somehow you've avoided being hit while you've been out but you can't stay where you are. Staggering to your feet, though, everything just seems wrong. You think the trollbräu might have permanently hurt you. None of your limbs work like they should, your fingers are tingling, and the ringing in your ears and pain in your chest just won't quit. Lose 1 current and maximum ÉLAN permanently - this injury cannot be restored by any means of healing. If you're still alive, will you struggle back up to the top of the mesa and confront the trolls (turn to 464) or shuffle off (turn to 990)?

1524

You slide down, down, down - and just in time! The door bursts off its hinges and the guards rush in as you slither right down the s-bend and into the pitch darkness of the pit. Although you're beginning to suspect this isn't the entrance to the Thieves' Guild after all, at least it's going somewhere. Seconds later you're ejected from the cramped tunnel and find yourself sailing through the air, but before you can get your bearings you splash down into some deep, fetid water which doesn't smell or taste a lot better than the goop lining that tunnel you just emerged from. You paddle frantically to the surface, gasping for breath.

Turn to 66.

1525

After a long walk through a tunnel which is vibrating hard enough to cause rocks to fall from the ceiling, you arrive at a dead end. As you make your way back to the north you take a whack to the head from a large falling stone - roll a die and subtract that amount from your EFFORT.

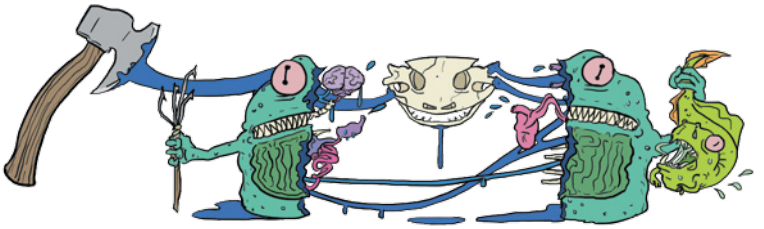
If you're still alive turn to 266 and choose some other way to go.

1526

You boldly set off into the unknown lands at the edge of the map. You walk for what feels like an eternity along the rutted dirt road, the warm afternoon sun beating down on your face as it slowly arcs through the endless western skies. It's kind of an eerie place - after spending your whole life surrounded by trees in a forest clearing you're getting vertigo under the wide-open skies of the plains. As you trek along, the dirt road improves and becomes paved with cobblestones. They look suspiciously like the stones that all the towers of Elfsdale Downs are constructed from. Ignoring this coincidence, you trudge on.

Your legs are beginning to ache and you're starting to repent of your adventurous spirit when you see the shimmering image of a caravan on the horizon. You freeze in the middle of the road like a deer in the torchlights - could these be the cruel humans who you've been raised from birth to fear?

If you've got the Scrying Orb and you haven't already wasted its charges you've got time to check into who these people might be before they arrive - turn to 622.
If you overcome your fear and hail these travellers, whoever they are, then turn to 64.
If you just want to find somewhere to hide then turn to 893.



1527

If you already had the 10-Foot Pole with you turn back at once! Otherwise read on:

Karol seems to like greasy and disrespectable places - after all, he spent a lot of time loitering around Elfsdale Downs - so the Dribbling Wand is really his kind of haunt. You have a look around for him and are about to give up when you don't spot him - after all, where's a 10-Foot tall human going to hide? - but then as if by some miracle you see a ludicrously tall, cloaked figure bent over almost double in a booth under the dark staircase leading up to the rooms. At first it seems he's avoiding your gaze by pulling his hood down over his face and deliberately ignoring you, but you rap on his table until he's forced to acknowledge you.

"Wspaniały. To znowu ty. Nie sądziłem, że pójdziesz tak daleko lub przyjdziesz po mnie w tym melina. Może czytałeś 'Zagrajmy w Miecz Bastarda Elfa'", he mutters. "Napij się, jeśli musisz. Co dalej??". He slides the bottle he's drinking across the table to you and you take a belt.

The 10-Foot Pole has rejoined you for the conclusion of this adventure! Add him to your Adventure Scroll once again as he follows you over to the bar.

Now if you're here to drink then turn to 719. If you're here for the fight then turn to 12. If you were just here to pick up your friend then you can leave without touching the sides of this wretched dive- turn to 827 to step outside.

1528

You don't get anywhere near the sword. The barbarian apparently sleeps with his eyes open because as soon as you step into the clearing he leaps to his feet, his blade already in his hands. He roars a barbarian battle cry and charges at you with frightening speed.

🔪**BATTLIN' AX - DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

Luckily he's above trying to kill as pathetic a creature as you but he keeps hitting you in such a way that causes possessions to tumble out of your backpack. Every time you lose a round to Battlin' Ax then you lose your choice of either a Meat or a Blue Pot. If you have neither then all losing a round to Battlin' Ax will cost you is a humiliating kick in the backside with a big blue boot. After three rounds if you wish to retreat then turn to 303.

If you defeat Battlin' Ax then turn to 1074.

1529

Following the trail of goo you soon begin to hear a godsawful din and see a light in the tunnel ahead - and not a moment too soon, because your lantern, flickering its last, runs out of fuel. You cast it aside and head on, and before long the tunnel widens into a massive cavern containing an entire subterranean village - the nobold town of Busted Hill, according to a sign which assures you of your welcome to this place, population 30. You step out of the tunnel and into the well-lit cavern, and then you notice it's open to the sky - the town is nothing more than a small collection of rustic hovels carved into the side of a large hill which has somehow fallen into the earth, probably thanks to some overzealous mining. The hill's pretty large - way too tall for a casual climb - but doesn't reach the top of the cavern by a long shot.

You're not completely certain this place was worth the time it took to walk here - aside from being inhabited by more of those frill-loving nobold creatures who mutter such incomprehensible inanities as "g'day" and "owsitgoin" as they wander into your field of view in the thoroughfare, there also doesn't appear to be a lot to do. Busted Hill's amenities include a church and a tavern ("The Deadset Doovalacky", whatever that means, which doubles as an inn and does triple and quadruple duty as a town hall and schoolhouse). Maybe you can get some directions out of this place there.

If you like you can visit the church by turning to 1539, or the tavern by turning to 458. Otherwise you can avoid contact with these lizards altogether and try to find your own way out of town by turning to 591.

1530

You stagger forward, heedless of the danger. Luckily the dwarf is an appalling shot and couldn't hit the broad side of a barn (or more importantly, a bastard elf) with her noisy weapon. Seeing that you're coming closer and closer regardless of her attempts to put you down, the dwarf throws her weapon to the ground and runs back to her wagon, accompanied by the rest. Frozen and exhausted, you moan at them to stop but they either don't hear you or aren't inclined to listen to what they reasonably assume is some kind of undead abomination - they climb aboard their wagon with an agility belying their stocky frames and charge away down the road to the south, panicked oxen straining at the harness.

Well, you're stuck walking but in their panic the dwarfs left their lunch and the strange weapon behind. Unfortunately without any ammunition it's little more than a heavy stick that you'd have to lug around, so you leave it. You console yourself by chowing down on the delicious picnic lunch the dwarfs also ditched. Restore up to 10 EFFORT and take a Tasty Burg if you'd like.

Finally feeling a bit warmer after your trek across the Mist Steppes you continue along the road towards Bilgeton. Turn to 1008.

1531

Finally it dawns on you: you've been had! Dejected, you trudge back the way you came. Lose 5 EFFORT. Eventually you rejoin the line - even further back from the gatehouse than before!

Soon your dejection is replaced once again by a feeling of crushing, utter boredom and contempt for the barely-sentient lumps patiently waiting ahead of you. If you don't get out of this line right now you're going to hit somebody!

If you want to try your luck with the wagons then turn to 586. If you're going to hit somebody then turn to 512

1532

You've had enough of this place with its snooty patrons, horrible migraine-inducing music and obnoxious bar staff. Instructing the snobby wizard to go fuck himself you turn around and storm out of the joint.

Turn to 827.

1533

The hulking owl buffets you with its wings and slashes at you with its talons until you're reduced to a huddled, weeping wreck of a half elf. Seeing that you're not going to be giving it any more trouble, it grabs you by a leg with its huge beak and drags you, limp and unresisting, through the forest like a rag doll.

After an extremely unpleasant journey through the woods, having banged your head against nearly every tree you've passed, the owl dumps you at its final destination - a ground nest (more of a hill with the top dug out, really) containing three incredible hulking owlets, each almost as big as you. The adult owl throws you violently into the nest and screeches to its young ones before stomping off into the night to find a main course for after the kids finish their stringy and terrified hors d'oeuvre. You're not even able to get up before the three owlets are on top of you, pecking and scratching and biting at you. You're in a tight spot!

If you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes and you didn't use it earlier then you find it useless here - they're too hungry! On the other hand If you have a Meat, a Giant Drumstick, a Tasty Burg or some other meat-based food item you can try to use it to placate these monsters - turn to 1387. Otherwise you're torn apart by these ravenous owlets who rudely wolf you down without even really tasting you. You are rapidly skeletonized and left piled in a corner of the nest where you serve as a conversation piece for many years to come.

1534

You cling on grimly, not trusting your sense of timing or your chances of surviving a fall from this height. Bhad might be emotionally unstable but is still the only thing between you and the ground. Misinterpreting your refusal to let go as a sign of commitment, the dragon's rage subsides.

"I'm sorry... so sorry.... I can be a bit crazy sometimes. I just... I ...", it sniffles. You suppress a groan at the prospect of another serve of dragon-sized emotions.

"I know. I'll make it up to you. I was only going to drop you off outside Bilgeton but I'll take you right in. We can go in together. I'll look after you..."

Before you can refuse the dragon banks hard left, over the devastation of Bilgeford and straight for the walls of Bilgeton. Unfortunately for the pair of you the Bilgeton town militia noticed the dragon setting fire to their toll town and isn't inclined to receive a visit from the scaly pest. As you're approaching the high walls you hear a shout. Looking down you see furtive movement on top of a corner tower as a team of guards winch and aim their heavy crossbows. Just as Bhad's shadow passes over the wall you hear a series of twangs and a swarm of bolts sail from the weapons. Though usually a heavy crossbow would only represent a minor threat to a dragon in flight, one of the guards gets lucky: a bolt punches right between a couple of scales on Bhad's relatively soft underbelly and tears into your ride's heart. The dragon lets out something between a scream and a roar and begins a rapid descent, partly gliding and partly falling, right into the streets of Bilgeton! You hold on tight, though you're beginning to have misgivings about your odds of making it in one piece as the dragon begins to fall faster and faster. Bhad is definitely unwell at the least - it's stopped talking to you. There's no hope it'll recover before it hits the ground.

If you'd like to jump off now that the dragon's below the height of the walls then turn to 1053. If you want to continue clinging on then turn to 1511.

1535

You start running your mouth, hoping that if you turn on the charm you'll avoid an unpleasant beating so early in the morning. This modest dream is quickly shattered as one of the guards brings the butt of his halberd down hard on your skull, plunging you into a black, dreamless sleep.

Turn to 1221.

1536

You flail desperately and just manage to manoeuvre into the hole just before the current drags you past. And just like that, down you go!

As the tunnel twists and turns and the rapidly-flowing water smashes your head and body into the roof and walls you have cause to reflect that your decision may have been foolhardy. Luckily it's over pretty soon:before your head is staved in you're dumped out into the calmer waters of Bilgeton's water purification chamber. Still, it was a rough ride- lose 5 EFFORT from the jostling.

If you're still ticking then turn to 66.

1537

You do what comes naturally when faced with certain (or even possible) extermination - you grovel on the floor like a worm. The dragon doesn't seem to be sure what to do with you as you weep and cry.

"THERE....there...." it roars uncertainly, smoke rising from its nostrils. "Stop crying. I... say, you remind me of...no. It couldn't be. You look too young... and yet.."

Sensing that you're not immediately about to die you wipe the tears from your eyes and stop snivelling. If you're on a mission from the Goblin King it might occur to you to mention it now. If so turn to 339. Otherwise read on:

"Oh, you're not a human. A half elf? Well... it could be..." the dragon continues. "Yes, you could be his son. That'd be interesting. Instead of dying, why don't you stay for dinner? It'd be far more pleasant than being scorched to a crisp, I bet".

If you want to wipe the snot off your face and take the dragon up on its offer then turn to 407. To refuse turn to 281.

1538

The equipment you see before you is mostly ex-service - simply made and somewhat battered from years of hacking and being hacked at. Despite that it's clearly superior to the flimsier elfish gear, at least for their intended purpose of hitting things. A sign board propped up in front of the wagon displays the prices. You skim over the ones that might be of interest to you:

Regular Shortsword: 2 Guilders
Knightly Shield: 5 Guilders
Cheap Halberd: 2 Guilders
Dented Helm: 1 Guilder
Soiled Gambeson: 2 Guilders
Dapper Garb: 5 Guilders
Heavy Crossbow: 6 Guilders
Full Harness of Steel Plate: 10 Guilders
Ballista: out of stock

The rough-looking guys don't seem inclined to haggle. If you'd like to ask where they're getting this stuff then turn to 1603. If you'd rather not ask these men any awkward questions then make whichever purchases that interest you and adjust your Adventure Scroll as needed.

With your browsing concluded, it's time to leave. Turn to 1483 if you bought anything and 423 if you did not.

1539

You approach the church - from the outside it looks a stone doorway sunk into the side of the hill with a noticeboard outside proclaiming it "The First Church of Hells". A bit of corrugated iron protrudes from the side of the hill, presumably either covering a gap in the roof of the church or providing some structural integrity but either way completing the rusticated look of the place. The stone door is covered in numerous sigils and carvings depicting demons conducting various demonic acts. Shoving the door open you find yourself in a small chamber which consists of nothing more than a few benches in rows in front of a small wooden table. The pedestrian scene is bathed in a menacing dull red light emitted by several oil lanterns with red-stained panes and several crudely carved statues of what you assume are nobold demons leer at you from the dark corners of the room, the flickering blood red light illuminating their sinister eyes, bifurcated tails and ridiculous frills.

If you've slain the priest already then turn to 587. Otherwise read on:

The padre, a nobold in a black cassock with even more impractical frills attached than on the nobold workmen you saw earlier, greets you as you come in. Or at least you think he does. You can't tell because of the language and the impenetrable accent.

"G'day cobber and welcome to the First Church of Hells. Don't come the raw prawn with me mate, what do you think we worship down under? What's your pleasure? Here for a gander or looking for a root? Tavern's best for that, next door, but you look like you could use a drink. Pull up a pew and let's have a natter".

With that the priest produces a bottle of deep brown firewater and a couple of metal cups from under the table. He gestures towards the benches. You guess he'd like you to take a seat.

If you'd like to do what he says then turn to 1246. On the other hand, if now seems like the opportune moment to attack for whatever reason you may have for making that decision then turn to 399. If you'd rather just leave you can rudely walk out and, once you're outside, head right next door to the tavern (turn to 458) or try to find some way out of this town without dealing with any more of these lizards by turning to 591.

1540

You pick up the book. It's warm to the touch and you could swear you can feel a pulse. Although it's somehow calling to you, invading your mind with thoughts of the treasures contained within, you're absolutely certain you shouldn't be messing with this thing. Still, loot's loot.

If you'd like to crack it open right now then turn to 573. If you can resist the urge then you can stuff it into your pack, though it'll cost you 1 EFFORT to do so. Add the Book of Unknowable Secrets to your Adventure Scroll. Note that every entry you turn to after this one will cost you 1 EFFORT until you open the thing!

With that accomplished you may either get out of here by turning to 1685, or you can go upstairs and confront the warlock by turning to 637.

1541

Simon does not take kindly to your continued attempts to be here. As the two lumberjacks tackle Briggins, who appears to be growing and changing somehow even as he's smashed to the ground, your formerly friendly host picks up a long axe handle and proceeds to try to brain you with it as a couple of his companions close in. You'd better beat him fast:

🔪**SIMON: DIFFICULTY 9 - FISTS 1**

If you're unable to defeat this opponent then you're driven back by a rain of precise and painful blows from the axe handle. You retreat into the wood before his buddies can get at you. Fortunately they show no signs of giving chase, being preoccupied with getting Briggins back under control. You get away before they seriously injure you. Turn to 1554.

If you succeed then Simon fails to run you off. You hold your ground: turn to 575.

1542

The Count smiles cheerfully.

"Very well, perhaps you wish to visit your tailor before you attend the ball. It will be held at the Countesses' new manor at the corner of Tent Avenue and Fort Lane. I hope to see you there. Guards, see the armiger back to the road". Perhaps you should make a note of these directions to the ball, should you wish to attend.

With that the Count turns back to his game which, unsurprisingly, he rapidly loses. As a couple of guards lead you back to the road you hear him cursing good-naturedly as his wife-to-be rakes her winnings across the picnic rug. Once you're up on the highway again the guards bid you good travels and return to their duties. For your part you resume your trudge towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 1445.

1543

Continuing uphill along Trader's Lane you encounter a filthy human beggar. He's sitting in a doorway, stretching out one hand for alms while clutching a loaf of bread in the other. You've seen this technique practiced in the very few elementary Grasswatching classes you attended back in the Academy, and you're fascinated to see humans copying elfen styles.

If you're feeling uncharacteristically generous and have the coin to spare you could place a Bilgeton Guilder in his palm - turn to 865.
If you're fresh out of Guilders you could instead give him a leaf or two of elfen cash, assuming you still have any - turn to 999.
Otherwise you bid this fine scumbag good day and continue your travels uphill - turn to 1019.

1544

While Rouge-Gorge is distracting the Merry Men with his stirring speech you find an opportunity to sneak off and find a safe hole to crouch in until the danger's over. Luckily the cemetery's full of holes where some undead monster obviously clawed its way out of the grave and into a ghastly half-life, so it's easy enough to find a decent pit to loiter in.

Pretty soon the Merry Men notice that the witch-killing prodigy has gone missing and that Rouge-Gorge is once again leading them into a dangerous lair or dungeon without even some flimsy half elf to back them up. Sick to the back teeth of the constant danger, high staff turnover, endless hiking and Rouge-Gorge's annoying habit of trousering the lion's share of the winnings they set upon the fop mid-speech and very quickly put an end to his quest to fill the market niche left behind by Tedbald of Bilgeford, the Knight Errant. After literally stripping Rouge-Gorge of anything that could conceivably be of any value the Merry Men take a desultory look around for you. They give up quickly: they're satisfied with the bounty that their former boss was carrying around and they're also a bit worried about hanging around an obviously haunted graveyard looking for a jerk carrying what amounts to pocket change once divvied up. The search aborted, they pause only to chuck Rouge-Gorge's dead and completely naked body into another conveniently empty grave and depart from the cemetery.

It's probably not safe to follow too hot on their heels, so you dismiss any thought of leaving the graveyard for the time being. Well, as long as you're stuck in the cemetery anyway you could do a spot of graverobbing: turn to 1376. Otherwise you could go in hunt of loot: you step through the barrow's dark front entrance and down the narrow staircase into the crypt below. Turn to 471.

1545

You have no interest in sharing a tree with a large angry bear so you climb down as per the monster's wishes. You are now in the unfortunate (for you) position of being below a drop bear. As you're looking for another place to lie down the huge creature releases its grip on the branch and plummets towards you. If you've got the Cheap Halberd then turn to 1058, otherwise it's curtains for you - you're slammed to the marshy ground beneath the huge mass of the Greater Drop Bear and ripped to pieces by its terrible claws and enormous, razor-sharp teeth. Your adventure ends here.

1546

The guards and the onlookers seem to doubt this story, but they can't go against a seemingly reasonable explanation given by the priest. They grudgingly relent from murdering you on the spot for your faux pas.

Chlothar beams at you, his pudgy cheeks glowing. "Best come along with me, bro. I think you've tended the graves enough for one day". With this the priest ushers you into the church under the watchful glares of the guards and townspeople who'd just been robbed of the chance to participate in a half elf execution.

Once you're inside the church, a large dingy structure packed with pews and dense with smoke from burning censers hanging from the walls, Chlothar gives you the run down. He has the power to make god and man forgive you - all you need to do is accept The K-NG as your one true god, forsaking all others. And then go through a Redemption ceremony and agree to a holy quest. Or you can go outside and take your chances, which probably aren't all that good.

If you're ready to go through with this plan then turn to 908. If you'd rather take your chances outside then turn to 1631.

1547

You refuse to be left behind. In any case, who says you couldn't slay a basilisk? You've never tried before.

Cronan and Legless groan as one and run on, leaving you to play catch up. The pace is even faster than before but your desperation to make friends with these cool guys gives you wings and you somehow keep up with the two athletes. You soon find yourself entering the tangled morass of the Schleimwald forest, puffing and panting as you stumble and shove your way through a maze of snagging branches.

One of the two great woodlands in this part of the world, the Schleimwald is also a pretty gross place as the name might suggest - the filthy river Bilge runs right through it and the pollution has spread to the trees which are twisted, deformed and diseased. They drip with fungus and slime which sticks to your clothes and hair and generally feels icky. Going is slow through the tangled trees and the marshy, muddy forest floor and after a couple of hours of trudging as quickly as possible behind your companions you're filthy and exhausted. It's already pretty dark in this dense woodland but you can see the sky taking on its evening colours through some breaks in the canopy and you hear the cacophony of hooting, roaring and screeching as the unspeakably dangerous crepuscular woodland animals begin to rouse from their daytime slumbers.

You keep up your pursuit of Legless and Cronan until the sun sets, when the two adventurers use the cover of darkness to finally give you the slip. You can hear them squelching away through the mud but you can't move fast enough through the ooze to keep up. The sounds gradually fade into the distance. Lose 5 more EFFORT from the day's exertions and the disappointment. You take a quick rest while you decide what to do next. You're exhausted and walking the forest in the dark could be incredibly dangerous, especially if there really is a basilisk out here. On the other hand, passing out in the middle of the Schleimwald can also be pretty risky - perhaps it would be best to press on in hopes of finding some safer place to lie down.

If you decide to rest right here then turn to 56. if you'd prefer to press on in hopes of catching the duo then turn to 577.

1548

Fighting witches and monsters for cash sounds like a risky line of work, and on closer inspection Rouge-Gorge's band of Merry Men don't look particularly merry. In fact they look like the kind of bruisers who'd knife you in the back for a hargroat. You decide not to take the fellow up on his offer.

"Very well then, I'll have no cowards in my company! Good day, monsieur!" sniffs the nobleman, clearly offended. "Come men, we're off to rid Nonce of a witch. Forward, lively now men! Onwards!"

Done with you, the fop marches away at a jaunty clip to the north, followed by his surly, grumbling band of miscreants, heavily loaded with loot from the battle and pulling the captured workhorses behind them. You watch them go then head south, making your way through the woods rapidly. You soon emerge on the Brunnenfeld plains, glad to put that nasty business behind you.

Turn to 282.

1549

The interview room is a small office consisting of a table and a couple of chairs. The guard ushers you in and takes a seat opposite you.

“Congratulations on making it this far - we’ve found no reason why we shouldn’t let you into Bilgeton. This is your opportunity to show us why we should let you in. Pass this interview and I’ll complete your Bilgeton Residency Scroll, which will allow you to reside and work in the metropolis”.

You’re about to start begging to be allowed in but the guard talks over you.

“Currently Bilgeton is overcrowded so we’re only accepting residents who can show that they’re going to be an asset to our city, through their skills or their heroic deeds or their business acumen. In other words you’re either a highly skilled migrant, you’ve killed a serious threat to our way of life or you’ve got a lot of money and can spare, say, 20 Guilders. So what’s it to be?”

If you’re already the holder of a Residency Scroll then this might be a good time to point it out - turn to 917.

If you have some kind of noble heritage recorded on your Adventure Scroll and want to discuss this then turn to 15.

If you want to talk about your skills then turn to 241.

If you want to brag about killing some threat or another to Bilgeton then turn to 306.

If you’ve got the 20 Guilders to spare then turn to 808.

If none of these seem like productive avenues you can instead own up to having nothing in hopes that your honesty will impress the guard- turn to 201.

1550

Through dangers untold and hardships unnumbered, you have fought your way to the castle beyond the Goblin City to take back the child that he has stolen. For your will is as strong as his, and your kingdom is as great. He has no power over you.

🔪**THE GOBLIN KING - DIFFICULTY 14 - TOUGHNESS 4**

The Goblin King has the power of voodoo over you. You have -1 FISTS for the duration of this fight.

If you survive, turn to 1183. This is a battle to the finish - if you can’t win then your adventure ends here.

1551

Emitting a cowardly squeal, you plummet into the foul waters of the River Bilge with a splash! The stinging waters carry you along rapidly and you spend the next couple of hours watching the trees whizz past on the river banks whenever you can keep your head above the water. After a while the trees begin to thin out and you leave the slimy, ominous forest behind you.

The river banks get a bit lower here and you start to paddle towards the shore, but before you can reach it a town comes into view ahead of you. It's a small human settlement which straddles the river. You've already been spotted: looming high above the town is a watch tower where a sentry is already shouting for nets and bowmen. Not far downstream of you is a bridge - steel helmeted guards with crossbows and rope nets are rushing there now. The river current is fast, but not fast enough. You'll have to swim as hard as you can if you want to get under the bridge before the guards get into position...

SWIM FOR IT: DIFFICULTY 13

If you manage it then turn to 1661. If you fail then turn to 1165.

1552

The patrol leader frowns.

"You know, I'm interested in how you came by this steed. Someone like you - can't see you coming by it fair and square. How about we confiscate it and put you in the lockup while we run its harness registration to see where it came from?" he sneers furiously.

If you agree to this plan then turn to 895. If you'd rather not let the guards get a good look at your mount then you could instead hand over the half elf by turning to 780.

1553

Taking advantage of the shopkeeper's apparent infirmity you slowly reach for that chitarrone. Your fingers close around its neck silently and you begin to lift the six-foot tall instrument clear of its hook. Although you're pretty sure you haven't made a sound the shopkeeper suddenly reaches behind the counter and in one fluid motion takes up a spear which he hurls at you. The deadly projectile sails through the air and plants itself in the wall just inches away from your face. It wobbles noisily as you look at the shopkeeper in shock.

"Now go on, git!" he shouts, taking up another spear. You somehow don't think he's going to miss this time. Releasing the string instrument you flee the store.

"Breaks my heart. Half elf that young going bad" you hear the shopkeep mutter as you race out the exit and back out into the market square.

Turn to 244.

1554

After such shabby treatment at the hands of one group of humans you're less than happy to run straight into another only minutes after you leave the campsite. Approaching through the woods ahead of you is a band of brigands by the looks, six extremely rough-looking customers led by a dandy clad from head to toe in a ridiculous silk outfit topped off with an incredibly large, floppy hat. He orders his men to halt as soon as he sees you.

"He's one of them, m'lord", offers one of the dangerous-looking cut-throats, grinning viciously as he draws a dagger, "I'll 'ave him".

"Nonsense!" replies the fop, twirling his long, thin moustache with his fingers and gesturing at you with his free hand, "Behold this man's arms. Are these the limbs of a lumberjack?"

This argument seems to satisfy the brigand, who sheathes his blade. The dandy now addresses you,

"Bonjour my good sir. Désolé, there's no time for introductions - we seek a band of woodcutters who are harbouring a dangerous monster: a reverse-taurcent, if you can believe such a thing exists. They are rumoured to be hard nearby. Have you seen them? Time is de l'essence!"

You're not going to cover for those shits. You point back the way you came. The fop thanks you.

"Merci. Will you help us battle this fiend? We can always use an extra pair of hands. Of course you will be paid...". Behind the fop the rest of the men are grimacing unpleasantly. Several are shaking their heads sternly and the one who drew his knife on you earlier locks eyes with you and draws his finger across his throat. They don't seem to want you around.

If you can take a hint you refuse the offer and continue on out of the woods - turn to 282. If you put the prospect of some violent revenge and coin above personal safety then turn to 157.

1555

You put two and two together and realise that these must be the "little ones" that lady was crying over. You thought you were looking for children, not dwarfs, but all the same you're looking forward to seeing what Eilika meant by making it "worth your while". You tell Harman and Giselle that they're coming with you.

Not to keen on returning to a life alternating between semi-starvation and being hassled by guards for busking in the market square, the dwarfs take a swing at you instead:

🔪**HARMAN: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1**
🔪**GISELLE: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

Treat this as a Multiple Hassle. Although dwarfs aren't great fighters these two are desperate to get away and are used to backing each other up in a scrap. While both are still fighting they may re-roll any 1s on their FIST dice (the re-roll will stand even if it's a 1).

If you lose the battle or don't want to fight them then you let them go unmolested and strike out on your own. Turn to 1581. If you defeat them both then turn to 500.

1556

You wander around searching for information about the event but it's fruitless - no one in the poorer sections of town know where it is and no one in the richer areas will lower themselves to speak to you. After hassling several well-to-do types and coming up empty you see a guard patrol approaching you - one of the poshos must have ratted you out! As you're considering fleeing you see another guard patrol coming your way from the opposite direction as well! Since there's no escape route and carrying a weapon openly in Bilgeton carries a summary death sentence, you furtively toss away any weapon you may be carrying - remove any equipped weapon from your Adventure Scroll. Luckily there are heaps of trash piled up even in the nicer parts of town so it's unlikely the guards will spot it.

"We've received reports of a suspicious individual matching your description behaving suspiciously in these whereabouts" says the leader of the first patrol upon reaching you. You try to explain that you're just trying to find the Grand Ball but the guard shakes his head. "Annoying rich people is a serious crime in Bilgeton and you are hereby instructed to vacate the district at once or you will be charged with a corporal offence of aggravated loitering. Unless you have the means to prove that you have business in the Noble District".

You sigh - he's clearly holding out for a bribe, but as you reach into your purse the second patrol catches up. Its leader speaks gruffly:

"What's all this then? I've received a report from these whereabouts of an individual of a suspicious appearance conducting himself suspiciously. I hereby instruct you to depart this district at once or you will be charged with the corporal crime of vagrancy with intent...."

As you're babbling your defence at this patrolman you hear the stomping of boots - incredibly a third patrol has arrived, and emerging from a nearby alleyway is a fourth patrol! You are being surrounded by a platoon of guards!

"Allo allo!" says the third patrol leader, "I've been briefed that there's a suspicious individual...."

Disgusted at being harassed in this manner and no more capable of bribing your way through so many guards than you are of fighting your way free, you let them hustle you out of the rich district. You find yourself once again on the poorer side of town North of the Bilge.

Since you wasted all night looking for the Ball you're getting tired. It's time to go in search of your father and find that place to crash at long last. Turn to 1793.

1557

You say, "Ok".

THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO YOUR HEAD: DIFFICULTY 14 - FISTS 1

If you're on a Mission From The K-NG subtract 4 from the DIFFICULTY.

If it was the greatest and best song in the world turn to 517. If you screw it up then turn to 9.

1558

You are wakened a little bit later on by footsteps and the feeling of something soft being laid on your chest. You open your eyes and see in the orange firelight a pretty human woman leaning over you. You think she's probably about twenty years old though all humans look roughly the same age to you. She's got big ... eyes and is wearing a very flattering dress that complements them very nicely especially in the position she's in. Noticing that your jaw is hanging agape she smiles at you.

"Oh, I didn't mean to wake you, dear guest. I am Nilde Aldrechttochter. I just wanted to make sure you were nice and warm", she says, releasing the blanket that she was placing over you.

If you can think of another way she can keep you warm then turn to 115. If you'd rather not risk a horrible scene just because you're pathetic and lonely then turn to 41.

1559

Do you have a Scroll of Dispel? If so turn to 930. Otherwise, read on:

As soon as you overcome your shock at the sight of a huge dragon and the flaming death bearing down on you, you bravely leap off Milner, narrowly avoiding a jet of superheated blue flame erupting from the dragon's mouth. The donkey is incinerated where it stands, putting its intolerable braying to an abrupt end.

You hit the ground with a clumsy roll and struggle back to your feet, already running for the exit. You're doomed. There's no way you can get out of the cave before the dragon blasts you with another jet of flame. Still you run for it. Behind you the dragon opens its mouth....

"WAIT. I mean, wait. Stop. Please", says the monster. "I'm not going to cook you. It's just that donkey - well it's kind of a long story but we have a history. He's really a powerful wizard... Merlin... who tried to kill me once, but I guess the Goblin King got to him...and then you did... well anyway", the thing prattles, rubbing its eyes as it trails off while telling you about your erstwhile steed. The dragon looks exhausted, with huge bags under its eyes like it hasn't slept in decades. In fact, he looks ready to doze off right now. Maybe, just maybe you can get him in a weak spot and become known as a famous dragon slayer! On the other hand, you're a miserable little coward with a terrifying dragon roaring some gibberish at you so maybe not.

If you want to launch a surprise attack, turn to 473. If you'd rather not die then turn to 1537.

1560

With no chance of defeating this guardian of the Bilgeton sewers you decide to beg for mercy. The hydra is actually reasonably intelligent and likes it when his dinner comes with a show, so it waits patiently to see what histrionics you think will save your skin. You prepare to put on the show of a lifetime.

BLUBBERING: DIFFICULTY 12 - TOUGHNESS 2

Should you succeed, turn to 609. If you fail, your pitiful acting isn't enough to save your skin and your adventure ends here as the hydra, bored of the pre-dinner show, goes straight on to the main course which is the side of half elf, extra rare.

1561

The Spectre's garb is so outlandishly form-fitting as to make the task of removing it nearly impossible even for someone of your flexible sensibilities. The smell's also overpowering: you don't think this guy has washed the thing, ever. Still, you're determined to grab everything you can, even if there's no godsly reason for actually wanting it.

SQUEAMISHNESS : DIFFICULTY 12

If you fail then you give up. Restore up to 5 EFFORT as a wave of relief washes over you. Turn back to 1214 and make another choice.

If you succeed you manage to remove the garb without throwing up or ruining it in your haste. Add the Lavender Bleggings to your Adventure Scroll and turn back to 1214. Or... do you want to take the next step and put the outfit on? If so then turn to 857.

1562

You agree to whatever Bhad just said and the dragon leads you to its room at the back of the chamber: a filthy, dark little cavern accessed through a bead curtain. The room is dominated by a large, filthy mattress, and huge, oddly-shaped rubber clubs are scattered haphazardly on the counter-tops surrounding the bed, interspersed with hundreds of scrunched-up tissues. A huge scrying crystal locked on to a view of an oubliette in Bilgeton Keep provides the only light. The smell in here is unbelievably bad, like your room in Elfsdale Downs but a hundred times worse.

Before you have time to take much of this in or complain, the dragon pushes you down on the mattress and the Freundschaftsbezeigungen begins!

Turn to 1618.

1563

Following the delicious smell and the sounds of laughter and companionship you strike out towards the oaks. You soon find yourself approaching a campsite in the middle of the small woods where eight bearded men in heavy checked tunics are gathered around a firepit, swapping jokes, whittling away at chunks of wood and gnawing at meat straight off the fire. Well, most of them are - two of them aren't sharing in the cheer. One's clearly injured, swaddled in bandages and lying on a thin pallet. The other, dressed in torn rags, sits on a tree stump aside from the others, a grim expression on his face and a distant look in his eyes. All around the campsite are felled trees and piles of woodchips. Nearby a cart stands half-loaded with logs and "rustic" furniture. A few workhorses stand nearby, idly chewing on the grasses and shrubs growing in the shade of the woodland oaks.

As you approach one of the men spies you and calls out to you in a booming voice, "What ho, traveller? I am Simon of the Free Brothers. We serve none but ourselves. So long as you're not one of Sir Tedbald's men you're welcome to lunch with us".

Your weedy frame and decidedly unofficial demeanour puts these men at ease, but if you're equipped with the Knightly Shield the insignia will be a cause for concern - turn to 1384. Otherwise turn to 1457 if you'd like to accept their hospitality. If you'd rather not lunch with these suspiciously jolly forester types then you bid them a hasty farewell and walk right back out of the wood. Turn to 282.

1564

You give the door three hammer blows. There's no response: maybe there's more to this code. Do you want to hit the door three more times quickly (turn to 1057), give it three hard thumps (turn to 1577) or really go to town and hit the thing 8 more times hard (turn to 5).

1565

You despise Biff but you don't want to see a fellow townself cut down like a dog. You rein in your mount and shout for the guards to stop what they're doing in what passes in your imagination as a stirring speech.

This doesn't impress them much and as soon as they're done massacring the elfs they round on you. You're hauled off your mount and dropped hard on the dirt before being treated to one of the great beat-downs of modern history. Fortunately for you you're not conscious for most of it as you black out when one of the guards breaks a spear shaft over your head.

You come to hours later at night, every joint in your body screaming in a symphony of agony. These guards really kicked the hells out of you and several bones are definitely broken - lose 10 EFFORT and 1 ÉLAN. On top of this, adding insult to injury, you've been stripped down to your skivvies - everything else has been stolen (or more likely just chucked out). Your travails have taught you to hate humans, a lesson which your somewhat hypocritical mom tirelessly tried and apparently fail to instil in you - gain +1 FIST whenever you're fighting a human from now on but -1 FIST for hassles involving talking to them. Make a note of this hateful grudge and remove all items and cash from your Adventure Scroll.

As you rise unsteadily to your feet you see that your fate was better than those of Biff and his crew - all of them lie where they were slain. No one even went to the trouble of robbing them. If you'd like to loot the corpses then turn to 666. Otherwise you stumble on the stones as the dirt road turns into a paved highway heading south in the general direction of Bilgeton. Righting yourself you trudge on: turn to 25.

1566

Ignoring the wild cheers of the crowd and the aggressive posturing of The Waits you don't wait for them to complete their Alta Cappella before launching into a wild jam of your own. Well, your band's own, since you don't know any songs. You do your best to keep up with a thumping rendition of the little known saga, "The Dwarfen King's Sorrowful Farewell to Nonce, With His Last Advice to Hugh the Organ Cleaner, Who Betray'd Him, After His Final Concert, in Monteton. To the Tune of 'In The Court Of The Crimson Kinge'".

EPIC BALLAD: DIFFICULTY 10 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2

As you play The Waits do their best to sabotage you: hurling bottles, trying to play over the top of you, pretending they're going to hit you so you startle and almost fall off the stage. It's going to take everything you have to keep it together here.

If you succeed then turn to 357. If you don't have what it takes then turn to 350.

1567

Your feeble arms are no match for the ogre's boulder-like fist. It crashes through your pathetic block, shattering bones before knocking you down into a heap! Lose 1 ÉLAN and 10 EFFORT from the appalling injuries!

If you survive you notice that Fistface is in no hurry to finish you off - in fact, he's bellowing at you to get up. Is he toying with you? If you want to get up then turn to 324. If you'd be more comfortable staying down for the count then turn to 1334.

1568

One thing leads to another and after a brutal day of rampaging around the Bilgeford surrounds and a vicious manhunt involving the entire Bilgeford militia you're holed up back in the Bilgeford hoosegow ready to take your bloody revenge on the sheriff who now lies at your feet, defenceless. Just as you're about to finish him someone appears in the darkened doorway.

"Bastard, don't do it!" says Jeff, stepping forward into the light. "Listen to me, stepson. You have no chance. You're surrounded. If you keep going they'll kill you. Drop your weapon. I've come to bring you home to Elfsdale Downs."

Seeing that you're loading up with even more weapons from around the lockup (you're now carrying six swords and wearing two entire sets of armour, as well as any of your confiscated items, which you may now return to your Adventure Scroll), Jeff continues.

"You've done enough damage. Your adventure ends here. You hear me? Your adventure ends here!"

If your adventure ends here then turn to 628. If nothing ends here then turn to 881.

1569

Otto clearly wants to talk about the scroll so you let him know that he has your full attention.

"The Bilgeton skeleton industry is crying out for workers, and as a skilled skeleton handler you could get a Residency Scroll, if you want. There's quite a queue for that as you can see", says the captain, gesturing to a long line of grotty vagrants and peasants lining up outside a wooden door, "But for a businessman of means such as yourself - one who's about to get a big payday at that - 10 Guilders would buy you the Business Premier package which would see you through those gates with the style and discretion to which you are no doubt accustomed".

The captain's feigned obsequiousness is annoying but maybe it's worth the cash to get in unhassled, so long as you have it. You're dismayed to find that he won't take IOUs or any other kind of currency or specie.

If you've got the coin and want to pay up then turn to 1501. If you have the styles of a nobleman (having the crest of a noble house recorded on your Adventure Scroll in ink) you can try to pull rank on the guard by turning to 804. If you're just not feeling this guy's sales pitch or you're unable to afford the fee then turn to 362.

1570

Your berserk and nearly suicidal charge temporarily drives the elfs back but there's no time to delay - they're swiftly regrouping and more of their buddies are pouring out of the woods by the second. It seems like this caravan has attracted every elf in Nonce! You yell at the wagon to move when suddenly you realise something is very, very wrong - your sixth sense (cowardice) is going haywire! You almost instantly discover why when you hear an incredibly loud twang coming from the tree line at the rear of the wagons followed by a loud crunch as a huge spear slams into the cobblestones right under your mount's feet. Looking towards the source of the projectile, you see a terrifying sight - the elfs have brought up a human siege engine called a ballista which is currently aimed right at you! You start to wonder how the hells they got that thing but your train of thought is interrupted by the realisation that a crew of green-clad elfs are currently reloading the gigantic crossbow for another shot! They've already loaded another huge bolt and reset the trigger. You'd better act, and fast!

If you'd like to turn and flee then turn to 916. If you don't think you're going to be able to turn your steed around fast enough to avoid getting hit then turn to 1135 to leap off the animal. There's no way you'll survive charging at the ballista - there's a large crowd of elfs in the way and they look about ready to cut you to pieces, but if you have the Bow of the Wood equipped and a very steady aim perhaps you could risk a shot at the crew? If you're feeling very brave (and have the bow equipped) then turn to 289.

1571

You wake up to the distinct impression that you're being jostled about. As soon as your head clears you find that you've been hog-tied and slung over the back of a huge white horse which is galloping through the mountains. The Spectre, resplendent in his weird purple livery, is sitting in the saddle just in front of you, gripping the reins as he expertly guides the huge white charger at speed through the treacherous terrain.

You must have made a noise in the process of waking up because The Spectre turns his head to see what you're doing.

"Evildoer! I am taking you to justice for your crimes", he says. "The nearest place with a proper court is Bilgeton, so I'll deliver you to the authorities there. And don't think about resisting justice anymore - I've stowed all your weapons away in my saddlebags. Your days of hurting the innocent are over".

While Bilgeton is probably where you want to go, you'd rather not wind up there as a prisoner. You've heard terrible things about the human justice system and there's no way you've got the money you'd need to bribe all the guards, lawyers, judges and priests that you'd need to pay to avoid a death sentence.

The ride there will doubtlessly take more than a day. You could attempt an escape with at least a respectable chance of success if you keep your eyes open for your chance:

ESCAPE JUSTICE: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you succeed then turn to 425. If you fail or don't try then turn to 1659.

1572

Your revenge is rowdy enough to draw the attention of some caravan guards who seem to bear some hateful grudge towards elfs and who, unbeknownst to you, have quietly dismounted from the wagons, nocked arrows to their bows and decided to rid the world of you and your fellow townselfs. They easily detect your location from the sound of fists pounding against faces, branches breaking and elfish curses and fire a barrage of arrows in that direction. The fight, which was far from over, suddenly becomes a long-awaited victory for the Bastard Elf as your opponents are sliced down by the arrows whistling through the forest. Glorious victory notwithstanding you turn to flee into the woods yourself but before you can make good your escape you catch an arrow right in the buttocks. Still, you manage to stay upright and hobble away deeper into the woods.

Once you're sure you've ditched your oppressors you pull the arrow out You're not going to die but you'll be walking funny for a while. Lose 1 ÉLAN from the incapacitating wound and turn to 961.

1573

Unbeknownst to you, you are being watched. Just as you reach the bridge from under its dark shadows emerges Collum the Troll.

"Halt!' he bellows, "None shall pass, for tis' a 'Troll Bridge'". He sniggers at the horrible attempt at a pun. "Either you turn back... OR… let me sing you my song."

If you wish to turn back this is your last chance: turn to 69 now. Otherwise his foul breath matches the awfulness of the song he insists on playing you on his ukulele (available this Christmas under his stage name 'Collum the Hutt' wherever the really horrible music is sold):

I'm a troll, Mouldy Oh,
I'm a troll, Mouldy Oh,
I'm a troll, Mouldy Oh,
And I eat toast for dinner!

I'm a troll, Mouldy Oh,
I'm a troll, Mouldy Oh,
I'm a troll, Mouldy Oh,
An' I think fish's' a winner

With his song concluded, the troll seems mollified. "Okay sweet cheeks, pass ye shall…", he grunts. The way's clear, but you're not sure your ears will ever recover: deduct 10 EFFORT. If you're still alive you stagger over the bridge, swearing never to come this way again. Turn to 155.

1574

There's a bright flash and there in front of you shines the Shiny Demon.

"Play the best song in the world", it says, "or I'll eat your soul. And this time I mean it".

If you have a musical instrument then now's the time to crack it out! Turn to 1557. If you're not carrying an instrument or not feeling it then turn to 9.

1575

No matter how you try you can't make yourself fit through the bars. Despondent, you give up and sit on your island of refuse, cradling your skull in your hands.

As luck would have it this section of the wall near the river is home to a small camp of thieves and murderers who make a living robbing and killing people who get stuck on the river grate. It's not long before a small group of them spots you, but seeing a kindred spirit in your wretched self (and wrongly assuming that you're the kind of skeleton that'll just pull itself back together if beaten apart) they refrain from attempting to murder you and instead ask you to join their fraternity. With nothing else going on right now you accept.

While you'll never be allowed into Bilgeton you play an important role in civic life by keeping the river approach clear of people trying to sneak into town. Because you and your fellow murderers are providing a valuable service the guards tolerate you and leave you to live in peace. Murdering passers-by for an unliving is uncomfortably too much like work for comfort but at least you get your very own tent and, despite their rough edges, the family of murderers you've joined is far more pleasant to be around than Jeff. And who knows, maybe he'll come looking for you one day and stumble into the Bilge himself...

Your adventure ends here.

1576

You give the shamblers the slip and emerge from the battle mercifully unbitten. Following the path back slightly faster than your normal slow amble, you leave the shamblers in your dust. Stepping at last on to the paved Counts Road, you continue hiking towards Bilgeton, still several days' walk to the east. Turn to 1802.

1577

You give the door three hard bashes and wait. Although you're more or less confident that you got the code right and that an honourable-looking fellow like Oddler wouldn't deceive you especially after you'd paid him, there's no action at all from the inside. Putting your ear to the door there's nothing but silence within.

Perhaps the Thieves' Guild is testing you. If you'd like to wait for a reply then turn to 735. If you know when you've been scorched then turn to 1531.

1578

Deduct 10 Elfen Leaves from the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll.

The priest looks despondent as he looks at the handful of twigs and leaves that you deposit on top of the altar. It's nearly worthless to him although it's a pretty big tip for an elf. Not particularly bothered about the priest's opinion of your charity, you waltz right out of the church and continue along your way up the lane, whistling a jaunty tune as you go.

Turn to 1236.

1579

Recovering from your earlier beating, you put up a spirited struggle. Even so, your situation is hopeless - no matter how much you struggle the skeletons will eventually get you tied down. Just as all seems lost - your legs and your left arm are lashed down and the trio are all working on getting your right arm into a rope loop when you suddenly hear a bell ring from somewhere inside the tower. The skeletons immediately let go of your hand and, chittering to one another casually, walk back out of the room, leaving you alone. Panting in terror and exhaustion, you wait until you hear their footsteps disappear down the staircase before you make your move.

Using your free hand you untie the knots and are soon free once again. You rise from the flensing slab and have a look around. The room you're in is some kind of necromantic lab - it looks like this is where victims and bodies are turned into skeletons. The rituals used for this are no doubt dark and disgusting - the worn stone floor is splattered with a dark ooze and there's a small heap of corpses and body parts rotting conspicuously in the corner. The walls of the room are lined with what you assume to be potion decanting equipment, reference scrolls and numerous vials, jars and bottles of liquid of various unnatural colours.

As you're considering whether to get the hells out or start filling your boots you hear a dull snoring noise coming from upstairs - the warlock in charge of this place is snoring loudly somewhere up that spiral staircase you were dragged up. Maybe this could be your chance to rid the world of that pesky warlock.... or perhaps you could just nick off.

If you want to escape while you still can then turn to 393. If you'd like to deal with the snoring warlock then turn to 637. If you'd prefer to get some looting in first then turn to 1293.

1580

Displaying far more arse than class you take a mighty swing with the poorly-made halberd and manage to slam it spike-side first into a small gap between two of the scales on the dragon's belly. The dragon roars in agony as dark blue blood begins to seep out of what would have been a mortal wound on a lesser creature.

"Oh... oh man!" it shouts, "That's not cool...I think you got my stomach."

The dragon winces as it pulls out the halberd and throws it on the ground at your feet.

"You know what, screw this and screw you. I try to be friendly and get along with people and look what it gets me. Well I've had enough. As soon as I'm better I'm getting out of this realm. You horrid little shortlifes will never see Bhad again".

With that the dragon turns and half-staggers, half-slithers into the darkness at the back of the cavern, disappearing from sight. You hear the rustle of what sounds a lot like a bead curtain and a thump as the dragon collapses back there.

Well, you didn't slay the dragon but you did chase it off - make a note of this on your Adventure Scroll. With that accomplished, you can loot the glittering treasure trove of the dragon's hoard! Firstly you may reclaim the Cheap Halberd if you like, and then any or all of treasures worth 20 Guilders (which you may add to your Adventure Scroll), a Full Harness of Steel Plate and a Palavan Army Knife. While there's a lot more loot lying around here you can't carry anything else and you don't want to go ask the dragon if it has a wheelbarrow it can lend you.

Once you've completed your looting then turn to 1235.

1581

You walk for a few hours down the track leading away from Brunnenfeld. The sun feels pleasant and the early-summer grass and flowers swaying in the soft breeze along the plains as far as the eye can see border on the idyllic, but after a while of this the sun feels hot and the grass is giving you hay fever and you'd kill for the endless vistas to be replaced with four walls and a bed that didn't consist of lying on the ground. The rivers that criss-cross these plains soon go from cooling and reinvigorating to an almighty ball-ache to cross without getting your shoes soaked.

Just as you're rethinking all this adventuring and considering crawling back to Elfsdale Downs to beg Jeff for another chance (he'd love that wouldn't he, the vicious old creep) you notice a curl of smoke emerging from a large stand of oaks a short distance to your left. It could be a campfire. Curious, you walk in that general direction and hear the sounds of axes biting into wood and booming laughter echoing among the trees, and soon you begin to smell something delicious and meaty cooking. Whoever's in there sounds friendly enough and you could use a sit down and a bite of something other than elfen rations.

If you'd like to see what's going on in there then turn to 1563. If you'd prefer to continue with your quest without risking encountering anyone or anything then turn to 282.

1582

You give full vent to your murderous impulses and treacherously butcher these two mighty (if not noble, or even very polite) adventurers like hogs while they lay in their camp. The full details of this horrible incident are too disgusting to even get into here, but they will be imagined and retold by bards and storytellers the land over for generations. Suffice it to say that in your rage you leave nothing resembling a humanoid corpse behind.

A little calmer now after that outburst you may, if you like, loot the campsite. You can take the barbarian's Heroic Sword and the rogue's Regular Shortsword, and also the treasure that they stole from the Goblin King - the glittering Mighty Codpiece! Everything else of worth was either destroyed or lost in the massacre.

Though your victory was completely hollow and cowardly, that won't prevent you braying about it to anyone who'll listen (with the necessary scenes altered so as to make it more heroic and less criminally pathetic). Add 1 ÉLAN from the swaggering airs you'll be adopting from here on out. With that you continue on your way, whistling a merry tune. Turn to 1799.

1583

Did you have a weapon or tool equipped during that fight other than rings or a knuckleduster? If so turn to 650. Otherwise you manage to knock your opponent out cold with a wild haymaker just as a guard comes to break it up.

"Hey, I saw that!" shouts the militiamen. You're worried you're about to get busted but he just prods your fallen opponent with his boot. "Good punch", he continues. "What, arrest you? Nah, he started it. Just wanted to admire your handiwork".

With that the guard walks off to hassle a wagon or something. You step over your whimpering adversary to take his place in the line, far closer to the gatehouse. Strangely, none of the other humans have anything to say about your cutting in this time, and the rest of the wait is short and almost pleasant in the shade of the Bilgeton walls. Soon you're stepping in through the door of the gatehouse.

Turn to 851.

1584

You notice that your tiny opponent drops his left hand low after a jab. Ignoring this weakness you hack him in half with your weapon and trample over his corpse on your way to the tiny refuges, which you stomp all over mercilessly in your search for loot. After destroying nearly the entire shanty and carelessly splattering most of the remaining occupants you recover some minuscule Enchanted Tools and 5 Bilgeton Guilders in hard cash. Add these to your Adventure Scroll.

With the brownies dispersed and the sun going down, this might be a good time to take a rest. If you'd like to take a load off turn to 335. If you'd prefer to press on then turn to 1358.

1585

The mysterious wooden box appears to be sans opening. Is this some stupid pixie joke, or is life simply messing with you yet again? Initially puzzled by this featureless cube, you soon become maddened by the lack of a visible lid, join, hinge or any other sign that it is actually a box and not just a plain block of wood. Patience and mental application have never been virtues of note, so you hurl the confounding box to the ground in a fit of childish half elf rage. The box rolls a few paces away, maintaining its stoic appearance of indifference. You've been ripped off! - unless you can remember the numeric key to the universe. Turn to that section now.

1586

The butler remembers something important.

"Oh, you're the one that helped us out with the brownie problem. We received word that their camp had been found all smashed up and abandoned. We've been trying to do that for months but could never find the place. Anyhow, Sir Witold would like to see you. Come in and don't touch anything. His excellency will be with you shortly."

The gate swings open and you enter the manor grounds. As you saw from the outside it's a lush green lawn in front of a large white mansion. The house and yard is enclosed within tall white stone walls to the front and sides and a sheer cliff-face to the rear where the property abuts onto the side of a mountain. On one side of the gardens is an ornate but dry fountain, next to which a very ordinary dray full of ordinary empty wooden barrels sits uselessly.

By the time you're done examining that the lord of the manor, Sir Witold, is coming down the steps to greet you. The snooty butler goes to help his liege down the steps, and once the knight reaches the bottom the butler waves you over. Witold is an old, portly, grey-haired human - despite being dressed in expensive-looking clothes and a fancy cloak he doesn't look much like the kind of knight you'd see on the battlefield. The butler speaks, breaking your train of thought:

"Sir Witold would like to personally thank you for defeating the brownie threat to our way of life. He would also like to offer you an opportunity to be of service to Brunnenfeld once again, specifically in your field of expertise as an eliminator of fay folk."

At this point turn to 1735 if you have the Confessor's Shovel and you've committed any crimes since you were Redeemed. Otherwise read on:

The old knight splutters emphatically. The butler raises a handkerchief to his lips before translating this ejaculation.

"The eponymous Big Rock Goblins of the mountains have blocked off the source of our town's spring water, the official drink of the Bilgeton nobility and a good portion of my lord's income. We can no longer fill our casks, and thanks to all this warm weather we've been having soon even our town's reservoir, the Susswasser, will begin to run dry. Your task is to go on into the mountains and correct the problem."

If you'll do it then turn to 1741. If you're not going to stick your neck out for some old goat and his unpleasant household staff then turn to 516.

1587

You go back to have a good hearty chuckle at the trapped dire wolf but there's just something utterly pitiful about it. Something that reminds you of yourself, somehow. Still it's heartening to see something other than you suffering for once. Restore 5 EFFORT.

If you've got Enough Rope you can attempt to haul the giant dog out of the pit if you want: turn to 1776. Otherwise you decide to leave the beast to its fate. Turn to 452.

1588

Tired or just plain distracted, you fail to see the horrible thing you're about to step in until you've slid over on it and landed on your back in a heaving birthing pool of giant moon moth eggs and insect goo. You and all your possessions are coated in a horrible-smelling slurry containing thousands and thousands of the tiny eggs and the new-born caterpillars which have just broken free. Your inattentiveness means these innocent little creatures are going to have to spend at least the first few days of their life stuck with you. Add the Moth Eggs to your Adventure Scroll (make sure you check the item effect - it removes any positive modifiers you get from your outfit). At least the repulsiveness of what's just befallen you has gotten your mind off your stomach for the time being.

Feeling suitably horrible you brush yourself off to the limited extent possible and carry on your way south. It's a long way through very difficult terrain but no further misfortunes befall you. Eventually you break clear of the woods and onto the paved surface of the Count's Road.

Turn to 1715.

1589

Outside the tavern the nobolds try to get you to carry another of their iceboxes. You try to reason with these animals.

"Fair..go? I dinki-di already have an esky. Mates", you force out.

The workers round on you, their reptilian eyes narrowing.

"Where'd you nick that from?" says one of them, looking at the box you're already carrying. "That's bloody Bruce's esky that is! Get 'im!"

🔪**NOBOLD WORK CREW: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

Once their TOUGHNESS is reduced to 1 they lose 1 FIST as well to reflect the number of nobolds you've put on their arses.

If you win turn to 421. If you lose then turn to 18 to surrender.

1590

You repay their kind offer with a barrage of excuses as to why you can't go with them. Your squirrely behaviour makes the guards a bit suspicious but at the end of the day they don't really care about what some itinerant traveller is up to. They bid you happy trails. As they trudge off to the southwest on their patrol you head uphill and generally northwards to give them and their town a wide berth. Running into three humans is bad enough. A settlement full of them - you shudder to think of it.

Turn to 1192.

1591

"Excellent!" exclaims Sven. "I knew we could trust one of our own with this task". He waits, as if expecting you to ask him to tell you more. You don't and he continues anyway. "None in Brunnenfeld know this, but we too have some elfen blood in the family. After the birds of Feewald told us of your plight we wanted to help give you the start that nobody gave us. Don't let us down: we're counting on you to give the ring to Emilie. Find the Silvermane's Sundries in the Merchant Square in Bilgeton!"

With this, Sven hands you the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes which you slip onto your finger for safekeeping (add it to your Equipment) and Britta gives you a leather pouch containing the 5 Bilgeton Guilders which you may add to your Adventure Scroll. Note that if you ever lose the Ring you must turn at once to 297 (it's awful so don't be tempted to check out that page to see what happens).

"Best of luck on your journey, half elf!" says Sven as you leave his store. Outside once again you continue uphill along the Trader's Row. Turn to 612 if the town's been overrun by brownies and 1236 if not.

1592

You've lost the last vestiges of your hand! This is worse than the time that Jeff took your Azari system out of your room to punish you for merely wiping his spectacles on your taint! Your rage at the injustice of both losses combines into a towering inferno. Leaping to your feet you strike the padre a fearsome blow, sending him to the cavern floor with a crushed skull. You then round on the others - with bestial rage and a horrifying scream you smash Bruce and Sheila's heads together and then chase down and dismember the other three who are paralysed with shock until it's almost too late. Soon they're all dead and there's only you, dripping in lizard slime and hauling an armload of grisly trophies as you stride onward through the tunnels.

If you were on a mission to kill the priest, you accomplished it. Make a note of this.

Add the Detachable Tail, Padre's Cassock and the Frill Neck to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 811.

1593

"There. You're Redeemed in the eyes of The K-NG", says the priest, "That's my quota hit", he says, finally beginning to calm down. "Now, you've been a sinner but I'm going to give you an opportunity to avoid the fires of Damnation that await you. Firstly, you're going to restore Greenbones to me. You will take him to the Warlock of Warlock Tower, a couple of days walk along the Count's Road to the south east of here, where you will have him necromanced back into health. And then you're going to the Bilgeton Synod where you'll notify Bishop Bedüdelt that I've met my Redemption KPIs for the quarter. You'll do both these things, without fail, or as my name is Brother Chlothar and The K-NG's name's The K-NG you'll be bound for Damnation. It'll be awful. Now get out of here."

With this the priest crams the remains of his gardening skeleton into your backpack and shoves you out of his church. You're still hosed and can't quite walk right thanks to a combination of all that booze and the beating, but at least you're alive. Also, the annoying god botherer forgot to shake you down for the stuff you stole. Somehow though, you feel distant to the gods of your youth, as if they can no longer hear you. Then again, they never did much for you to begin with.

Make a note that you've been Redeemed and add the Skellybones to your Adventure Scroll. Now, it's time to get on with things: will you continue on up the lane (turn to 1236) or will you head back down the road and exit town via the main gates (turn to 338).

1594

The southern gate is closer to the guardhouse but the rapidly-spreading chaos has thrown the marketplace into such confusion that no one is very interested in the comings and goings of the Bastard Elf. While the townspeople rush to and fro and the merchants scurry about in an attempt to save as much merchandise as possible, you slip out the southern gate. Once you're clear of the town you start to run, putting as much distance between you and the spreading inferno as possible. Even this isn't suspicious - plenty of townsfolk and guards have the same idea.

Your wanton destruction of the church hasn't gone unnoticed - you feel a burning sensation on your back as though the sun itself was glaring at you. You've managed to anger The K-NG! From now on whenever you roll a 6 on any of your FIST dice it will cost you 1 EFFORT (two sixes will cost 2 EFFORT, and so on). Make a note of this misfortune on your Adventure Scroll.

You don't stop running until you're miles from the town and utterly out of breath. Finally sure you're not being pursued you take a short breather before continuing on your way.

Turn to 268.

1595

You spend the next couple of hours sipping at your scalding booze while the trolls drink impatiently, waiting for you to hurry up and finish it off. Although you're barely putting the stuff to your lips it still burns and you inhale a lot of the alcoholic fumes - lose 5 EFFORT as you begin to feel quite nauseous. You take so long to drink your booze that the sun sets. By this time the trolls are more or less paralytic and begin to pass out, collapsing to the ground one by one, each with an incredible thud.

This might be an appropriate time to leave - with the trolls down and out you can sneak away without incident: turn to 1429. On the other hand, maybe you've got cause these trolls some mischief. If you've got cause (and the Lorewardening Key, Elfen Dagger, Regular Shortsword or some other short, bladed weapon) then you know deep down what needs to be done- turn to 1412 - or if you've got the Suspicious Canteen and want to use it now that it's safe to do so then turn to 848.

1596

Having previously cunningly blamed Jeff for any or all of the capital crimes you committed outside the walls of the city, you order your guard to seize the homewrecker. Jeff, stunned at this rough reception, meekly submits to his fate. The city militia soon comes to take charge of him.

Elfs are barely, if at all, tolerated in Bilgeton and the town guards seem inclined to cut him down on the spot and throw his body into the Bilge, but you intercede on his behalf - after all, you were looking forward to tormenting him. Instead of a flashy execution he's locked up in the Tradegate prison, given a one-sided but very entertaining trial and locked in the oubliette where he is, appropriately, forgotten about. By everyone but you, that is.

You go and visit him once a month or so to revel in his misery, but annoyingly he's doing fine in there. Elfs don't aspire to much and in his cell he's got peace and quiet, a roof over his head and all the slop he can tolerate. Even worse, he's a full blood elf so he doesn't even age as quickly as you - a century and a half later he's still sprightly and cheerful while you've turned into a gnarled, hate-filled and senile old coot. Still, you've got a pile of stuff and you've tricked people into respecting you, and that's all that really matters.

1597

Although crossing countless miles of trackless wilderness to ask some dodgy specimen who spends his days lurking under a precipice about a crotch cover sounds unappealing, it's still far more pleasant than spending the rest of your life in the Swamp of Perpetual Putridity. You accept the mission.

"Good choice!" croons the Goblin King, "Now run along and see Bhad and don't forget to give him this my order. I'm a regular so he knows my tastes and measurements. You've got a long way to go and time is short, so you'd best be on your way. Oh, and take Milner with you. I'm tired of that ass and he'll help you on your journey...."

The Goblin King clicks his fingers and you suddenly find yourself outside the Mazyrinth again, this time with the wall to the south of you. You hear a horrible braying sound and swivel quickly around to see what new horror accosts you. You've nearly sprained your neck for nothing - it's just a particularly hideous mule with the word "Milner" painted on his mottled sides in thick black paint. It probably belonged to a miller or something. You were hoping the Goblin King would fix you up with a classier ride. At least has a saddle and should be better than walking.

Your first indication that this assessment was wrong comes as soon as you try to mount up. Milner, braying, and snorting, keeps lurching away every time you try to get into the saddle.

MILNER: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2

Turn to 604 if you want to use the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes on this thing (should you have it). Otherwise if you succeed then, after more than a couple of spills, you manage to climb into the saddle. You're bruised, battered, but otherwise in charge of the situation. You think. Turn to 296.

If you fail the rotten mule manages to bite you while you're trying to reassure it of your good intentions, ripping out a large chunk of your hair and leaving a horrible bald spot. Lose 5 EFFORT. As you scream in pain the mule trots off, forcing you to follow on foot. Turn to 55.

1598

You clamber atop the wagon and flip Biff off with what in elf society is known as "the bird".

"Hey Biff! Biff! BIFF!" you shout, gesturing at the bush where the elf is skulking, "I'm leaving Elfsdale Downs and I'm never coming home! It's your fault! Give Jeff one of these for me," you continue, proffering a middle finger, "and here's a spare one for you!". Biff has gone deathly pale, probably mortified by the rare "double bird" insult and also by the realisation that his and Jeff's poor treatment of you may have caused you to leave home forever.

By this point the rest of the caravan has noticed the horrible ruckus you're making and all the guards and drivers are looking at where you're gesturing. Reasonably assuming that you're trying to alert them to an elfish raiding party, they start shouting to each other in their weird language. The caravan begins to slow down and the guards take aim in the direction you're frantically gesticulating, firing round after round from their curved bows into the undergrowth. Biff and his cronies scarper as a couple of caravan guards leap down from their vehicles and rush off after them into the woods.

Turn to 1292.

1599

Your pleas for mercy fall on deaf ears, not that the skeleton has any ears, deaf or otherwise. It boots you back into the grave you've just finished robbing, where you lay among the corpse parts, bravely weeping and begging for your life. Your miserable wails and the excited chattering of the skeleton soon summons the priest, who comes out of the church to see what all the fuss is about.

"Caught a thief, eh Greenbones?" says the priest, a dumpy, bald man in a brown cassock. The skeleton points at you and chitters menacingly.

"HE STOLE ME AND ROBBED THIS GRAVE", shrieks the shovel in a voice like a struck bell, almost causing you to leap out of your skin. If you could unhand the thing you would, but you love it so.

"Is that so? Well, you'd best come with me, my brother. Unless you want me to call the militia." The priest extends a helping hand into the pit. You know when you've been boned: you accept the priest's help. He pulls you out of your grave and leads you into the church through a back entrance as the skeleton occupies himself refilling the grave you just put all that effort into exhuming.

Turn to 353.

1600

You're not putting your life on the line for anyone except yourself. Taking advantage of the sleep-deprived brownies' morning slumber you pick up your gear and quietly sneak out of the clearing.

Thanks to last night's briefing you know how to get to Brunnenfeld - you could head for the water you can now see gleaming in the morning sun some distance away through the trees and follow the river path towards the town - to do this turn to 453. If you'd rather take a direct route through the woods to avoid attention then turn to 307. Otherwise, if you want no truck with this particular bunch of bloodthirsty and crass humans you can set out in the general direction of Bilgeton and out of this accursed forest - turn to 44.

1601

You want to finish off this unspeakable evil, mostly so it doesn't bite you in the arse later on, but there's no way you're going anywhere near that thing. Luckily you packed a bow so you stand at the other side of the clearing and pepper it with arrows.

Despite its weakened state the Phalloknight is still a tough nut to crack, and your horrible shooting isn't helping. Eventually you get bored and wander off, leaving the creature for the next adventurer to deal with. Make a note that you left the demon here and head through the undergrowth to the road by turning to 1609.

1602

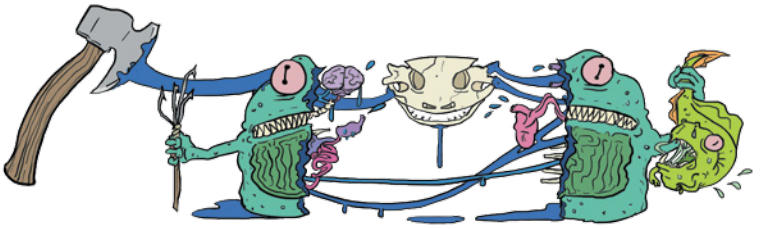
You assent to your half-sister's deal and pick up the pouch. It contains 10 Guilders worth of gold and jewellery - add this princely payoff to your Adventure Scroll. One of the rings in the pouch looks particularly interesting - it's a Signet Ring bearing the seal of Count Hugues of Bilgeton. This could be more valuable to you than gold - if you wish to remove this from the pouch then deduct 5 Guilders from the haul and instead add the Signet Ring to your Adventure Scroll. As you're making up your mind about the ring, Amelie ushers you back out of the tent. The guard that was posted outside is suddenly paying attention and rushes towards you with halberd raised in readiness to hack you down, but Amelie signals to him that everything's fine.

"Knock it off. He's in on it, Hrodwulf. Let's bring him a horse and get him out of here" she whispers. The guard nods and rushes off to get you a steed.

"Listen, if you're going to Bilgeton and you're looking for father then you might want this", she says, chucking you a bottle of milk. "It didn't help me much but maybe you'll have more luck". You're not sure how milk's going to help you either but that doesn't stop you pocketing it. With this Hrodwulf reappears, leading a beautiful white horse. Seeing you struggling to get into the saddle he even helps you clamber up there. Add the Bottle of Milk and the Noble Steed to your Adventure Scroll.

"Naturally I'm going to blame you for the theft", says your half-sister, "But don't worry, these guys are all getting a cut too and no one's going to send word back to Bilgeton. Now go! Before that potion I gave the Count wears off!"

She slaps the horse's rump and it takes off along the road to Bilgeton. Once you're a safe distance away you pull a good distance off the road and rest up in a copse of trees. Waking early in the mid-afternoon after a good sleep you enjoy a thorough stretch and a rummage around in your pack for food before setting out towards Bilgeton. Restore 20 EFFORT and turn to 1455.



1603

You casually ask whereabouts they picked up a ballista. Gawin looks about ready to knock your teeth down your throat but Sigbot intercedes.

"Let's just say that the Bilgeton militia paid us in specie instead of coin last month, and leave it at that. It's a hot item and flew off the shelves. Check back next month if you're still in the market and your nosiness hasn't gotten you killed yet. Now are you going to buy anything?"

Hopefully that answered whatever questions you had. If you want to peruse the sales items once again turn back to 1538, otherwise it's time to go - turn to 423 to leave without making a purchase or 1483 if you've already bought something and are done shopping.

1604

The townspeople line the narrow street as you're dragged all the way up the hill to the top of town. Upon reaching the palisade you are hauled up onto the roof of the gatehouse and, accompanied by the raucous cheering of the villagers, hurled over into the rocky scree on the north side of town. Although the fall isn't that far landing on bare rock is painful - lose 5 EFFORT. Your possessions rain down on you as you pick yourself up and dust yourself off.

Turn to 1698.

1605

You wheel your steed around and ride hard for the elfs attacking the rear caravan, accompanied by the skeleton guards who've dismounted and are jittering towards their trapped companions. The elfs blocking the way look like a mean crowd, even by elfish standards. A trio of them turn their attention from the wagon to you as you approach. This is going to be a tough fight!

🔪**CROOKED ELF : DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1**
🔪**HORRID ELF: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1**
🔪**FAT ELF : DIFFICULTY 4 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

As long as you have more than 1 GUARD you don't have to treat this as a Multiple Hassle - your companions are keeping them busy. However, each time you lose a round you lose 1 GUARD as the elfs bash them to pieces and scatter the bones around to stop them reforming quickly enough to help you again today.

Should you win then turn to 1133. If you're defeated then you must throw yourself on the mercy of these unpleasant villains - turn to 816.

1606

You put your hand on the lich's knee and stare into his wrinkly face where you detect a glimmer in the ancient evil's terrifying glowing eyes.

Fifteen minutes later you're both spent. Hardmod is snoring happily away on the chaise longue and you're trying desperately to get the taste of corpse meat out of your mouth by dousing it in the gangrene tea, though that seems to mostly be making matters worse.

If you're in any way ashamed of yourself you can let yourself out - turn to 846. If you'd prefer to get back into bed and cuddle with your new friend then turn to 346. If now's the perfect time to strike and rid the world of yet another unspeakable evil then turn to 94.

1607

You inform Hulagu that you're heading to Bilgeton and wish to join the caravan. The merchant appraises you like a piece of meat.

"What exactly do you bring to the table?"

How do you respond?

"My strong right arm" - Turn to 757.
"I can guide you through these lands" - Turn to 737.
"I can pay my way" - Turn to 1256.
"I got nothing." - Turn to 799.

1608

Today's just been too hard, and this on top of everything else: you just can't take it anymore. You turn aside, going in whatever direction gets the little creeps to leave you alone. After you stumble and lurch randomly, bedevilled by stings and shrill little insults for what seems like an age the sun begins to go down and the attack slackens. Night falls and the brownies finally leave you in peace. You totter through the forest for a few more paces, coming to the shore of a lake where you collapse, unable to go on any further.

Turn to 992.

1609

Though the road is visible to you there's a lot of marsh and thick woodlands between you and it. It's mid-morning by the time you finally stumble out of the woods and back onto the cobbled Count's Road to Bilgeton. Your filthy, bedraggled appearance and wild eyes belie the fact that you've only been on your quest for less than a day. Next time, you promise yourself, you'll just take the road in the first place.

Free of the woods at last, you set out along the road to Bilgeton. Turn to 1446.

1610

You try not to gag as you lower yourself into the foul-smelling, slick pit. Even though you're naturally very slippery and not particularly broad of shoulder it's a hell of a tight squeeze, and your items keep snagging on the edges. You'll have to hurry - the guards have stopped hammering on the door with their fists and are instead swinging their halberds, tearing great holes in the wood and spraying splinters around the Thieves' Guild entrance with each blow.

BOMBS AWAY: DIFFICULTY 9

Add 1 to the difficulty for every item that you have on your person. You may discard (but not use) items now to reduce this penalty - delete them from your Adventure Scroll. This must be done before you roll to see if you pass the Hassle.

If you succeed turn to 1524. If you fail then you'll have to give yourself up - turn to 562.

1611

Well, why not. That priest will eventually wake up and call the militia on you, but if you burn his church down the cops will probably think it's just a story he made up for insurance purposes, or something like that. Anyway, you feel like burning down the church and that's all there is to it.

You slosh some of the baptismal whiskey around - on the pews, the altar, the bed, the holy books - everywhere, really, and then take one of the burning censers from the wall and hurl it into the pool of flammable liquid as you make your way out the front doors. The whiskey lake goes up with a whoosh and the flames flash back into the barrel which instantly explodes, coating the walls and ceilings in a sheet of flame. From your vantage point you see a gratifying ball of fire gout out of the little window high up on the front of the church.

You've started a fire which will go on to burn Brunnenfeld to the ground - with no fire code, no fire department and rows of tightly-packed buildings, the town is a tinder box. Already the flames are spreading to the trees around the church and the wooden palisade - soon all will be ashes. Make a note that you've destroyed Brunnenfeld on your Adventure Scroll.

It's time to hightail it out of there before things get even more out of hand. If you want to let yourself out by the south gate then turn to 1594 - if you want to continue north to see if there's a way out into the mountains then turn to 1351.

1612

You spend the rest of the day and a good part of the evening babbling to yourself incoherently, trying and failing to pull out locks of your lustrous hair and generally roaming the woods, a broken shell of an elf. Thanks to your extreme laziness you wander pretty much continuously downhill, this being the path of least resistance. This eventually tips you into a dried creek and you follow the bed of this glorified ditch along through the ever-darkening forest. By sheer luck or, less probably, the favour of the gods, you eventually stumble out of the woods hungry, exhausted and emotionally drained (lose 5 more EFFORT) but entirely clear of the forest and onto the paving stones of the Count's Road.

Turn to 1715.

1613

Hulagu doesn't seem terribly impressed by what he sees in front of him, but he accepts your offer.

"Very well. We're down a guard since Cheren ran afoul of a gaggle of harpies. You will travel with us as far as Bilgeton in return for your services as a guard but beware - the maladministered and backwards County of Nonce is overrun with bandits, so you can expect to fight. Is this acceptable to you?"

Sensing that you won't get a better offer and fully intending to weasel out of your end of the deal as much as possible, you accept this sweet ride. You clamber up onto the back board of the rear wagon and take your seat inside as the caravan begins to roll out towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 482.

1614

Sneaking up behind the closest chick, you jam a burlap sack down over its head all the way down to its feet, hoist it over your shoulder and try to run for it - a task made rather difficult by the awkward size of the baby animal. You quickly find the motivation to power on, though - the owlets' terrified chirping very soon attracts the incredible hulking owl, who comes stomping back to dismember whatever's causing the commotion.

Jeff never thought you were good for much but you've discovered that you have a rare talent for fleeing, and despite your difficult load you're able to lose the huge owl somewhere behind you amid the tangled trees, though you don't stop running until the sounds of crashing and screeching have completed receded behind you into the general cacophony of the forest. By this time it's dawn, and you find yourself stumbling, exhausted but not yet dead, out of the Schleimwald and onto a partially-paved highway. You collapse in a handy patch of dirt and try to catch your breath. As you lie there you get a quick look around and see the walls of Bilgeton looming only a few miles down the road to the south-east.

Lose 10 EFFORT from the night's tribulations but add the Owlet to your Adventure Scroll. Once you recover (assuming you recover) you stand up, brush yourself off and continue on your way - turn to 1732.

1615

You slice Jeff down with your gleaming blade and are greeted by the polite applause of your servants who have gathered to watch the carnage. You're impersonating Tedbald, after all, and his heraldic crest is a decapitated elf head. You're expected to butcher an elf from time to time. A couple of cleaners come and hurl Jeff's body over the gate where it's quickly picked up by a passing meat wagon, probably bound for one of the city's less reputable butcher shops and then the kitchen pile out the back of the Dribbling Wand.

With Jeff killed you feel very little need to do anything else and you spend the rest of your days inside your mansion, ordering take out, staring into the scrying orb and commissioning painting after painting of your heroic victory.

1616

So it goes on - the mushroom never seems to let up (and Hurensohn keeps giving you chunks of the stuff), and since you can't sleep you make excellent time, not that time currently has any meaning to you other than that sometimes it's dark and other times it's light. Hurensohn refuses to stop the cart - strangely, he refers to anywhere you want to rest as "bat county" - so before too long the wagon is rolling down what looks to you like a rainbow highway towards some bizarre settlement. A tall tower stands before it, watching you with a terrifying, baleful eye. Two iron-clad knights stand before a bridge beyond the tower, and with them a malicious-looking scarecrow. Beneath the bridge roars a river, filled - you think - with skulls borne along by the screaming souls of the lost. The sun stares mercilessly down on this scene, seeing all, judging all with its harsh light.

The tower, mouthless, issues a proclamation: "STOP". The scarecrow advances across the bridge. Hurensohn looks apprehensive as he grasps the reins, preparing to slow the cart. You have no idea how he's controlling this vehicle in his current state - perhaps from experience you guess.

"You're going to have to get out and talk to these...guys", he says. "I've had too much. They'll be on to me. Here, take this", he says, releasing the reins with one hand and fumbling around for something under his seat.

Do you want to do as he says? If so turn to 607. If you're not going to talk to these hostile-looking freaks then turn to 1462.

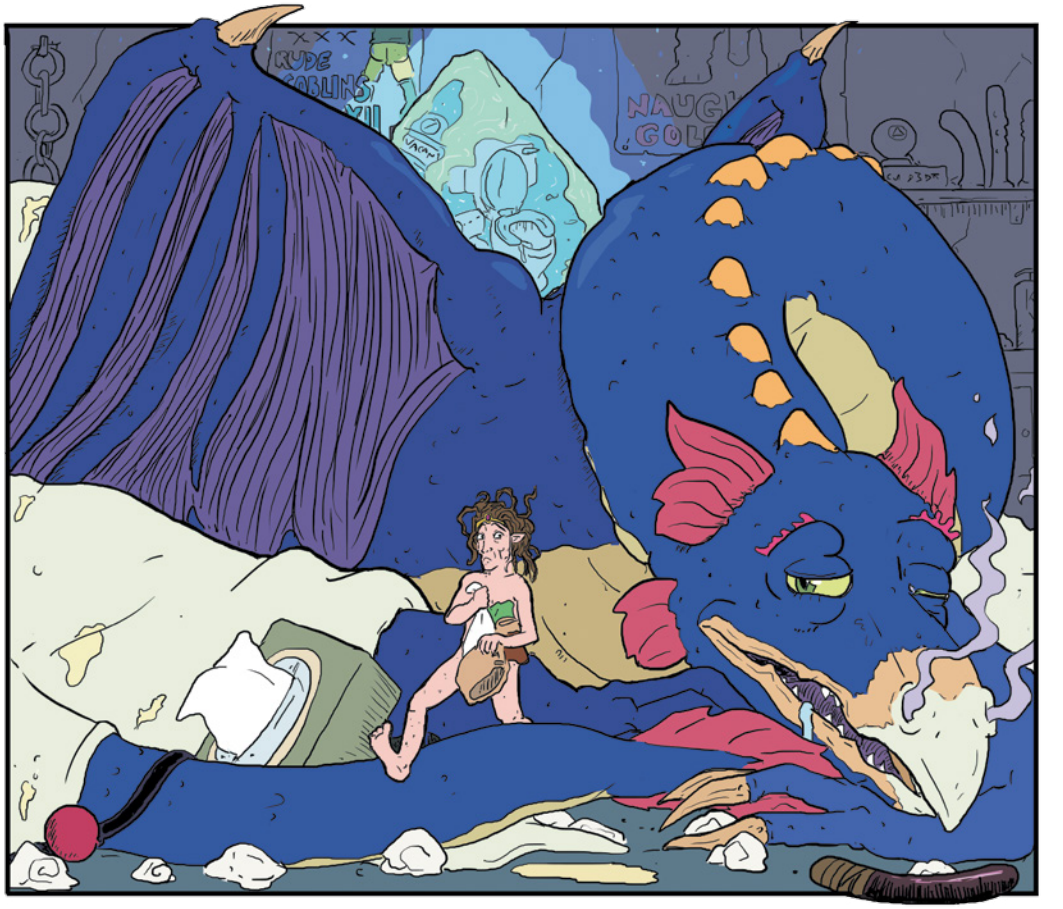
1617

You don't want to dig, but the shovel has other ideas. Resistance is futile. You want to sink this bad boy into the ground, put your foot on its step and dig up some earth. It's what you were both made for...

RESIST: DIFFICULTY 11

If you succeed then turn to 1279. If you fail then you can't bring yourself to let the shovel go - and if you've got it, you may as well use it. Turn to 1202.

1618



You jolt upright to find that the awful events of last night weren't just an incredibly weird and unpleasant dream: Bhad is snoozing happily in the bed right next to you (or, more accurately, surrounding you - the dragon's huge). Carefully extricating yourself from the sheets, you go about collecting your clothes and possessions which were scattered about the dimly-lit, filthy and foul-smelling room during the myriad unspeakable events you just took part in.

Unfortunately, moving's hard for you (you threw your back out last night, somehow, and the discomfort means you only restore up to 10 EFFORT from the ...rest) and you manage to stumble into a dresser as you're pulling your trousers back on. The dragon's yellow eyes flick open and it sits up, fixing you with an unreadable reptilian stare.

"Not... sneaking away are you?" the dragon roars sleepily, smoke rising from its nostrils.

If you want to make an excuse so you can get away as quickly as possible then turn to 770. If you've changed your mind about sneaking off then turn to 1227.

1619

How many of the items (cash, card and ring) on the previous page did you take? If you took nothing or only one item then turn to 972. If two or more items then turn to 286.

1620

You vaguely recall Jeff trying to teach you how to use one of these tools once- hook the end over the thing you want and pull, or something. Whatever. You never asked for bloody Jeff to show you anything, godsdamnit. Anyway, you figure it out on your own - you hook the key over the belt and yank down. Everything comes away in one smooth motion and you pocket the skeleton's ring as well, though you could have sworn that the skull on that skeleton started chattering while you were pulling the jewellery off its finger. You don't stick around to investigate though: like any halfway-decent half elf you quickly leave the scene of the crime before checking out your haul. You netted a small pouch containing a couple of Bilgeton Guilders, a Skeleton Workers Union membership card for something called "Greenbones" and a huge, gaudy and heavy class ring. Add the 2 Guilders, the SWU Card and the Class Ring to your Adventure Scroll.

You're back out the front of the church now. Will you go in, or do you want to proceed up the lane with your ill-gotten gains? Turn to 140 to visit the church or 1236 to get out of here.

1621

The snail is too slow to properly digest you and all you lose to it is a shoe, which you quickly recover from its corpse. In the process you manage to collect a large gob of corrosive Snail Slime - add this to your Adventure Scroll. You also managed to get just enough rest to shake off the effects of any potions you've ingested - restore any ÉLAN lost from potion abuse.

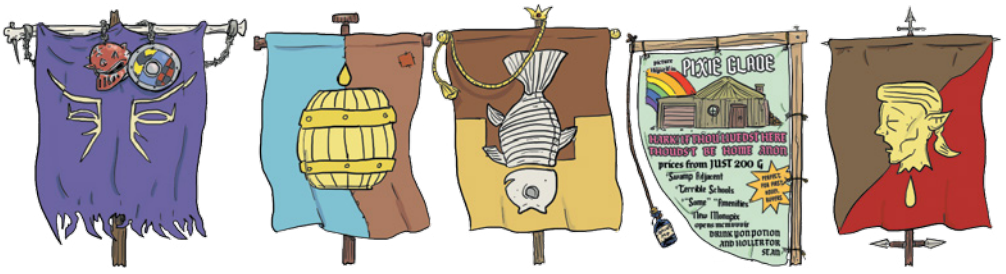
You decide to press on and make your way out of the forest rather than risk another snail attack. At least the going is a little easier in the grey pre-dawn light and you only sink up to your knees in swamp water a few times as you slog along towards the road. Turn to 1609.

1622

You bust the bartender right on the chops, smashing his stupid glasses, messing up his stupid moustache and dropping him to the ground behind the bar. The other bar patrons cheer - apparently he wasn't all that well-liked for whatever reason. Even so, you'd rather not risk getting arrested here. You wouldn't last five minutes in a human jail. You can feel the walls closing in!

You rush screaming into the market square followed by the angry shouts of the roughed-up hipster and the raucous laughter of the other patrons.

If you make a break for the nearby southern gates then you manage to squeeze out before there's trouble - turn to 372. The only other path that suggests itself to you is the church, uphill along the road to the left - surely you could seek sanctuary there? Turn 1106 to try that.



1623

You put the strange clearing and its denizens behind you and cut through the forest for another half an hour. Eventually you emerge once again from the tree line, this time facing what the map helpfully identifies as the Count's Road. Despite the sort-of grand name it's just a wide dirt track which curves to run south and west of where you stand now. According to the map, following the road south alongside the forest will eventually lead to Bilgeton and heading west will lead out onto something called the Endless Plain of Fortune, a completely uncharted land probably teeming with exotic and thrilling adventures and opportunities to get rich or die trying.

To head for Bilgeton turn to 209. If you'd rather seek your fortune out on the Endless Plain then turn to 1526.

1624

You get tangled up in a bush and the guard easily catches up with you.

"Oy!" he reiterates as he comes within easy striking range of his cruel-looking halberd, "I saw what you did".

He bends over in front of you and picks up a handful of leaves, depositing them in your hands.

"Don't litter. Last warning".

You begin to protest but the guard has already turned away. Only then do you realise that at some point during your skulking your bag had been pulled open by one of the twigs on the bush you were ineffectually hiding in and all your elfen currency had fallen out. Sheepishly repacking your cash, you notice that you're missing some of your more valuable leaves and twigs. Roll a dice and multiply the outcome by 5 - that is how many leaves have been lost. Remove that amount from your Adventure Scroll. Your embarrassed gratitude turns to rage as you realise that the stories about human corruption are right - they're not to be trusted!

Fuming at the excessive cost of this lesson in human nature, you extricate yourself from the foliage and continue on your way down the road. Turn to 1445.

1625

You decide to tell Hulagu the truth about your situation. Perhaps he can help. You yell up to him in his seat atop the wagon,

"I am a great half elf hero from Elfsdale Downs, a town many leagues distant from here. I have willingly departed my home in search of new adventures that will redound to my fame, and certainly not because I was told to leave by Jeff, who I hate."

Hulagu looks confused. "Elfsdale Downs is rumoured to be somewhere in that forest hard by, is it not?" he says, pointing over your shoulder. You turn and see the forest maybe a mile behind you. You guess you hadn't gone as far as you thought.

The merchant is on to you! You'd better come up with something convincing, and quick!

LIE: DIFFICULTY 10

If you succeed turn to 981. If you fail then you don't manage to stutter out anything remotely plausible: turn to 706.

1626

You scramble back up onto the sideboard and look around again. Your imagination must have run away with you while you were dangling off the cart. You can't see anything out there at all now that you're upright.

You're halfway through regaling the driver about your intention to micturate into his stew when the caravan stops to make camp. Suddenly the carriages ahead of you accelerate and you hear a loud thud accompanied by the sound of splintering wood coming from the rear of the carriage. You turn to look for the source of the sound and see it's being caused by a gang of elfs who have run out into the road and begun hurling cobblestones at your wagon. On closer inspection it appears to be Biff and his crew of malcontents. Biff's a bullying jerk who, like most of the denizens of Elfsdale Downs, made no effort to conceal his disdain for you. He's stolen your lunch money, pulled your underpants hard up betwixt your butt cheeks, deliberately stabbed you in the feet multiple times while playing mumblety-peg and hassled you out of the grasswatching academy, but surely he wouldn't pelt a carriage with cobblestones if he knew you were a passenger.

If you want to let Biff know there are friendlies aboard then turn to 1176. Otherwise if you have a Bow of the Wood and wish to use it to defend the wagon then turn to 588. If you trust the other guard to handle this situation then turn to 1178. If you're pretty sure you're doomed then you could jump free and make a run for it - turn to 1278.

1627

You're unusually perceptive tonight. That gurgling isn't coming from you! You stop moving, narrowly avoiding stepping in a huge dark puddle of something gross and squirmy.

You've (nearly) stumbled across the brood of a giant moon moth. These horse-sized insects are pretty common in forests in this part of the world, but you've never met one before since you don't get out much. The giant nocturnal bugs live for only a week in which time they mate, lay a slurry of caterpillar eggs in goo and promptly go off somewhere to die. It's one of these slurries you've neatly avoided stepping in, and the gurgling noises you can hear are coming from the thousands of tiny caterpillars that have already hatched and begun looking for food so they can begin the whole pointless and disgusting cycle over again.

No longer feeling so hungry after seeing that, you step around the lake of horrors and continue the long hike south. Your persistence is rewarded - sometime late at night you emerge from the forest and onto the cobbled surface of the Count's Road.

Turn to 1715.

1628

The skeletons quickly overcome your pitiful struggles and tie you into the flenser. Chittering, they march out in single file, leaving you to your fate and an uncomfortable night strapped to the infernal device. If only you had someone you could rely on to cut you free, but alas. Alone, you submit to your fate and enjoy a final snooze.

Annoyingly early in the morning the warlock of Warlock Tower wakes you up by conducting the messy, painful and extremely terminal flensing ritual which removes the skin and flesh from your bones, revealing a pristine skeleton which can be inhabited by a wandering spirit to form a reanimated skeletal worker. His or her adventures will be recounted in an upcoming Two-Fisted Fantasy Gamebook, "Crypt of the Bone Lords", available in all good bookstores summer 1985. Your spirit, however, is lost and your adventure ends here.

1629

You tell the guard about how you bravely and single-handedly slew Bhad in the heart of the dread Alp of Abandonment. The guard can hardly believe it but after giving you a hard look in the eyes he can tell that you speak the truth. He shudders.

"The dragon always gave me the creeps. The world's a better place without that thing on the prowl. You've done all of us a great service".

He pulls himself together and after dotting all the is and crossing the ts the guard hands you a tightly furled piece of vellum with details of your right to be in Bilgeton! Add the Residency Scroll to your Adventure Scroll in ink : you are now permitted to enter Bilgeton through the Trader's Gate in future adventures, and you'll start each new game with that item. Your paperwork complete, the guard escorts you out of the office and through to the other side of the gatehouse. You step through the exit and out onto the streets of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1364.

1630

"Oh, riddles", says the demon cheerily with a sound like a crystal chandelier being swung into a tree, "I love riddles. I'll go first!"

You begin to object but the demon has already launched into his puzzler:

"Five demonic princes: Ancitif, Botis, Corson, Decarabia and Eligos are hellish patrons, in no particular order of, Cold Truth, Falsity, Ambiguity, Mu and Chaos. Truth always tells the truth, Falsity always lies, Ambiguity will not commit and Mu negates the question, but whether Chaos speaks truth, lies, something in between or a negation is a completely random matter. You must determine the patronage of the demonic princes by asking five yes or no questions. Each question must be put to but one demon. All but one of the demons understand Palavan Humanese, but will answer all questions in the language of the seventh hell, in which the words for yes, no, maybe and mu are "HO","AG", "NOALN" and "AFFA" in some order. As you are aware nothing in the seventh hell is fixed and the meaning of these words varies from day to day. The last demon, which may be any of the princes, speaks only in the language of the diabolical spheres and responds in the meter of the souls of the damned. Now which demon is which?"

This is a real chin-scratcher! If you know the answer then convert the name of the demons into numbers by using a Caesar Cipher with a right shift of 2 and adding the resultant numbers together, then divide it by the sum of the numbers belonging to the demonic princes of Cold Truth and Mu and turn to that paragraph. If that paragraph makes any sense then continue reading, otherwise the Prince of Shards claims his victory and his prize! He slays you and drags your soul back into its hell dimension, ending your adventure right here!

1631

You'd rather take your chances with whatever awaits you outside than forsake the gods of your people. Yes, you know next to nothing about those gods and the people hate you, but there's principles at stake here. Well, you don't have any of those, but you've got your reasons. Anyway, you say no.

Chlothar shakes his head sadly as you leave the church. You stride through the double doors. Luckily the bloodthirsty crowd of toffs has cleared off but the guards are still lurking around. As soon as they spot you they advance. You've barely begun stuttering an excuse when one of them smashes the butt of his halberd into your head, sending you reeling into darkness.

Justice is harsh in Brunnenfeld, but luckily these guards have just had lunch and don't have the stomach to carry out a public dismemberment. Instead they content themselves with robbing you of any currency you might have (remove anything in the Cash section of your Adventure Scroll) before dragging you up to the top of the hill and hurling your limp body out of the north gate.

You awaken a short time later face down in a pile of gravel in a mountain pass just to the north of town. You might have lost your money but you've gained a splitting headache from the beating - subtract 5 EFFORT. Should you survive this rough treatment you rise to your feet, dust yourself off, and continue onwards.

Turn to 1698.

1632

Putting that scene behind you as best you can, you carry on. Nothing else particularly weird occurs and after a couple more hours you complete your refreshing stroll along the banks of the great inland lake. The Alp of Abandonment, the lonely white-peaked spire jutting out of the tundra like a huge and lonesome fang, is but a short distance away over the plains. You commence the overland trek, being careful to avoid the attention of the few shamblers you can see roaming around along the way, and you soon arrive before the base of the huge mountain without incident.

Turn to 791.

1633

You paddle over the weir and splash down into the water on the other side. Here, in another huge chamber almost the same size as the one before it, you find that the water is marginally cleaner - while it still stinks it's at least relatively clear and doesn't seem to contain too many chunks of anything rancid. Above you there are numerous holes in the ceiling and some of them have ropes with buckets coming down. This must be Bilgeton's reservoir of drinking water!

As a bucket descends into the water from above you splash over to it and cling on for dear life. You hear hearty swearing about the weight of the bucket from whoever's hauling it up, but you soon find yourself at the top of the well among a group of surprised human townsmen. You clamber out and take a cursory glance around, which confirms that you're within the town walls! Bidding your unwitting and confused benefactors a good day, you depart to explore Bilgeton.

Before you continue: If you had the Glorious Vessel or Drop Kick, you sadly had to leave it down below. Remove it from your Adventure Scroll. If you were swimming around in the sewers or floating in a barrel you find your prolonged exposure to the foul and corrosive water has rotted away all your clothing. All outfits on your Adventure Scroll other than the barrel are similarly affected and must be discarded! If you are not wearing the barrel your remaining rags do not entirely protect your modesty - you must make a note that you are naked, hardly the best first impression to make in a place like this!

Regardless of your sartorial situation it's time to move on. Turn to 1364.

1634

It takes a while to get through the tunnel but eventually you emerge into... another cavern. It's as dark as the others and there's a shallow pool of water in the middle of the chamber which soaks right through your cheap elfen shoes.

You can go in all the cardinal directions from here. To go north turn to 792. To go east turn to 295. To go south turn to 529. For west turn to 1301.

1635

You let out a polite little cough to let the horrifying destroyer of civilisations know that you're there and sidle out from behind the stalagmite as the Malrog swivels around, its craggy face radiating pure hatred.

"WHAT SCUM SPEAKS", it grumbles out with a sound like a pair of massive basalt blocks being dragged against each other.

Your courage fails you a little as you stutter out your name and some minor pleasantries about the weather (dark and stale, as is usual for a mine).

"STATE YOUR PURPOSE AND PREPARE FOR DEATH, INSECT".

If you'd like to ask the monster if you can pass then turn to 1319. If you think you can butter it up by asking about its book then turn to 1109.

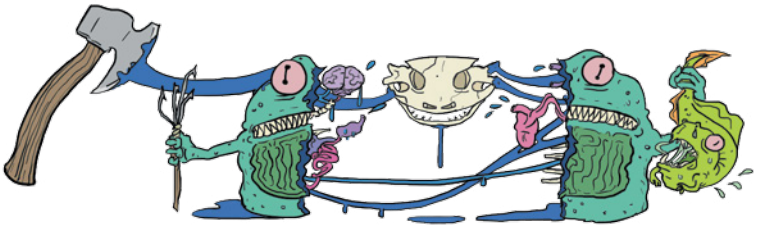
1636

Fairies are pretty close to being the most useless, unhelpful beings in the Kingdom of Palaver. While the dwarf might be able to tell you how to get into Gobholme if you help him out, all you'll get from these fairies is sass. You decide to rush in to help the downed dwarf:

🔪**FAIRY SWARM: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 3**

If you defeat the fairies turn to 195. If you've bitten off more than you can chew then your feeble attacks aren't enough to save the beleaguered dwarf from the attention of most of the fairies, and as soon as he's beaten into silence the swarm turns its attention to you. One look at their victim, covered in burns, cuts and bruises lying face down with his pants around his ankles is enough to persuade you to take to your heels, and you flee these tiny flying terrors before they can give you the same treatment.

You flee fast but unfortunately you don't make a completely clean getaway. While you do escape the punches, kicks and miniature fireballs of the fairies, one of the little pests manages to catch up and squeeze into your pack - add the Fairy to your Adventure Scroll. Unaware of your terrible luck for now you move on, putting this humiliation far behind you. Turn to 1151.



1637

You take the bottle and sit down next to the troll. The nine-foot-tall monster regards you impassively with his huge stone face.

"Good lad. I'm Kaspars, Boyar of the Rock. Now down that bottle. We'll discuss your business here after that".

The bottle is a huge granite flask. You remove the stopper - a pebble - and your eyes almost melt away as the fumes scour them of all moisture. A fizzing blue liquid bubbles out of the top of the flask and burns your fingers quite badly. It's going to be tough to keep whatever this is down.

Kaspars leans back and tips his entire flask into his monolithic face before hurling it away, sending it flying right off the edge of the canyon. While most of the other trolls are drinking and yelling merrily over the top of each other, a few of the stone faces are watching you to see what you'll do.

If you've got the Tasty Burg or a Stale Loaf then maybe you have an idea as to how these could assist you in this situation- turn to 860 to use the Burg or 10 to deploy the Loaf. Otherwise you can down the brew and just hope for the best - turn to 1523.

If you'd rather not risk drinking whatever the hells this stuff is then you can make your apologies and leave - turn to 570.

1638

Whatever's attacking you probably expects you to put up more of a fight. It leaps out of the water, roaring horribly as it sails through the air at chest height, hoping to tear you out of the boat and into the creek where it could finish you off. Unfortunately for your mysterious attacker you are a miserable coward: whereas this attack would have instantly felled someone putting up a stout defence, you are in fact cowering at the bottom of the boat wishing you were back in your draughty tower in Elfsdale Downs. The monster, finding nothing to savage, sails clean over the boat and back into the creek, and its momentum carries down under the water behind you with a huge, ungainly splash. You hear a loud crack and a roar of pain: it's hurt itself!

Taking advantage of this rare stroke of good fortune, you paddle like crazy. The water behind you boils and you hear a snarl of pure rage as the creature pursues you, splashing unevenly through the water as you flee before it. After what seems like hours of this grim chase and just when you're about to give up all hope of giving this monster the slip, you see a dim light ahead - the end of this underground stream! You redouble your efforts and emerge into a starry night. You're paddling fast up an otherwise sluggish creek which is about to join with a faster-flowing stream. Ahead of you is a huge plain, behind you hills rising up into mountains, and between the hills and you is the beast that's been chasing you! Taking advantage your slightly slackening pace as you lollygag the monster leaps from the water behind your punt - it's a half-starved manticore! Goblins sometimes keep them as pets and flush them when they grow out of their cute phase - and this one is far past cute. It's as tired as you are and seems to have broken its foreleg but the rest of its claws and terrifying stinger work fine, as you soon find out! The beast rears up, secures your punt with one terrible paw and begins battering you with its huge bat wings as it tries to rip your entrails out with great swings of its cruel scorpion tail. Caught now, you must fight:

🔪**EXHAUSTED MANTICORE: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes and want to use it on this thing then turn to 685.

If you win, turn to 921. If you lose this time then the monster is hungry enough that there are no third chances! You are dragged down into the water and back into the tunnel where the starving beast will chew on you at its leisure.

1639

You put up a pretty convincing display of violence and the guards, being little more than country hicks squeezed into armour, kind of freak out. They both flee, but in their haste to get away one of them trips over and bashes his head against a tree hard enough to knock him out cold. The other doesn't even look back as he runs down a worn path alongside a gently winding river. He's probably going to be back once he calms down so it might be a good idea not to stay here.

You pause to loot the fallen soldier - he's wearing a freshly Soiled Gambeson and a Dented Helmet. You may also collect his Cheap Halberd: add these to your Adventure Scroll if you like. With that accomplished you decide to leg it before the guards come back with reinforcements. The only direction that doesn't feature fleeing militiamen, a body of water or the forest that you just spent all day slogging through is south, so you head that way with a quickness. You soon emerge from the forest and find yourself in a wide open plain.

Turn to 268.

DROP KICK

1640

After several hours of enduring the dust, spiders and general privations of the Endless Plain of Fortune you've had enough and repent of your stupid decision to go this way. To top it off you've been walking through a vicious dust storm for the past half hour and managed to get all turned around as you stumbled around in circles, panicking. Luckily you have your trusty scrying orb which you can use to show you the fastest way out of here. After lingering over a vision of your skeletonised corpse bleaching in the drifting dust you succeed in getting it to tune in on a more useful prediction, showing you walking vaguely to the northeast for a while. You follow its instructions and after a surprisingly short stroll you find yourself approaching a familiar-looking forest. In front of it is a wide dirt track which you recognise as the Count's Road. Since it goes towards Bilgeton without the possibility of getting lost in the endless western plains you decide to follow it.

Your Scrying Orb is depleted - remove it from your Adventure Scroll - but at least you made it back from the Endless Plain of Fortune and lived to tell the tale. Turn to 209.

1641

Before you can stop yourself you've punched the wizard as hard as you can right on the nose. This actually isn't all that hard, but the wizard is totally unprepared and has the typically flimsy wizardly constitution. Your wobbly punch shatters his fragile honker and blood sprays out everywhere, soaking his fake white beard and clean white robes.

Aside from breaking his nose (and hurting your wrist - you really need to learn how to throw a punch), you've also broken his concentration. His illusory powers are not only providing the patrons' drinks but also the establishment's decor, and with his magic dispelled the glamour fades to reveal that the interior matches the exterior - it's not shabby chic, it's just shabby. Everyone's really been standing around in a decrepit, dank old warehouse all along!

Although this is far more your kind of scene than the fancy club you entered you realise that at some point the wizard's going to recover and curse you with something, or at the very least rat you out to the bouncer. You decide to make a break for it, heading out the exit before any more trouble can break out.

Restore 5 EFFORT due to getting the last laugh for once and turn to 827.

1642

You don't get far - the lich follows you out into the crypt's main hall and blasts you with a terrible spell that envelops you in a burning cloud of corrosive green fog. You look in horror as all your flesh melts from your bones, leaving you thoroughly skeletonised and standing in a puddle of goo that used to be the rest of you! The lich chuckles mirthlessly and returns to his quarters, leaving you alone to cope with your new situation as best you can.

Turn to 1743.

1643

You explain that you don't have any Guilders but you've got something just as good - elf currency! You place a twig in Fettwanst's outstretched palm. Strangely, he's not impressed. Misreading this terrible whale of a man, you keep piling leaves and twigs into his hand until you've given him all your currency. He gives you a look like you've just put a turd into his palm.

"This is no good here", says Fettwanst, closing his hand firmly and crumbling all your hard-taken elfen currency into dust and splinters of wood. Remove all the elf currency from your Adventure Scroll.

If you're now all out of options you can try to fight your way past this lummox - turn to 416 - or you can give up and head to the southern gates. Turn to 338.

1644

You hurl the glowing jar into the room. It shatters noisily on the bed, spraying its contents all over the hapless warlock who wakes up, screeching furious obscenities.

The stuff in the jar is a magical embalming fluid which, aside from being horribly toxic, is also incredibly flammable. The warlock, locating you through the chemically-induced tears running down her face, prepares to cast some kind of doomsday spell at you. Before she can get the spell off the fumes reach a candle and combust explosively, flinging you backwards into the lobby. Seconds later the warlock lurches out, still aflame, partially jerked by the magical fluid in the jar and one hundred percent furious at the half elf who tousled with her skeleton workers, looted her workshop and woke her up by turning her into a living mummy. Ignoring the flames that still lick at her from her burning robes, the badly wounded warlock screams a completely unprintable obscenity and attacks!

SCORCHED SORCEROR : DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you defeat the warlock then turn to 1361. If you can't defeat this fricasseed foe, turn to 363.

1645

"Don't shoot", you shout up, "I'm a man!"

The guard gives you a sceptical look (or at least you think he does) through the narrow eye slit in his helmet but he lowers a rope down to you anyway and hauls you out. Once you're out of the pit and dusted off he and his companions gather around you to see what you're all about. They seem willing to take your claim of being human at face value, though they appear to be mildly concerned about your wardrobe choices. Perhaps the elfen nursery stories about humans eating elfs for fun were a bit off, although that could just be because the elfen nursery stories about humans being as thick as pig shit were spot on.

Unaware of your internal monologue, the guard that hauled you out of the hole addresses you in an earthy humanese.

"Ye ought to should be more careful out in the Feewald. Dire wolves be the least of your worries. There be brownies, elfs and other filth out here that'd cut your throat as soon as look at ye. I am guard-sergeant Witlass of the Brunnenfeld militia. Why don't ye come along with us back to town? If the doctor's about ye might be able to get that arm seen to, or at least get drunk enough that you forget about it".

If you'd like to go with them then turn to 1138.
If you'd prefer to stay the hells out of any human settlement especially when escorted there by an armed guard then turn to 1590.

1646

Thinking unusually quickly you hunker down behind the shield, taking only mildly horrific burns as the flames slowly cook you. Lose 5 EFFORT (and don't use the shield to try to reduce that damage!).

Just as the now-ruined shield becomes too hot to handle, the dragon's flame lets up. Chucking the molten remnants of the shield to one side (remove it from your Adventure Scroll) you can now draw your weapon and attack while the dragon is regaining its breath - turn to 473. If this course of action seems too suicidal for you then you can use the opportunity to flee - turn to 1264 - or if you don't like your chances of getting to the exit without being set on fire, you can grovel for mercy by turning to 1537.

1647

As you noted before by reading all the cards the Count kept throwing on the ground in front of you, he has nothing. You somehow beat him with a high card. The Count goes deathly pale as you enquire as to how he will deliver your deed of nobility.

"Guards! Seize this traitor! He's attempting to usurp my title!" shouts the Count suddenly as he scrapes the possessions you won fair and square back across the rug. "He's a cheat, too, otherwise how could he have defeated 'the Mark' in three games in a row?"

The guards roll their eyes at this but that doesn't stop them following orders, since that's what they're paid for. You briefly think about running but then you realise at least one of the guards has a crossbow which is aimed right at your torso, wielded with the assurance of someone who doesn't often miss. The guards drag you to the ground, shackle your hands with iron manacles, relieve you of your stuff and roughly haul you back onto your feet. As they drag you across the clearing to the prisoner wagon (a carriage lined with iron bars like a giant cage), one of the guards hisses in your ear: "You went too far. Thanks for nothing, bozo".

They heave you into the prison wagon, making extra sure to bang your head against the bars on the way in before slamming the iron door shut behind you and securing the latch.

Turn to 227.

1648

You open the bedroom door, skip nimbly down the wonky stairs once again, stride past a red-faced Jeff and bemused Mom and march right out through the front door of the tower, ready at last for adventure. The door slams shut behind you and you hear multiple bolts being drawn.

There's no further reason to stick around. Will you head out for the road to Bilgeton (turn to 643) or will the horror of your foolhardy decision to leave hit you and drive you partially insane, causing you to wail and flee headlong into the woods? If so turn to 785.

1649

Despite your miserable academic record, your terrible financial status and your total lack of talent for or interest in grasswatching, you're pretty sure this stupid old coot will let you back in on the grounds that you'll owe even more money to the school which you may or may not one day make an effort to repay if you feel like it.

You make your formal request to be readmitted to the Grasswatching Academy as a resident, preferably with a large room overlooking the girl's dorms. You don't think you've ever seen the old master crack a smile but he howls with laughter at this suggestion, tears streaming down his cheeks. Eventually he pulls himself together enough to slam the door in your face but you can still clearly hear him laughing on the other side of the baroque portal. Lose 5 EFFORT due to the chagrin.

Your bitter-sweet trip down memory lane completed, there's nothing to do but give Brenda another hard kick and leave the grounds to find some other place to waste your time. Turn to 1284.

READ

1650

Your inability to understand how elfs tick was the reason you didn't thrive in your home town, and this lack of understanding derails your revenge plans completely. Jeff, being an elf, has no plans or interest in bettering himself beyond finding a place to live and getting a few meals a day. You swing by the villa from time to time to hassle Jeff about his lack of a job but as he is at the apex of elfen accomplishment your taunting falls on deaf ears.

On the verge of abandoning your plans, you are riding out to try to sink the boot in one last time when fate intervenes to give Jeff his comeuppance. You arrive to find Jeff, your mother and a tall, ancient but hearty-looking male human of about eighty years and wearing a milkman's uniform all standing about on the front porch in the midst of what looks to be a difficult discussion. The old man and your mother are holding hands and Jeff looks utterly miserable. They all fall silent as you approach.

Your mother is the first to speak:

"Son, this is Wandering Milkman, the very same milkman who wandered into my life all those years ago and gave me my rich, rich son. Since you moved us in here he has wandered back into my life, heart and bed. He has again been delivering our milk...and as Jeff is never home he has been delivering everything else a woman needs too." At this Jeff goes bright red, you cringe and the old man roars with laughter and gives you a big wink.

"I go out to sit under the tree in the yard for but an hour a day..." Jeff complains, but the old man interjects, walking in front of Jeff and over to you with his hand outstretched. Your feelings about this guy are a bit ambiguous, but you've never seen anyone upset Jeff to this level so you're quickly warming to him. You reach to shake his hand and he crushes your weak paw in a vice-like grip.

"Greetings. Name's Wandering Q. Milkman, and I'm given to understand that you're one of my many bastards. Right pleased to meet you but as you can see I'm a mite busy right now. I'll stop by your place soon, we'll drink some rye and catch up a-proper." With another wink he turns and, putting his arm around your mother's waist, pulls her back into the house. The door slams shut behind them, leaving you and Jeff alone outside.

Jeff looks at you with a mix of loss, bewilderment and betrayal on his face. In return your face contorts into the ugliest, smuggest expression ever witnessed on any sentient being. "Whose turn is it to leave the nest now, Jeff?", you sneer as you saddle up. You chuckle at this humdinger all the way back to Bilgeton where you spend the rest of your days as a worthless, dissolute fop.

1651

You've picked up a Screaming Skull on Spider Legs! This one is none too happy about having its sleep disturbed and begins screeching at a ludicrous volume. You throw it hard at the flensing table where it cracks open with a horrible snapping sound, but too late - you hear a foul-mouthed bellowing coming from upstairs...

Turn to 875.

1652

She's obviously got the hots for you! You graciously allow Brenda to join your noble quest. Add Brenda to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 214.

1653

You slide your Guilder over the bar and receive in return a filthy mug filled with some foul-tasting swill which the bartender assures you is a goblin variant of beer. It tastes absolutely vile and you wind up nursing it for hours as the goblin glares at you. Still, you're a paying customer and there's no one else around so he can't do much more than insinuate he'd like you to piss off by thumping the bar with his iron fist every time he walks past you.

You take so long with your beer that the bar begins to fill up! As the rowdy goblins flood the bar for drinks after a long day of rushing about doing whatever goblins do, a band begins to play up on the stage. If you turned a couple of dwarfs over to Eilika you'll recognise them - turn to 197 to approach them if you've met them on this adventure. Otherwise the dwarfen pop they're strumming out is just background noise to you and you continue looking around. You see that several of the goblins are piling into the fighting pit where they are already bashing each others' heads in for fame and cash prizes. Turn to 876 if you're interested in getting in on that action.

If neither music nor violence floats your boat, while you're gawping at the goings on the bartender swipes your unattended drink and pours it out. Since you've got nothing to drink and there's no way you're ordering another one, you'd best either book a room for the night - turn to 694 - or just fulfil the bartender's fondest wishes and leave his establishment by turning to 192.

1654

Kaspars stares intently at your open palm. He holds his fist out in front of him in the shape of a rock.

"H... how can I be defeated?" he booms in what probably passes as a wavering voice for a rock troll. "It takes decades of patient study for our people to master this game, and to be overcome so swiftly by an outsider - and a meat creature, at that?"

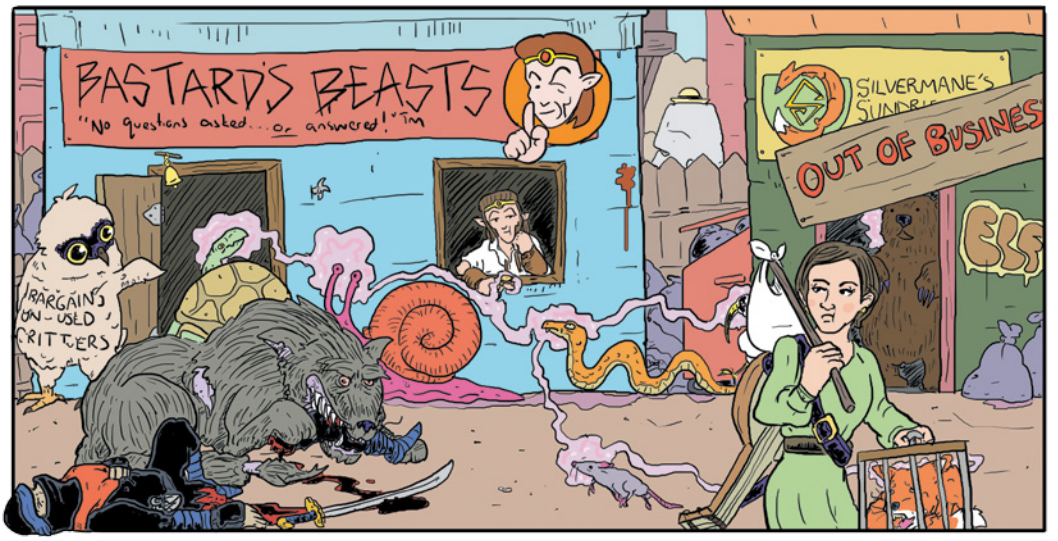
He recovers his composure somewhat. You remind him that a deal is a deal.

"Very well. Perhaps we have underestimated the meat folk - if they're all as cunning and intelligent as you then perhaps we should not risk agitating them by stopping up their water. We will clear the stream that leads to Brunnenfeld."

You stick around to watch Kaspars and the half-dozen or so trolls who are still sober enough to move clamber down the side of the mesa and clear the debris out of the stream. Thanks to their huge stature and strength they're done remarkably quickly and the clear, slightly fizzy water soon flows down the creek bed once again. With that accomplished, you decide to move on.

If the time is right to return to Brunnenfeld to collect your lavish reward then turn to 270. If you feel that your fate lies in the big city rather than in the first provincial backwater you came across then you forgo your reward (for now) and move on. Turn to 955.

1655



You've got the ring and you've got your own collection of exotic animals which are way cooler than anything this lousy store has. Instead of giving the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes to its intended recipient, why not use it to set up a competing business? You get to work immediately, developing a business plan, taking out a loan and provisioning the store. Within days you've set up Bastard's Beasts right next door to the hapless Silvermane's franchise. Using the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes, not only can you control your own critters but you can command the animals from next door to march right into your inventory or simply give Emilie a hard time. Soon you've put the poor young girl out of business: she shuts up shop and leaves town.

Using the power of the ring you're soon the main animal supplier/horse-whisperer/unlicensed veterinarian in the city of Bilgeton, which allows you to turn a solid profit no matter how much you plunder the business's finances. While the Silvermanes would dearly like to come and get revenge on you, they're not able to - you're protected at all times by your increasingly hulking owlet and mangy dire wolf, and after a couple of would-be assassins meet a grisly fate they decide to leave you alone.

With a moderate fortune and a roof over your head you have no further need to seek out your human father or worry about Jeff. You succeeded by virtue of pure, unbridled bastardry and a surprising concern for the welfare of your gigantic mongrel of a dog.

1656

You throw the item in a glorious arc towards the hand, which doesn't even move as the object sails right over it and lands in the lake with a loud splash. The hand clenches into a fist with the middle finger extended, an insult if you ever saw one! After giving you a good long look at the bird, it descends back below the surface of the lake without a ripple. Remove whatever item you threw from your Adventure Scroll.

Furious at your loss and chagrined by this rude treatment, you've got half a mind to wade into that lake to get your stuff back and teach that hand a lesson. To do so turn to 633. If you'd rather not get wet or risk further humiliation then you bid farewell to the loot now resting at the bottom of the lake and turn to 1632.

1657

The pixies drag you a short distance through the swamp to the Glade proper. It's a wretched little hellhole, a jumble of cramped lanes lined with identical grim-looking houses all packed together. In the centre of town there's what looks like a main drag with several larger buildings, and in the middle of it all is a large rock, curiously painted gold. A couple of humans and a dwarf are kneeling in front of it, hacking at it feverishly with iron picks. The only other interesting feature that this miserable little burg possesses is a barn-sized structure at the edge of town with the words, "Lodge of Travellers" stencilled on the side. You guess it's supposed to be an inn though it doesn't look like the kind of place anyone with any money would want to stay.

"They're making our new supermarket for us. It'll be the biggest Monopix in the tri-county region. And you're going to help. Get digging. If you do a good job you can stay at the Lodge of Travellers for the night and maybe there'll be some more work for you tomorrow. Now here's your magical pick", he says, chucking a cheap-looking pick onto the ground in front of you. "Get to it".

You pick up the Magical Pick (add it to your Adventure Scroll) and, wondering how it all came to this, begin to get down to some actual work under the watchful eyes of your pixie overseers.

CAN YOU DIG IT: DIFFICULTY ? - TOUGHNESS 2

You may decide the DIFFICULTY each round - if you overcome that level you've dug out that amount of STONE. Make a note of the amount you've removed.

Once you've completed the job one way or another then turn to 989.

1658

Karol, who has been leaning against a wall this whole time, waits for the skeletons to leave before coming over to untie you.

"Dodam to do swojego konta", he sighs as he undoes the last rope, freeing you from your desperate predicament.

Not bothering to thank your lanky hero, you stand up from the flensing slab and have a look around. The room you're in is some kind of necromantic lab - it looks like this is where victims and bodies are turned into living skeletons. The rituals used for this are no doubt dark and disgusting - the worn stone floor is splattered with a dark ooze and there's a small heap of corpses and body parts rotting conspicuously in the corner. The walls of the room are lined with what you assume to be potion decanting equipment, reference scrolls and numerous vials, jars and bottles of liquid of various unnatural colours.

As you're considering whether to get the hells out or start filling your boots, you hear a dull snoring noise coming from upstairs - the warlock in charge of this place is snoring loudly somewhere up that spiral staircase. Maybe this could be your chance to rid the world of that pesky warlock and help yourself to some magical loot....or perhaps you could just nick off.

If you want to escape while you still can then turn to 393. If you'd like to deal with the snoring warlock then turn to 637. If you'd prefer to get some looting in first then turn to 1293.

1659

Tied as you are, you don't really have a hope in hells of getting away from this guy. Instead you meekly submit to your fate. The Spectre rides through the mountains along narrow passes until the range gives way to rolling hills and then, finally a road which runs towards Bilgeton. You stop by the side of the road and after an uncomfortable night's sleep spent slung over the back of the horse you're taken the rest of the way at a hard gallop. You watch the imposing walls of Bilgeton rising out of the distance and growing bigger and bigger, and before noon you're at the enormous northern gates where a couple of heavily-armed guards are inspecting the caravans and travellers queued up to enter the city.

The Spectre jumps down from the horse and hails one of the guards, a fellow with a droopy moustache.

"Got another for me, eh? Let's take a look at him", says the guard, glaring at you. "Yep, looks like a troublemaker. Reckon we have a cell for him. Why don't you come in and make your declaration and oath while we see this gentleman to his room".

Without any further ado you're hauled roughly off the horse and thrown on the ground before being dragged into the gatehouse where you're handed over to the prison guards. They lead you in through the guardroom where you are strip searched while all your gear is confiscated. You watch it being secured in a wooden evidence chest at the back of the room (keep it on your Adventure Scroll for now, but none of it's available for you to use). You're given your Prisoner of the Count starter kit - a couple of filthy sackcloth tunics, a toothbrush with only one bristle left and a pot to piss in (don't bother adding these loathsome items to your Adventure Scroll). Now that you've been formally inducted into the Bilgeton prison system a couple of the surly prison guards march you down a narrow spiral staircase to your new home.

Turn to 49.

1660

Karol looks horrified that you've called on him.

"Zostaw mnie z spokoju!" he exclaims.

"Hey! No phoning a friend!" interjects the demon, disembowelling you both. Your adventure ends here.

1661

Paddling for all you're worth (or far more, really) you manage to get under the bridge and out the other side before the guards can get into position. You hear their weighted nets and lassos splashing into the water just behind you. As soon as you feel safe enough you turn around to shoot the guards a rude gesture but think better of it after the guards, now in position atop the bridge, fire a volley of crossbow bolts at you! Luckily your frenzied paddling and the flow of the stream has moved you out of accurate shooting range and the bolts splash harmlessly into the water behind you. This doesn't stop the guards reloading and trying again, and you're glad when the stream takes a hard turn and puts that hostile little human town behind you.

Turn to 1456.

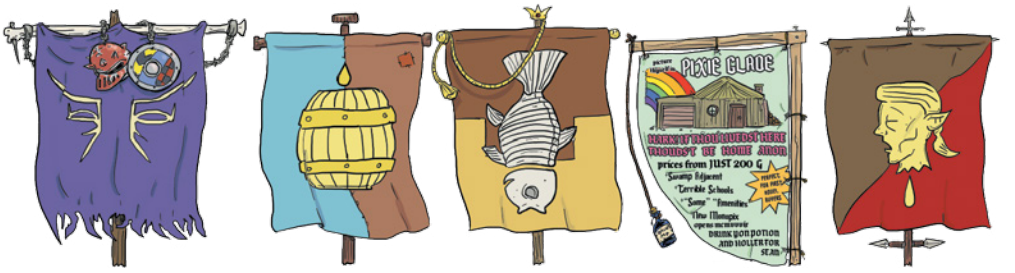
1662

Perhaps you think you're going to fight your way out of this one, but as soon as you begin to struggle Sigbot draws a dagger with his free hand and gives you a hard poke in the side while gripping your arm so hard you think it might break. His accomplices advance on you steadily, weapons drawn. You've made a bad situation worse.

Luckily these guys aren't completely uncivilised - they merely strip you to your leather underwear and lash you to a tree just a short way back from the road before moving on, leaving you to your fate. The sun has set and the band of crooks is long gone before you finally work your way free of your bindings and can continue on your way. Remove everything you own from your Adventure Scroll, make a note that you're now naked (your form-fitting unmentionables do little to protect your modesty).

After a fairly long and uneventful stretch of travelling (mercifully excised from this tome to save on printing costs and to avoid further straining the reader's patience, but either way it's taken long enough to allow you to recuperate somewhat: restore 20 EFFORT) the road emerges from the woods at last and you finally see the great walls of Bilgeton in the distance. It's still at least half a day's ride away or twice as long on foot, but the end's in sight at long last! Still, before you lies a long and lonesome road.

Now, have you summoned a Shiny Demon into the world? If so turn to 1574. If not, turn to 897.



1663

The bartender takes your cash and gives you a key for a room upstairs (or up ladder, really). Not bothering to thank the guy you climb up and locate your room.

If you're looking forward to a nice sleep in a comfortable bed then boy are you disappointed. The room is tiny - the nobolds are only three or four feet tall, after all. The bed is far too small to sleep on so you wind up trying to sleep on the floor. Just as you finally manage to drift off the nobold workers come back from their shifts and you're jolted awake by the sound of yelling, screaming, smashing bottles and weird nobold oaths coming from the bar downstairs.

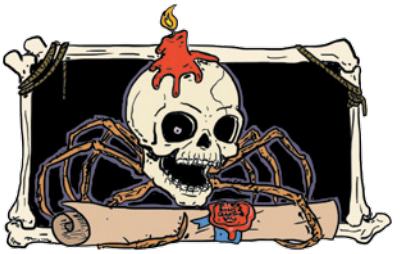
Restore just 5 EFFORT from this awful rest. You storm out of your room and back down the ladder, ready to confront the nobolds. When you get down there you see the bar is packed - nearly the whole town must be here!

Did you kill a bunch of nobolds in the tunnels earlier? If so then turn to 980. Otherwise you might feel like killing them now - if you want to attack this rowdy bunch then turn to 1030. Otherwise you force your way through, grumbling as you swear to find some way out of this hellish town : turn to 591.

1664

Congratulations on becoming a murderer! Murder happens quite often in this city, but it's officially frowned upon and new arrivals are expected to refrain from killing people in the street until they at least know where to dispose of the bodies. Whether you surrender now or manage to ditch the guards and live for a while as a wanted fugitive, your fate is sealed - eventually you will be caught by the guards, summarily executed and chucked into the Bilge.

Your adventure ends here.



1665

Being only half elf, you don't have that whole haughty and unemotional thing going on. In truth you're pretty unstable even for a human. As such, you can't resist the opportunity to give your erstwhile tormentors a final kicking. Driven by self-righteous fury you scream out a war cry and leap from your hiding spot directly into the elfs, swinging your fists or weapon wildly. Your opponents barely have time to struggle to their feet before you're upon them.

🔪**BIFF: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1**
🔪**THREED: DIFFICULTY 9**

They are tangled in their bush and are unable to attack you at the same time. Fight them one after the other. If the fight isn't over after 3 rounds then turn to 1572.

If you win turn to 542.

1666

You crouch down and help yourself to the spread before you. You've never seen a selection like this, ranging from delicate pastries that you couldn't buy with the wages from a month's lore-wardening to enchanted travel mugs and magical bottomless thermoses for the noble picnickers. You find this display of wealth annoying since it's not you owning it, but you console yourself by messily cramming several meals worth of delicacies into your face before scooping up the crumbs with both hands. Gain 10 EFFORT. You can also take the Feewald Cake or the Bottomless Thermos of Scalding Soup. Add whatever you've selected to your Adventure Scroll. You spitefully hock a loogie into anything you can't stuff into your face or carry away.

You hear the distant sounds of shouting coming from the woods surrounding the clearing. It appears the guards have overcome their nerves and are regrouping somewhere out there. It might be time to get out of here. To head back to the road turn to 1203. If you don't think you'll get back across the clearing in time you may want to hide in the coach: turn to 129. If you're sure you still have time you can wander over to the royal tent and check that out as well: turn to 920.

1667

For some reason Aggie isn't particularly sympathetic to your complaints about mistreatment at the bony hands of her skeletons. Your whining doesn't do much but visibly annoy her. When you finally run out of steam, the necromancer responds.

"Fucking outstanding. Next time I'll fucking have my ploughing skeletons cut your cocksucking head off as well so I don't have to put up with you pissing in my ear with your cock and bull stories. You're old and ugly enough to put up with a pissing little scratch from a bloody gardening implement. Now are you ready to make a fucking deal or will I have you thrown down the ploughin' stairs for wasting my entire blasted evening?"

You are thoroughly brow-beaten. Lose 5 EFFORT from the chagrin. If you survive this lambasting, do you decide to help (turn to 704) or turn down her offer (turn to 532)?

1668

You run away screaming but the billy goat seems to have taken a shine to you. No matter how far you go from the hovel you can't give it the slip! It keeps ramming you in the butt every time you slow down. Eventually you collapse exhausted by the side of the road several miles away.

The goat keeps you awake most of the night bleating and knocking you around but you manage a bit of rest when it finally takes a nap. You wake in the mid-morning a bit worse for wear but still grateful for the shuteye - restore 10 EFFORT. The goat hears you wake as well and resumes helpfully butting you along the road as you resume your trek towards Bilgeton.

Add Butthead to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 1446.

1669

You recall that you can use the fancy ring to comprehend and command animals. You give the ring a twist on your finger and you're suddenly able to have a telepathic conversation with the wolf, who decides he no longer wants to fight for The Spectre once you explain that "Satan" isn't a name that people traditionally give to pets that they like. In fact, the dog is so annoyed by this revelation that he launches himself at his unwitting master's back. Occupied in combat against a horrible golem, the Spectre is completely unable to defend himself against this surprise attack from his furry former friend. The giant dog's jaws close around his master's neck, there's a nasty-sounding crunch and the wolf drags the purple-clad crimefighter to the ground with a strangled scream. After giving him a quick mauling, Satan's fury is spent and he races away, fleeing into the mountains with a lonesome and forlorn howl. The Spectre lies motionless, moaning quietly as he tries to make any sense of what just happened to him. You guess that ghost won't be walking again for a while.

Turn to 1779

1670

You find yourself in a cosy study room - well, cosy considering it's in a crypt. It's some kind of study if the desk and shelves laden with scrolls and dusty old tomes are anything to go by. There's a lot of alchemical equipment set up all over the room with potions bubbling merrily over little fires and condensing through glass tubes into filthy old bottles. The room is also full of necromancy supplies - half-built (or dismantled) skeletons lean against bookshelves, anatomical charts cover the walls and a big bucket of bones and assorted monster parts sits right next to the door. As you look around the lich takes a seat on a chaise longue in front of a fireplace, which roars with the green flames that provide the only light in this room. Weirdly, they don't seem to be emitting any heat, or at least none that you can feel.

The lich, now comfortably seated with his legs spread entirely too widely apart for the modesty of his robe to contain, introduces himself.

"Greetings. I am Hardmod the Ancient, the Undead Lord of Palaver", he says, the pair of glowing green lanterns dangle suggestively from the drawstring of his robes. "You must be wondering why I haven't destroyed your corporeal form and devoured your soul yet. Well, it's simple. There's something I'd like you to do for me that only someone of your...qualities... could accomplish. Come, sit and I'll tell you all about it."

You take a seat uncomfortably close to the lich on the comfortable chaise longue and he offers you a cup of tea that he seems to simply materialise out of thin air. It smells like gangrene but you politely take it from him anyway, not wanting to anger this deadly abomination with your customary rudeness.

"There's a certain itch I need scratched and only you can do it. But be warned - it might be uncomfortable even for someone with as flexible a moral character as yourself". The bastard's been reading your mind! "So, can you be of service to me?" Hardmod continues, raising one of his wispy eyebrows as he awaits your answer.

You don't dare refuse this chilling creature. If you're willing to at least pretend that you'll help Hardmod then turn to 763. If you're pretty certain he's coming on to you then perhaps you can help him in some other way - turn to 1606.

1671

The farmer lets you out of the shithouse and presents you with your blushing bride. Without any further ado your new father in law delivers a stirring speech, conducted in its entirety at pitchfork-point, at the conclusion of which he pronounces you man and wife. Instead of telling you to kiss the bride he instructs you to head to the Bilgeton Synod where the bishop can confirm your marriage all official-like in the eyes of The K-NG.

Just as you're about to ask how the hell you're going to get to Bilgeton, Aldrecht unveils his wedding gift to the newly-weds: a cart hitched to the back of a half-dead old dray with a bell hanging from a loose collar around its neck. The bell is inscribed with the name, "Bessie".

"You can ride her to Bilgeton", he instructs you, "The horse, not my daughter. Now get out of here before I get all emotional". His ceremonial duties completed, Aldrecht advances on the pair of you with the pitchfork, leaving you no choice but to clamber aboard the front of the little wagon and whip the reins before he runs you through. The horse whinnies pathetically and pulls the wagon towards the road as Nilde waves a teary farewell to her father.

Add Nilde and the Clapped-Out Old Nag to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 847.

1672

You give Goodman Fettwanst his bribe. Remove the cash or item(s) from your Adventure Scroll. The living roadblock grins and moves aside, retreating to his guardhouse for a well-deserve sit as he examines his new treasure. It seems like the essence of success in human society is to get into a position where people have to pay you to get you out of their way. How do humans live like this? You'd better keep an eye on your coin pouch if you're going to make a home in Bilgeton.

Chewing on that difficult-to-swallow lesson, you shove the single gate open and step out into the mountain passes leading away from Brunnenfeld.

Turn to 1698.

1673

You're real peckish and the seeds and leaves that have nestled at the bottom of your bag aren't doing much to satisfy your cravings. It's time for a real snack. You take out your pickle and give it a huge chomp.

You instantly realise you've made a big mistake - it tastes far too meaty for a pickle, and it's got a really chewy centre. You're gnawing on a preserved finger of a plague victim! This specimen was waiting for a doctor to use it to work on a cure, or some mad warlock to devise a doomsday spell from it, but instead it's found its way into your gullet.

You immediately start to feel sick, which doesn't prevent you finishing the preserved treat - restore 5 EFFORT and remove the Pickle from your Adventure Scroll. Unfortunately this is no mere indigestion - you have contracted the Plague!

Make a note of this on your Adventure Scroll. From now on you will regain 5 EFFORT less whenever you rest or sleep as the disease takes its toll. You must also deduct 10 from your Maximum EFFORT - if your current EFFORT is higher than this total you must now lower it.

Now turn back to the paragraph from which you came.

1674

That was your best and probably only shirt! Aiming carefully you take some revenge shots at the birds with your bow. They're flying pretty damn high up near the top of the spire but that's not going to stop you blowing off some steam:

🔪**EAGLE EYE: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you succeed turn to 1700. If you fail turn to 533.

1675

You're probably expecting some kind of comeuppance here, but the ring is only cursed so that Sven will know if you've lost it, not if you've stolen it. He'll eventually find out and report your crimes to the local militia, but since you have no intention of ever going back to Brunnenfeld anyway it's nothing to you whatsoever.

Turn to 244.

1676

Now openly laughing at your credulity, the guard takes your Guilder. As the town militia enjoys their hearty chuckle it slowly dawns on you... you've been had! Noticing the furious expression on your face the fancy guard tries to console you.

"Now, now, don't be so sour. I'm sure you'll make it back in Bilgeton. You're free to go, young fellow".

With that, the guard waves you on and the militia steps aside to let your caravan pass.

You're still fuming about being ripped off and being called "young fellow" by a human - you must be twice his age! - but since you don't like your chances of getting your money back out of these guys you just do what you're told and move on. The caravan crosses the bridge unhindered and you emerge out the other side of the small town without incident. Your purse is a goodly bit lighter but with high hopes of reimbursement from Aggie's agent you continue on your way towards Bilgeton!

Turn to 1002.

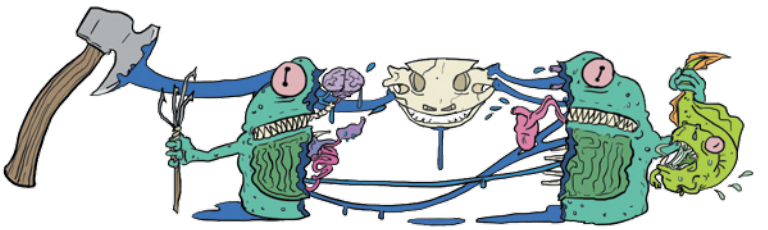
1677

The plan is terrifying, but you're too embarrassed to back out and you don't want to lose face in front of the elfs after boasting about your grasswatching skills. As a result you're soon lying on your back in the middle of a highway wearing a cheap kettle helm and a soiled, oversized padded coat with some hateful anti-elf insignia stitched onto it. Add the Dented Helm and Soiled Gambeson to your Adventure Scroll as Equipment, replacing any other headwear or outfits.

Your instructions are simple - lie still and when a wagon approaches pretend to be an injured human guardsman. There's no way the skeletons will deliberately run over a human militiaman and as soon as they stop the elfs will launch an ambush from their hiding places in the bushes and trees alongside the road. For all the mystery around grasswatching it turns out lying still is something you're pretty good at. You're almost drifting off to sleep on the warm stones of the road when you hear the clopping of hooves and the rumble of wheels rolling along the cobble-stones. Permitting yourself a quick peek through the eye slits in the helmet you can see it's the caravan the elfs have been expecting! And what a caravan - four wagons, each driven by a pair of animated skeletons perched behind two skeleton horses. An elf watching from the bushes hisses at you to lie still and you put your head back down, but the hooves and wheels of the first wagon are becoming louder and louder and the ground feels as though it's shaking : will the wagon stop in time?

PLAYING POSSUM : DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you succeed then turn to 24. If you fail or don't want to try then turn to 522.



1678

You decide to break into the vacant towers and help yourself to whatever you can find inside. Luckily everyone's in the pub so there's no one around to stop you, but regrettably this place is pretty poor even by elfen standards.

After jimmying open a few doors you find the miserable loot isn't really worth the effort and you leave off. Add one of the following items to your Adventure Scroll (if you don't already have it):

Extra Buckles, The Bastard Sword of the Elf, Bow of the Wood, Enough Rope, Elfish Cloak of Invisibility, Healthy Poultice, A Cut Purse, Lorewardening Key.

The pub is closing up and the patrons are beginning to emerge from their drinking tower and into the clearing. You don't want to risk being discovered by a bunch of elfs who will probably hurt you quite badly once they realise you've purloined their meagre possessions, so you slink out of town.

Turn to 1804.

1679

Sigbot grabs your arm, preventing you from going anywhere. His men snarl and stand at attention, advancing on you from their resting place alongside the wagon.

"If we can't make an honest living then we'll have to make a dishonest one. You look like a man of means, so I have another offer for you: your money or your life".

No matter how much you squirm you can't break free of Sigbot's iron grip! If you want to pay up then turn to 762. If your life isn't worth that much then turn to 1662.

1680

You approach the tower cautiously. Aside from the crunch of gravel underfoot you hear nothing other than the faint sound of snoring coming from somewhere near the top of the structure. The warlock must be up there! As you stand at the base of the tall tower, you weigh up the chances of you getting up to the top floor in one piece against the fabulous loot the tower probably contains. Eventually your greed outweighs your fear and you start climbing, scrambling up the tower using helpful nooks and crannies between the stones to haul yourself up.

You're about ten feet off the ground when you begin to regret your decision - your weedy arms are already beginning to give out! It's going to be tough to get all the way up to the top:

A LONG WAY UP: DIFFICULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you have Enough Rope then after a few attempts you tie something from your backpack to it to use as an anchor and manage to hook it to the inside of the open window. You may subtract 1 FIST from this Hassle.

Should you succeed, displaying a degree of upper body strength you never knew you had, you haul yourself all the way up to the top and crawl in through the open window - turn to 637. Should you fail then you give up on the tower and this whole scene in general: turn to 1424.

1681

Your pleas for mercy fall on deaf ears - the farmer is too busy fetching his pitchfork to do anything about the pesky goat, who is enjoying butting you into a jelly far too much to stop just because you're asking him. After a while the farmer returns and shoos off the goat before marching you at fork-point around the side of the hovel and into the outhouse. He latches the door shut behind you and you watch through the crescent-shape cut out as he props a stool up against the door and takes a seat. You're stuck.

Turn to 748

1682

You listen for a moment and the noises don't stop - it sounds like someone is rummaging around over there. Worried that the Count (and therefore your ride and possibly yourself) is in danger, you extract yourself from your comfortable bed with some difficulty and sneak out through the canvas flap of your tent into the night.

You immediately see something's afoot - you can see a light glowing dimly through the canvas of the royal tent and the noise gets louder. You hear the distinctive sound of a pouch of coins jingling briefly. Someone's looting in there! A lone guard leans on his halberd a little way down the road with his back to this scene. Surely he's in earshot and should investigate - is he asleep at his post?

If you want to summon the guard then turn to 422. If you want to burst into the tent and deal with the thief yourself, turn to 194.

1683

You step over the dragon's corpse and head over to the dark section of cave from which it slithered. There's a bead curtain strung up at the back of the cave. Sweeping it aside you step through into a short tunnel and then...

There was something seriously wrong with that dragon. You find yourself standing in what must have been its sleeping quarters - a cavern large enough to hold the dragon and not a lot else. The chamber is dominated by a huge, filthy mattress with sheets that clearly haven't been changed in months, and there's a huge filthy scrying orb in the corner which emits the only light in this room as it broadcasts live scenes from one of the oubliettes in Bilgeton Keep. It's way too big to steal and you don't know how to operate this model anyway so you leave it alone. All around the mattress are various huge, weirdly-shaped rubber clubs and hundreds of sheets of paper which have been scrunched up and thrown about. Every surface in this room is encrusted with a layer of some kind of hard, glue-like substance and the smell is indescribably bad. As a chronic self-pleasurer back home you have some inkling of what's been going on in here but compared to this guy you were small potatoes. A wave of nausea overcomes you and you nearly retch. though you retain the presence of mind not to attempt to steady yourself against any of the walls. You manage to stay upright and soon recover, though staying here isn't likely to be good for your health.

If you want to ransack this room then turn to 17. To back out right away turn to 470.

1684

You trounce the guard thoroughly and hurl him out of the wagon where he's pelted with stones until he runs off screaming into the forest. Flush with your victory, you emerge back out onto the road, looking forward to your formal acceptance to the gang. You only realise something's wrong when you see that trademark cruel grin on Biff and his cronies' faces. Your gut tells you to run but before you can do anything it says, Biff wings a cobblestone at your head. The rock catches you right on the dome, knocking your lights out. The last thing you hear is the sound of cruel elf laughter and a thud as you hit the ground.

You come to some time after dark with a terrible headache. You touch your face - it's covered in dried blood but everything seems to be intact. Still, you're sporting a painful lump on top of your head. Lose 5 EFFORT. You sit up and take stock of the situation: you've been betrayed and dragged into a ditch by the side of the road where you were robbed. Biff and the others are gone and you've been relieved of all of your cash and any loot you're carrying (remove these from your Adventure Scroll), though you still have your rations so long as you haven't eaten them yet. Food is the last thing on your mind right now though - you're nauseous from the concussion. The cart looks to have been torn to pieces as the elfs searched for valuables to take away. It's now little more than splinters of wood and iron scattered across the road. You won't find anything of value in there.

You lurch to your feet and wobble violently as the stars wheel crazily overhead. You manage to begin staggering south onto the cobbled road towards Bilgeton.

Turn to 25.

1685

Making sure the coast is clear you make it down the spiral staircase and down to the large wooden door in the darkened foyer at the very bottom of the tower. You lift the latch and go to shove it open but it's incredibly heavy, and the hinges are rusty and squeaky. The noise echoes threateningly up and down the stone structure and your heart briefly stops as you hear the snoring from upstairs halt. After an eternity of frozen panic you hear a sleepy muttering sound and the snoring resumes, and only then do you allow yourself to wipe the sweat from your brow. It's going to take all your concentration to get this door open without waking the warlock:

GETAWAY: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 1

If you succeed you manage to get the door open wide enough to allow you to slip out into the night. If you have Skellybones this is a great time to chuck the sack into the foyer before you let yourself out, thereby completing Chlothar's mission (remove Skellybones from your Adventure Scroll) The same goes for the Bag of Child Bones - you can leave this here if you're fastidious about completing missions. Whether you leave a sack of bones behind or not you make it out in one piece - turn to 1424.

If you fail you make enough noise to wake the dead and more than enough to rouse a sleeping warlock! You hear a foul-mouthed bellowing coming from upstairs...

Turn to 875.

1686

You soon realise that the only possibility of an easy escape is going to be at the top of that hill, if anywhere at all. Maybe some wizard that can levitate you out of the cavern roof or some kind of Pegasus-type creature - you can never tell with these fantasy adventures. Anyway, there's no way you're going to backtrack through all those blasted tunnels again. Instead you begin the difficult climb up the stony hill, clambering through the loose scree on your way to the top.

Eventually you arrive at the summit and see your ticket out of here - a huge clockwork contraption featuring a long vertical wooden shaft with a massive, heavy-looking hobnailed boot on the top end, held in place with a simple metal pin attached to a long rope. It looks like some incredibly painful catapult, and since there's no way you're going to slide back down that hill and deal with the nobolds again you're going to have to take it for a spin. Taking up the rope connected to the pin, you position your buttocks right in front of the device and, bending over, give the rope a yank. The pin goes flying out of the machine with a metallic ping, freeing the boot to begin its descent. The huge piece of footwear swings down and around in a great arc and catches you hard in the buttocks. There's a godawful crack as your coccyx gives way and you're hurled with incredible force through the air, flying clear out of the hole in the cavern ceiling and into the night. Just as you think you'll continue to soar up into the stars above your ascent slows then reverses and you find yourself coming down hard. You feel twigs and branches catching at you and tearing at your skin and clothes, then a tree trunk fills your entire view for a moment. There's a sickening crunch and all goes black.

Turn to 68.

1687

The bat woman is pretty sure she can do better, but unfortunately for her two minutes is all it takes you to put a bat in her oven. Deeply in love with this bat monster, or at least unwilling to leave the first dank cave you could find where you'd be tolerated, you settle down and raise a horde of Batard Elfs with her. While your spawn will eventually go in search of their milkman ancestor and his couch as you kick them out of the cave one by one, your adventure ends here.

1688

You patiently explain to the bartender that you thought "tab" meant "free". He shakes his head sadly.

"What forest did you stumble out of? Well, usually we'd break at least one of your arms, but if you can't pay then the boxing tournament needs meat. You can pay your debt off there by taking a few punches in the face".

You feel a stony hand pressing down hard on your shoulder. The rock troll bouncer, always alert to people skipping out on their bill, has you in his grip!

"Plike, meat for the tourney. Put him up against the champ".

The bouncer drags you towards the stage, which is now swarming with fight fans! You've been entered into the first round! Plike shoves through the crowd and pushes you into a clear space in the middle as the bloodthirsty audience cheers...

Turn to 1705.

1689

The long-suffering Nilde is not best pleased that you're talking to single sorceresses in the first place, but her annoyance turns to red-hot anger when you make your clumsy advances on the necromancer right within earshot of your betrothed. Pushed beyond her limits, the farm girl rises to her feet, seizes you by the nearest ear and, displaying horrifying strength born of a life of pulling up turnips on a mud farm, drags you all the way down the stairs and out into the night. Aggie's swearing and the amused chittering of the skeletons in the area recede into the distance as Nilde hauls you all the way back to your cart. Hurling you into the back like a sack of turnips she proceeds to yell at you at length about everything she finds objectionable about you - this takes an extremely long time, and by the time she's finished talking about your smarminess and moved on to your smugness you're pretty tuckered out.

Giving up on you as a lost cause (at least until she gets you to the altar), Nilde lapses into a furious silence and whips the reins. Bessie whinnies and the cart trundles forward.

Lose 10 EFFORT from this humiliating and painful ordeal and turn to 294.

1690

Sucking up your pride and really, really lowering your standards as to what constitutes a good ending in one of these gamebooks you decide to return to the loving embrace of Bhad, your partner in Freundschaftsbezeigungen. After a long trek back across the Mist Steppes you return to the needy dragon's lair where you are received with almost pathetic gratitude. You find, however, that once you're back inside he's even more keen than last time that you don't leave, and when you wake on your first morning there you find that Bhad has sealed the exit shut by piling up a heap of rocks and gold coins and melting them together with dragonfire. He can still come and go through an opening high up on the mountain but since you can't fly you're totally stuck. You spend the rest of your life here, the most treasured of all of Bhad's possessions, though you never get used to the horrible smell in Bhad's room or the unspeakable act of Freundschaftsbezeigungen which becomes a regular feature of your existence. It beats sleeping outside or having to get a job, so it's not a total loss.

Your adventure ends here.

1691

Waiting in line might be fine for these peons who are socially, financially, intellectually and physically your betters in every conceivable way, but you've got places to be. Giving the queue a miss you creep through the garden, making sure to keep a topiary between you and the guards at all time until you reach the low wall separating the front yard from the back. Although your scaling of the wall isn't as stealthy as you'd like - you slip as you try to swing your leg over the top to the other side and wind up crashing in a heap at the bottom - no one is around the back to notice and the noise of the party drowns out your clattering and wailing. You spring back to your feet and make your way to the back of the building where you're sure you'll find some way in. Unfortunately this isn't going to be simple either - there's an armoured guard sitting on a stool by the sole doorway in the rear, a far smaller and less impressive affair than the portal around the front. Luckily the guard is engrossed in reading some kind of choose your own adventure gamebook and fails to notice you skulking around in the shadows.

Not wanting to take any risks, you hide yourself behind a convenient heap of foul-smelling garbage sacks and watch the rear of the house for your chance. After a little waiting you see the door swing open and a servant emerges lugging another bag of litter for the pile behind which you're hiding. Despite his disgusting burden he's dressed in what would be considered a dapper garb anywhere outside of the Noble District of Bilgeton. Flinging the garbage onto the front of the heap, he returns to the building. Since he's an employee the guard pays him no heed.

If you happen to be wearing the Dapper Garb, it is remarkably similar to what the servants have on : should you have this item equipped and balls of steel you could try walking by the guard as though you belong there. Turn to 80 to give this a shot. If you don't have the Dapper Garb you can either approach the guard and just ask him if he'll let you in - turn to 1759 - or you could simply break a small window nearby and climb in to the house that way. Turn to 37.

1692

Despite your growing fears, you fling the front door open. Before you stands a squadron of a half dozen armoured Bilgeton militia accompanied by an equal number of large, mean-looking thugs.

"What the hell are you d...." starts the shocked patrol leader, a short, bearded man with a big nose and a prominent belly, but he stops himself from finishing that thought. "Apologies my lord, but should you not be at the Grand Ball?"

You sneer and, heedless of the danger, retort to the effect that if the town guard's arms training was anywhere near as good as the training they receive in being impertinent nitwits the city would be far less of a crime-riddled hellhole. The patrol leader goes bright red and you're quite sure that he'd attack you on the spot if the resplendent regalia you still wear had not convinced him that you are a far, far bigger deal than you truly are. The guardsman gulps as he brings his rage into check with some difficulty.

"Very good, my lord", he says with a bow, before turning to yell at his troop: "This one's a bust. Come on men, Baronet Iwan the Inbred is next".

With that the guards depart. Slamming the door shut behind them you spring up the stairs, only to find Isentrud sitting up in bed, thumbing through a huge leather-bound book titled "The Almanac of Palavan and Surrounding Realms Sovereign and Noble Houses, Anno MCMLXXXII". She lowers the book and gives you a searching look as you re-enter the boudoir.

Are you a member of the nobility, with a heraldic crest of some sort recorded on your Adventure Scroll? If so turn to 855. If not, do you have at least 50 Guilders on you? Turn to 553. If you're neither a noble nor loaded then turn to 441.

1693

Did you throw Excalibur? If so turn to 909.

If you threw some other sword turn to 1794.

If you threw in something other than a sword then turn to 1656.

1694

You roll the map up and head back into the forest, ignoring a growing sense of foreboding as the leafy canopy closes overhead once more. As you proceed you keep getting stung more and more frequently and after about an hour you're beginning to feel like a half elf pincushion. Lose 2 EFFORT.

You begin to hear some very high-pitched chattering all around you in the forest, a little like crickets chirping but sometimes you can make out definite words. Suddenly you hear a loud twang and a projectile the size of a pub dart whistles past your ear. You're under attack from something more than just forest bugs!

If you'd like to head back out of the forest then turn to 890.

If you'd like to plough on through then turn to 1797.

1695

Your thieving paws are forestalled by the awe you have for the majesty of the sovereign and the inviolability of his possessions (or you've just decided you don't want to be hacked into pieces by a militiaman's halberd). Instead, you slink back out of the clearing and return to the Count's Road before anything awful happens.

Turn to 1445.

1696

After a long and difficult struggle you finally drag yourself to the top of the spire, grasp on to the edge of the nest and haul yourself in. You lay up there on your back until you catch your breath, and then you sit up and take a look around.

You're sitting in a nest, high up in the middle of the Big Rock Goblin Mountains. The nest is a collection of tree branches, animal fur, torn-up bits of clothing and other fibrous detritus woven tightly together and secured firmly to the very peak of the mountain which juts through the centre of the animal-made structure. It seems that the giant eagles of Eagle Rock didn't like to collect much in the way of treasure : the only thing that might be worth a damn up here is a Giant Bird Egg, which you can take with you if you like. Down below on a large plateau a little way to the east of here is a large stone circle of about twenty tall statues or monuments arranged at nearly equal distances. Beyond that the range begins to tail off, gradually shrinking back into hills and foothills as it approaches what looks like a village in the middle of a convoluted maze. Your eyes wander back to the stone circle and to your amazement you notice that one of the statues has moved - it's now lying flat and pointing towards another of the monuments.

With nothing else to be accomplished up here you work your way back down the spire and harvest some loot from the downed birds - a whole armload of 50 Eagle Feathers and an Eagle Eye are yours for the taking if you want them. Make the necessary adjustments to the Cash and Junk sections of your Adventure Scroll respectively before moving on away from the spire.

Turn to 190.

1697

Brenda gives you a very pretty smile as she relieves you of your coin pouch at knife-point - remove all currency from your Adventure Scroll.

In serious pain from the unwarranted beating you just received you limp back out of the academy grounds. You could have sworn there was something more to that smile, but fear of being beaten and robbed again prevents you turning around for another look. Turn to 1284.

1698

The mountain path heading away from Brunnenfeld doesn't look to be all that well-trafficked and it swiftly becomes very narrow as soon as you're out of sight of the walls. At least it's clear of debris and allows you to put that human town behind you.

You climb up the steep uphill path for a couple of hours or so heading roughly north-east and eventually come to a junction. There's a signpost here - one path, heading to the north, leads to Bilgeton via "Eagle Rock", which must be the tall spire you can see looming tall over the mountains ahead. The top of the spire is surrounded by fast-moving objects which you take to be the eponymous eagles. You're not sure how safe it is to have anything to do with these birds of prey. Another path heading north-east and downhill into a ravine is unnamed but is marked by a note hammered into a signpost. The note reads, "Site owned by Sir Witold of Brunnenfeld Spring Water Casking Concern. Trespassers will be dismembered", followed by several diagrams of peasants being torn apart in unpleasant ways.

If you'd like to head for the spire then turn to 1772. If you'd prefer to take your chances in the gully then turn to 617.

1699

The line shuffles forward. The teller doesn't shout "next" again for a very long time, during which time you start hallucinating from boredom. Roll a die and subtract that amount from your EFFORT. If you're still standing then you must decide - will you keep waiting (turn to 695), or will you finally get out of here and crack on with your quest (turn to 827)?

.

1700

Although most of your shots arc harmlessly below the birds, you persist and eventually a particularly far-flying arrow strikes one of the eagles directly in the heart. It crashes to the ground, utterly dead. The other two eagles don't take kindly to this and dive at you, screeching furiously as they ready their talons to rip you limb from limb. You fight them as a pair:

🔪**EAGLE ROCK: DIFFICULTY 9* - FISTS 2* - TOUGHNESS 3**

For each point of TOUGHNESS they lose deduct 1 DIFFICULTY and 1 FIST as they become wounded and less able to swoop at you.

If you win then turn to 1520. If you lose then it's the end of your adventure - these eagles will eat some of you and use the rest of you as material for their nest.

1701

As you go to leave you find a small crowd of nobolds - about twenty of them - have gathered. They're all armed, and not with hand tools this time but instead knives, shortswords and some spears. With their neck frills extended and teeth bared they're quite an intimidating sight, their short stature and ridiculous clothing notwithstanding.

"Here's the bitzer who knackered our padre! It's a bloody outrage, it is! Get him!" shouts a particularly well-attired lizardman and the mob surges forward. You guess they've either noticed or heard about your murderous exploits somehow.

While your heroic death fighting a small horde of underground lizardmen would probably make Jeff feel at least momentarily bad for his cruel decision to kick you out of YOUR home, you don't think the news would reach him from down here, plus in any case you don't want to die. You decide to fall to your knees and commence grovelling for mercy.

"Hang the bastard!" shout several voices in the mob in response to your pathetic cries for clemency. The nobold who spoke before steps out in front of the mob.

"Fair go, mates. This dropkick's from the back of beyond and he wouldn't know a banana bender from a sandgroper. Let's give him a fair trial and then we can hang him. So court's now in session". Turning back to you he says, "What are ya pleading, guilty or not guilty?"

Of that you understood about three words: "guilty" and "not guilty". They're waiting for you to reply.

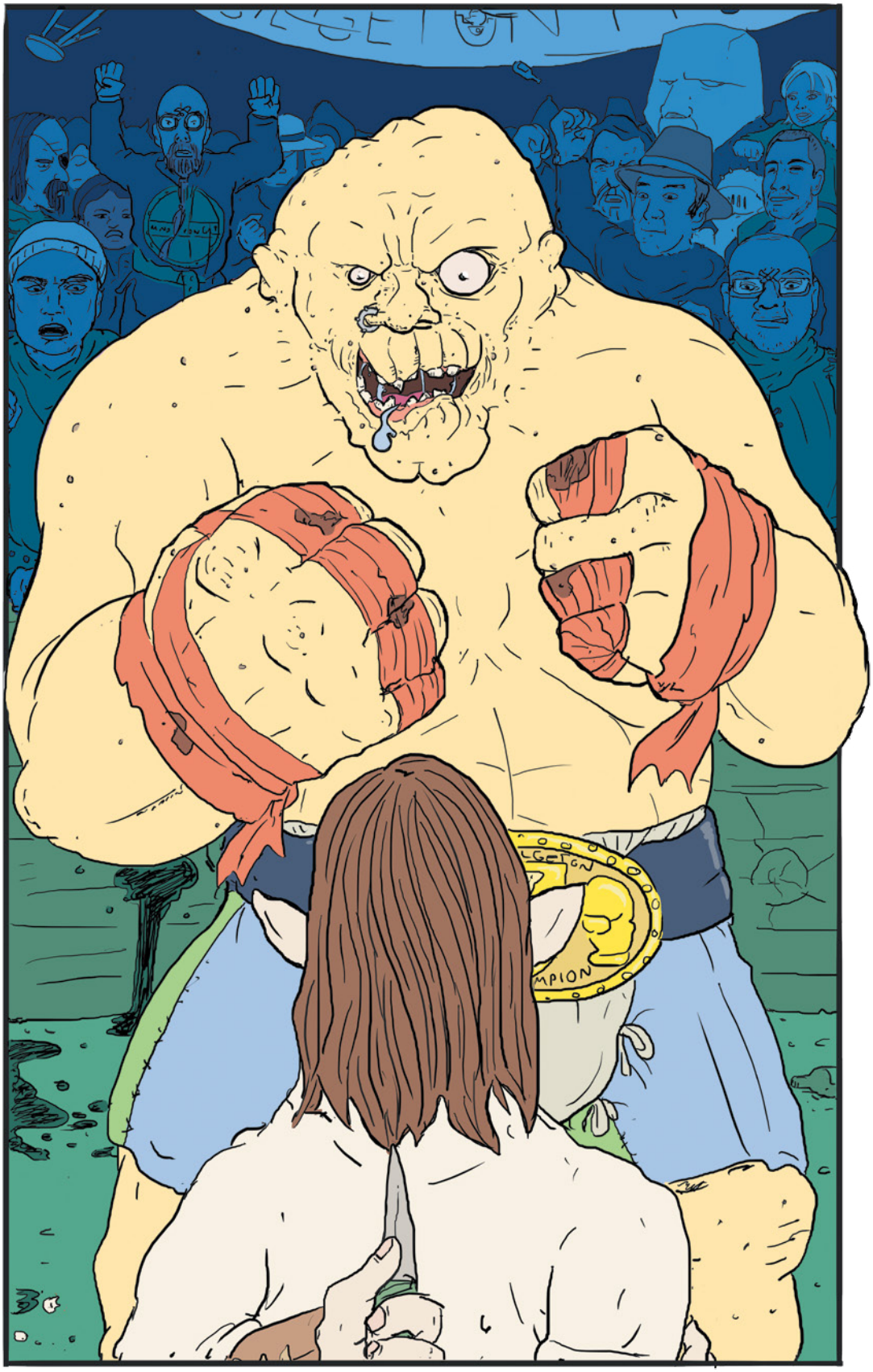
If you're guilty then turn to 1172. If you're not guilty then turn to 949.

1702

You make your way over to the shed, hoping to find some loot or at least a secluded place to lie down and pass out for a while. It's pitch black in here and as you stumble around you awaken one of the residents of the shed, an old workhorse which is laying and wheezing unhealthily in the hay. It snorts in alarm and whinnies pitifully but as it tries to lurch to its hooves it stumbles and crashes into the side of the shed, making a horrible racket.

As you're trying to calm the elderly equine the rear door of the hovel bursts open and a furious old farmer ruses out, yelling, "To arms! Thief! Thief!. He's armed with a pitchfork and he's racing across the field to the shed alarmingly quickly. As he approaches you see the outhouse door swing open and another human emerges - a woman, based on the garb. She shouts to the farmer and picks up a hefty wooden switch leaning against the crapper.

As tired as you are you don't want to fight an unknown number of humans. You've still got time to flee on foot if you like, running screaming into the night - turn to 1062. If you'd rather ride out of here then turn to 1729. If you'd rather stand your ground then you prepare for battle - turn to 940.



1703

You saunter over to the crying woman, racking your brains for the right thing to say to a lady in distress. She's quite pretty, with long red hair, alabaster skin and an ample bosom that you gawp at slack jawed, watching it heave whenever she sobs. You naturally settle on a grotesquely sleazy pickup line which goes down like a lead balloon, but it does get her to stop crying for a second as she looks at you in abject horror. This is the point in the conversation where most women would kick you in the nuts and storm off, but this lady is desperate enough for help that she's even willing to talk to you to get it.

"My little ones.... I don't know where they are! I couldn't afford to keep them around anymore and I sent them away..." she says, tears running down her face. "I told my little ones to go away to Bilgeton... I made a terrible mistake. I need them back and I just know they've gotten into trouble out there ... Can you help find them? These people, the guards, none of them will help me!"

If you offer your help to this damsel in distress then turn to 484. If you've got enough on your plate you could politely but firmly refuse by turning to 351.

1704

The guards take your possession of a cut purse as evidence of your thieving ways. Deciding that if you're going to act like an elf they're going to treat you like one, they summarily execute you and dump your body over the town walls.

1705

The reigning champ of Bilgeton is a terrifying ogre named Fistface. He's eight feet tall and just as wide and his face is a crinkled mess of scars and deformities from which he derives his nom-de-guerre (his real name is Kevin). He roars savagely as you're thrust forward into the ring. Unequip all weapons or tools other than rings or the knuckledusters if you have them.

The bartender, now functioning as an announcer, calls out:

"In the blue corner, weighing in at 1,200 pounds, the reigning champion: FISTFACE!". The crowd goes absolutely wild. "And in the bloodstained red corner, weighing in at, what, 97 pounds, it's the… Jabbing Jabroni!". This doesn't garner as much of a reaction from the crowd.

Fistface leans forward, a fierce expression on his face. No doubt he's about to whisper some dire threat into your ear to demoralise you.

"Hi, I'm Kevin" he snarls quietly. "I'm not really a bad guy. I just do this for the pay. But I have to keep the kayfabe going, keep the crowd pleased and all that. Let's give them a good show. Nice meeting you and best of luck".

If you have an easily concealable sharp weapon in your inventory such as the Worthless Steak Knife, Elfen Dagger or a Lorewardening Key, now might be the time to use it - turn to 923. If you'd rather be a little sportsmanlike at least then you refrain from shanking your adversary - turn to 1718.

1706

You loose arrow after arrow but either your aim is off or this novelty elf bow is wonky. As you fire wildly into the surrounding area, Biff's crew pelts you with a steady stream of rocks, cobblestones and roadside detritus, a chunk of which strikes you on the temple and sends you careening off the cart and into the dirt. Before everything goes dark you see the carriage tipping over onto its side hard as a wheel is smashed away by a large rock.

You wake up some time after dark with a throbbing headache. You feel dried blood when you touch the side of your head but nothing seems to be broken. Still, it's a painful wound. Lose 10 EFFORT. You sit up and take stock of the situation: you've been dragged into a ditch by the side of the road and robbed. Biff and the others are gone and you've been relieved of all of your cash and any loot you're carrying (remove these from your Adventure Scroll), though you still have your rations so long as you haven't eaten them yet. Food is the last thing on your mind right now though - you're nauseous from the concussion. The carriage looks to have been torn to pieces as the elfs searched for valuables to take away. It's now nothing more than splinters of wood and iron scattered all over the road. You won't find anything of value in there.

You lurch to your feet and wobble violently as the stars wheel crazily overhead. You manage to begin staggering south onto the cobbled road towards Bilgeton. Turn to 25.

1707

You declare to Witold that your quest is not done yet. He shrugs and has his butler indicate that you're free to carry on. You spend a couple of weeks loafing around as is your right as a nobleman and dissolute fop (restore your ÉLAN and EFFORT to their maximum values) before eventually deciding to hit the road.

If you wish to return to the mountains and continue to Bilgeton that way then turn to 1149.

To instead leave Brunnenfeld to the south, heading to Bilgeton by a more well-travelled (if slightly longer) route then you set off through the southern gates towards the Count's Road, far to the south. Turn to 372.

1708

You attempt to be stoic for once in your life. Jutting out your chin, you proudly let out a whimper which turns into a moan and then a torrent of tears, snot and spittle which runs down your face as you plead for mercy.

The knights are too disgusted to gradually stab you to death as they intended, and instead mostly just stand around looking uncomfortable until your tantrum subsides. They and their companions then relieve you of as many of your items as they can carry. Your miserable begging disgusts the brownies enough that they let you cling on to at least some of your stuff rather than have to deal with you any longer. Remove two items of your choice and all your currency from your Adventure Scroll.

You lie on the ground whimpering until long after the brownies have disappeared into the forest with the spoils of their victory. Once they're safely out of sight and long gone you dry your little eyes, pick yourself up and move on along the outskirts of the forest. Turn to 214

1709

The priest, still incandescent with rage, continues yelling at you despite your submission.

"You will pick up Greenbones - or what's left of him - and take him to the Warlock's Tower. It's on the Count's Road two days to the south-west of here and a day's walk west of Bilgeton. The Warlock will repair him. If you fail - if Greenbones doesn't make it back to me - I will know, and as sure as my name's Chlothar the Chunky you will face divine retribution. It'll be terrible. And, of course, you'll burn in the fiery Plane of Demons where the devil devises new torments for sinners daily for all eternity and so on and so forth. Now begone from here and never darken this town again with your foul presence."

Under the priest's watchful eyes you sullenly pack the broken remnants of Greenbones into your backpack. Add the Skellybones to your Adventure Scroll.

No longer welcome in the churchyard, you must decide: will you continue north along the lane in hopes of finding the exit (turn to 1236), or will you turn back down the lane and let yourself out of town through the southern gates? If so turn to 338.

1710

You've done what you can, though you suspect Aggie will be less than thrilled that "what you can" consists of a single wagon. Then again you have no idea why the necromancer expected anything from you at all. Yelling at the driver to hurry up, you ignore the panicked chittering of the skeletons you leave in your dust as you roll on down the road as fast as your steed can carry you.

You now have just 1 WAGON and at most 1 GUARD - make a note of this on your Adventure Scroll. Now turn to 382 to make your getaway!

1711

Despite the reddening colour of Magistrate Beltz's face, the young lawyer continues to demolish the arguments of the prosecution, making a fool out of the judge and generally annoying the crowd. Some hothead in the audience hurls a spear which lands in the floor with a judder just inches away from your feet! The courtroom is on the brink of a riot!

A lawyer from the prosecution approaches to ask you a question:

"Bastard, if that is your real name, when you were committing the crimes for which you stand accused, would you say you felt guilty, or guilty as all hell?" he says.

"OBJECTION!" shouts your lawyer before you can reply to this completely reasonable question, "Leading the witness!"

The Magistrate looks ready to erupt and the crowd roars in fury - the audience is on the brink of rushing from their seats and tearing you and your stuffy, officious lawyer apart!

If you'd like to dismiss the lawyer and defend yourself from here on out then turn to 52. If you want to risk the consequences of letting this "freshman" defend you for even a moment longer then turn to 615.

1712

You bravely hurl your backpack on the ground and flee the scene, leaving the brownies to their fate. In doing so you left all the rest of your possessions to their fate as well. Remove all non-equipped items from your Adventure Scroll.

After you've crashed through the forest for a little while you begin to calm down. You've ditched the law, but now you're a bit lost.

Turn to 307.

1713

You saltarello until your legs feel fit to fall off. Just as you're about to give it up and forget about waiting for the royal couple, a servant wearing the livery of some local lordling comes rushing into the ballroom and shouts for the band to knock off the music.

"Treachery! Theft! Murder!" he shouts, eyes wide in horror, "The Countess de Fraude is a fraud! The marriage is off and the Count plunders your estates while you stand here hopping in circles!"

More servants arrive shortly after and fill out the rest of the story as they arrive, bellowing their news in turn - the Countess de Fraude turned out not to be who she claimed to be. As soon as she arrived in Bilgeton, she cleared out what was left in the Count's coffers and took off. With no more money to cover his gambling debts, the Count decided the time was ripe to send his men to ransack the estates of everyone at the party, which is basically every noble worth spit in Bilgeton. After paying off the guards he fled town with the remainder of his loot, heading to some unknown and distant quarter.

Since your date is no longer wealthy you're not interested in her. Dropping her like a hot potato you wander off, leaving the chaotic scene unfolding at the party behind you. It's late - perhaps it's time to go in search of your father and see about that couch to crash on?

You set off to find your old man. Turn to 1793.

1714

Your home town, Elfsdale Downs, contains several abandoned towers, usually deserted as soon as their shoddy construction and frequent, hasty, expansions caused one or more of the upper levels to collapse. The villagers of Aelfsburg are no better at building and they have a couple of empty piles themselves. Locating one at the edge of the clearing, partially covered in creeping, slimy vines but with an intact ceiling over the ground floor, you curl up in a corner and get some well-earned sleep.

After an unusually sound snooze you wake up at the crack of 10 am. Still yawning you emerge from your shelter and back out into the Aelfsburg clearing.

Restore 20 EFFORT and turn to 884.

1715

You've never been outside so late. It's cold, dark, and no one's bringing you dinner. Just as you're about to give up all hope you see a something glowing down the road to the east. Cheered by this, you approach and find that it's a light shining in the window of one of those wretched wattle and daub farmhouses that rural humans seem to enjoy dwelling inside. While under normal circumstances you'd prefer not to associate with anything so uncouth and rusticated as a human peasant, the prospect of a warm meal and a roof over your head is very appealing compared to spending your first night away from home roughing it on the thoroughfare.

To go up and knock on the door turn to 1308. If you want to skulk around and case the joint out first then turn to 1343. If you'd rather sleep in the great outdoors then turn to 1433.

1716

As soon as the violet vigilante claps eyes on the bone golem, his expression changes to a scowl. "You've got the mark of the Skull on your jaw. That means one of my ancestors... I mean The Spectre has had dealings with you before, evildoer. I don't suppose you've changed your vile ways?"

The orb atop the golem glows red in response and displays the message "MY REPLY IS NO". Flailing its bony limbs wildly it charges at The Spectre who raises his fists to defend himself. The two set to battering each other in a spectacularly violent display.

Your slack-jawed gawping is interrupted by The Spectre's wolf, who rushes at you baring its teeth.

If you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes and want to use it to take advantage of this situation then turn to 1669. Otherwise you must defend yourself:

🔪**SATAN: DIFFULTY 8 - FISTS 1 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you defeat The Spectre's dog then turn to 401. Otherwise if you fail to overcome this creature then you can throw in the towel by turning to 1396.

1717

You panic and sell your bag full of brownies out. Everyone in the bag groans but it's too late for them - one of the guards roughly tears the bag from your back and stomps up and down on it until it stops screaming. Unfortunately this means everything in the bag is destroyed as well - remove all items from your Adventure Scroll other than what you have equipped.

Having dealt with the brownie menace, the guards turn their less than friendly attention to you. As you plead for clemency, one of them raises his halberd and slams the shaft down on your skull with a horrifying cracking sound. Then all is darkness and silence.

Turn to 1221.

1718

Fistface returns to his corner and the bartender-turned-announcer rings a bell! The fight's begun!

With speed belying his enormous bulk, Fistface comes barrelling out of his corner with a wild haymaker aimed at your head.

If you want to duck under it then turn to 755. If you want to block it then turn to 1567. If you want to pretend it connected and throw yourself on the ground to get out of this, turn to 1334.

1719

After a long and difficult climb you finally drag yourself to the top of the spire, grasp on to the edge of the nest and haul yourself in. Once safely inside the woven tree branches and assorted fibres of the nest you finally catch your breath. The three eagles watch you huffing and puffing, their eyes glinting with mirth and intelligence.

"Wau, nega mandeungeoya. dangsin-i tteol-eojil geola saeng-gag haess-eoyo! Naneun gisteol daseos gaeleul ilh-eossda!" squawks one of the eagles. You're a bit taken aback - while you don't understand the language, it's clearly not a bird shriek.

"I guess you're not a high elf", it continues, switching to Palavan Humanese. "Yes, of course we can speak. Don't look so surprised. We're giant eagles, not regular-style eagles. We've been watching you since you entered the mountains and we think you might be able to help you out - if you do us a small favour which won't cost you a hargroat or take you a step out of your path".

You're too tired to haul yourself straight out of this nest but if you've got the +1 Ring of the Silvermanes and finally want to use it to force these eagles to help you, favour or not, then turn to 89. If you want to hear the birds out while you catch your breath after a hard climb then turn to 1132. If, now that you're here, you want to completely freak out then turn to 314.

1720

You don't like the idea of stomping around a strange forest in the dark. Reckoning your enemies are dispersed enough to pose you no real threat you find a decent-sized bush and crawl inside, passing out from exhaustion almost as soon as you're curled up in there.

You sleep well enough considering you're in a topiary and not in your nice bed, and you rise relatively refreshed. Add 20 EFFORT. Now that it's no longer dark and you're not completely tapped out it should be easier going through these woods.

Two obvious paths present themselves - you can either head downhill and to the east, or uphill and to the northeast.

To go east turn to 307. To go up the hill to the northeast turn to 1192.

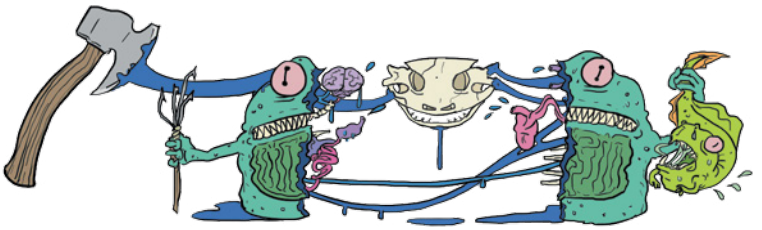
1721

Nilde, already displeased at you for ignoring her nigh-constant nagging to take her to the Synod, is no longer able to take your brazen, if almost certainly futile, flirting with other women right in front of her face. Delivering a ringing slap to your cheek which rattles a couple of teeth loose she bellows at you that it's over before storming out of the manse and out of your life.

Freshly dumped and feeling like a complete heel (even more so than usual), you completely lose the urge to party. Giving up on your dreams of sleazing your way into high society you let yourself out through the front door without even stopping to steal anything on the way. You eventually find yourself on the streets, roaming aimlessly.

It's getting late and even in your fugue you'd like to go find that place to crash that you're supposed to be looking for. Even as a divorcee you're not so desperate as to stay at a motel (a magical hostel which charges by the hour) so instead you go in search of your father.

Turn to 1793.



1722

For a human weapon, it's pretty fancy! The eye-catching zweihander is longer than you are tall and its massive blade looks like it'd really hurt if you hit someone with it. The goblin shopkeep walks over to you and you ask him to get it down for you.

"Yeah, she's a real beauty", he says, "But by the looks of you I don't think you could even lift it, let alone swing it. Now this", he continues, gesturing to a boring-looking iron swortsword lying on a shelf," this is more your speed. It doesn't look like much but it's sharp, light and doesn't take up much space in the pack. Two Guilders and I'll throw in the scabbard for free."

Seeing that you're still looking sceptical he tries one final pitch.

"Say, you look like a greasy lowlife of some kind. These knuckledusters might be perfect for you. Great for removing teeth and practically undetectable, looking as they do like a set of rings". Tacky, unadorned brass rings, you think to yourself. Still, they could be handy. "One Guilder and that's a bargain", the goblin finishes.

If you continue to insist on the Heroic Sword, the goblin will get it down for you under duress (and great difficulty, thanks to his heavy armour). It costs 5 Guilders. The Regular Shortsword is 2 Guilders as advertised, and the Knuckledusters are 1 Guilder. If you don't have the human cash you can attempt to barter with elfish currency, assuming you have any. Turn to 810 to attempt this. As you're finishing up your transaction (successfully or not) a paying customer enters the shop and the goblin goes to try his sales routine on the new arrival. With nothing left to do here it's time to go. You step out of the store and back into the street. Turn to 1543.

1723

You hurl the meat as far from you as possible and it splashes into the sewage with a loud splash. Remove the item from your Adventure Scroll.

You've been carrying this food around for a while and it's gotten pretty rancid. Luckily for you, if there's one thing a sewer hydra enjoys more than fresh meat it's a chunk of meat that's been festering in a backpack for a good long while. While it's diving after this tasty treat you paddle for far more than you're worth in the direction of the weir. By the time it's ready for the second course you're already relatively safe and aren't too concerned by the sewer monster's furious but impotent screeching and thrashing.

Turn to 1633.

1724

That filthy demon's cheating! You flip the table over, scattering the remaining pieces everywhere. The Prince of Shards looks at you in what you assume is fury, though you can only see your terrified face reflected in its broken visage.

You don't have long to gaze upon yourself or bask in your mistake - in your anger you've forfeited the game and the demon is swift to claim his prize. With an efficient swipe or his cruel, glassy hand he relieves you of your windpipe and your life before dragging your soul back with him to his Hell of Introspection. Your adventure ends here.

1725

It's hardly possible that a cowardly slip of a being such as yourself could lay low Cronan the Destroyer, the King of Aquilonia, aka The Adventurer, Warrior Without Fear. More powerful than any man (but apparently vulnerable to sneaky half-men), his legend spread across the land and sea. As soon as the bards catch wind that you've done him in, people will no doubt start fearing you a little more. In the meantime you can add 1 ÉLAN due to the swagger and boastful airs you've taken on. As you pose and brag, most of the goblins move to finish off the rogue, who is now completely surrounded. You're left free to loot the barbarian's corpse and may take his Heroic Sword. You also find what the fuss was all about - a huge, bejewelled Mighty Codpiece, which you add to your Adventure Scroll as well.

While you're pillaging the great warrior, the goblins have finished off the cloaked rogue and are looking around for another target. They spot you pocketing the codpiece and several them advance on you, their armour clattering menacingly as they jog in your direction.

If you want to make a break for it then turn to 378. If you want to attempt to explain your way out of this mess then turn to 14.

1726

You approach the settlement, joining the road just to the north of town. You guess the watch-tower spotted you coming because just before you reach the bridge you see a small horse-drawn wagon trundling towards. Driving the vehicle is a human with a military bearing through dressed in gaudy silks instead of the usual padded armour of a local militia. He must be doing well for himself. His chest is adorned with a gold star inscribed with the town's crest of arms and the word "Sheriff". As the wagon comes near the driver pulls on the reigns and stops the horses.

"Morning", the man says cheerfully. "You visiting someone around here?"

You answer, but you get the impression that it doesn't matter much what you have to say. He smiles wryly.

"You know, looking the way you do - you're just asking for trouble around here, friend. Where are you headed?" he asks. You reply, more or less truthfully.

"But Bilgeton's in the north".

You ask if you can eat here some place. He shakes his head, smiling unpleasantly as he fails to mask his obvious annoyance.

"Dribbling Wand in Bilgeton's just a few miles up the road. And if you want some friendly advice", he adds, "a haircut and take a bath. You wouldn't get hassled so much. Now you have a nice day, huh?". The sheriff stares at you intently, waiting for you to move on. It begins to rain miserably. You hike your shirt collar up.

If you take the "friendly" advice and head on towards Bilgeton, turn to 774. If there's no law against you getting something to eat here then turn to 1438.

1727

You cross the floor of the tower to the elfish musician. The dandy shoots you a glare as he continues tooting on his cornamuse. Like many other aspects of elfish culture (and to Jeff's great disgust) you never could comprehend or even really tolerate elf tunes: they all sound like noise to you.

The musician affects not to notice you until he concludes his excruciatingly long, atonal solo. You ahem as he's draining the spit out of his instrument onto the floor of this pub.

"Yes?", he says, sighing deeply as though your presence pains him, "It's so tiring to engage with one's fans, but one does what one must I suppose. So tell me, what are your thoughts regarding my rendition of The Breaking of the Third Age at Elfindal?"

If Brenda's with you turn to 580, otherwise you're on your own here.

EGO STROKING : DIFFICULTY 12

If you succeed turn to 708. If you fail then turn to 1392.

1728

With the marshy ground shaking underfoot under the galloping fury of the Phalloknight's unstoppable charge you'd have a better chance of getting a bullseye on the moon than putting an arrow down this thing's shaft. You're not even a good archer, much to that gods-damned Jeff's disappointment and probable amusement. You manage to fire a couple of arrows in various directions but the Phalloknight doesn't even bother to raise his shield. You're quickly smashed to a pulp by a direct hit to the head from his couched lance before being trampled into a mushy slick of gore beneath his armoured balls.

1729

You're not sure this rickety old sack of bones will even support your half elfish frame, but it's your only hope. You awkwardly clamber aboard the animal and give it a kick to get the thing going.

Although you're worried the horse is going to keel over on you, the animal is a little tougher than it looks: though it totters unsteadily and whinnies in alarm, it begins to trot off with you clinging precariously to its back. It actually manages a decent clip while crossing the muddy field but comes dangerously close to the lady, who takes a vicious swing at you with the wooden switch she's packing as you canter by.

Roll two dice and add the result together. If the result is lower than your ÉLAN then turn at once to 1752. Otherwise the farmer's daughter has hit a homer - you go sailing off of the horse and into the mud, stunned out of your wits. Lose 5 EFFORT.

The old farmer hauls you up and forces you at fork-point into the outhouse, which he latches shut from the outside. You watch through the crescent-shape cut out in the door as he props a stool up against the door and takes a seat. You're stuck here for the night. Turn to 748.

1730

Fighting back nausea you down the bottle. The trolls are impressed! They've never seen a meat-creature down a whole bottle of trollbräu and live before! Unfortunately for everyone involved they don't get to see it this time either.

Although you're nearly blind from the huge quantities of alcohol you've downed you valiantly refuse to black out and rise up to continue on your quest. The cheers and hollering of the trolls as you weave drunkenly about their drinking circle turn to panicked shouts as you stagger dangerously close to the steep northern edge of the plateau and then over. You don't survive the long fall down.

1731

As the brownies wake up you gather them all together to tell them about your inspirational new plan. The rucksack thing would never work - you're a horrible liar and you don't feel like carrying a couple hundred brownies around in your backpack - so instead you're all going to rush right at the main gates and take the humans by surprise. They'll retreat before your onslaught and you'll all be inside Brunnenfeld in no time!

The brownies seem more than a little sceptical but they can't talk you out of it, so they arm up and accompany you through the forest, sneaking past the human patrols as you approach the human town. Soon you reach the forest edge and sight Brunnenfeld's walls - a rough palisade compromised by a large open gate. They're not expecting a daytime attack - this should be easy.

You roar a battle cry and charge across the field separating the town from the forest. Running at the forefront of the brownie host you're surprised to see lot of snapped belts, ruined shoes and other garbage scattered around the field. You're about to ask the brownie next to you about the when you realise he's not there! You stop your charge and look behind you - to your horror the entire brownie host has dispersed to pick up the damaged garbage and is dragging it back to their forest slum. Oh well, you guess that's what brownies do.

You're left standing alone in the field in front of the gate. Your attack failed but at least you're rid of those brownies. If you'd like to approach the gate and see about getting in then turn to 603. If you think you've pretty much messed up your first impressions with Brunnenfeld you can instead turn south and walk away from the town across the plains - turn to 372.

1732

The rest of the stroll towards Bilgeton is a pleasant affair. The Bilgeton Plains are quite densely populated in comparison to the mostly empty wastes you've been traversing since you left home, and all manner of small farmsteads and peasant huts line the way. Pausing only to steal and consume a pie you spot cooling on a window ledge (restore 5 EFFORT), you trek on towards the city. Soon you are approaching a gate set in the immense walls - the great Trader's Gate. You see the sun glinting off the steel helmets of what are probably guards, and it suddenly strikes you that it may be a challenge to enter the city after all. This might be your last chance to equip your gear for your grand debut and to get rid of anything that could get you into trouble in the city.

Make whatever adjustments you're going to make and turn to 681.

1733

The shovel vibrates menacingly. It's about to rat you out. If you've murdered a human then turn to 179. Otherwise the guard only laughs at the incriminating testimony of the digging tool.

"Seems you need to leave town in a hurry. Well, the price has gone up. Supply and demand and all that", chortles the guard.

You can pay the revised toll with one third of your Guilders, rounding up to the nearest Guilder (minimum two Guilders). Or you can pay with two weapons. If you manage this outrageous sum then turn to 1672. If you're skint you can try to pay with elfish currency instead (if you have any) by turning to 1643. Other than that all you can do is attack this oaf to get him to move aside (turn to 416), or you can give up and leave via the southern gate by turning to 338.

1734

Just as you're on the verge of figuring out what to do about the miniature army arrayed against you, a familiar and normal-sized figure comes bursting out of the woods. Brenda, the pretty elf lady who beat and robbed you earlier today, tramples through the artillery and swipes several surprised sparrows out of the air. You take advantage of the diversion by stomping a few dormice into a paste. The surviving attackers drop their weapons and shields and scatter in every direction, their will to fight broken.

Brenda shoots you another very pretty smile. You arch an eyebrow and smirk, attempting to look suave but succeeding only in looking like a creep.

"What's a pretty lady like you doing in a place like this?" you smarm as you nonchalantly stand in a splattered brownie. She smiles again (more politely than genuinely, not that you can tell the difference) and replies, "I wanted to come thank you - I got an A in my final assignment because of you! And... I was worried about you. I'm done with school and it looks like you could use the company, so can I come along?"

If you want to let Brenda tag along then turn to 1652. If you work alone then turn to 267.

1735

The shovel has been vibrating menacingly since you walked through the gates. With the knight here it finally peals out a litany of the terrible crimes you've committed. The knight and his butler gaze on you in horror as the shovel testifies against you. You hear crossbow strings being drawn taut.

If you killed the priest then turn to 199. Otherwise your crimes are only sufficient for the knight to have you horsewhipped out of town. His butler and guards thrash at your back, herding you through the nearest gate. You soon find yourself outside of Brunnenfeld's palisade once again with the gate locked firmly shut behind you. Lose 5 EFFORT from the chagrin occasioned by this shabby treatment. With no hope of returning to that town you carry on, wishing you could rid yourself of this damnable shovel which has, in the absence of any human authorities, once again lapsed into a merciful silence.

Turn to 1698.

1736

With uncharacteristic presence of mind and resolve, you stand your ground until the Phalloknight is almost on top of you before flinging your pouch of pixie bits as hard as you can right into its helmeted face.

This would have been a great plan if you had half an hour to wait for the Pixie to kick in. The Phalloknight will definitely be tripping his massive balls off then!

Turn to 618.

1737

You smack the goblins' armoured heads together and give their mounts a kick. The weird creatures screech and lope down the hill, dragging the unfortunate guards with them. Kicking open the castle doors you stride into the throne room of the Goblin King, where the sovereign sits draped across his throne. With his huge mullet haircut, tight silver leggings and impressive package he looks every inch the fairy tale character you remember from your childhood. The Goblin King leans forward and arches an eyebrow.

"I ask for so little. Just let me rule you, and you can have everything that you want", he says, slightly incongruously.

You're not in the mood for banter. You're here to fight! You step forward to do battle with the Goblin King. Turn to 1550.

1738

Now that you're ready to move on, if you'd like to continue out of the mountains and into the shifting vapours of the relatively flat Mist Steppes then turn to 1812. If you'd prefer to get closer to Bilgeton rather than much further away, you can follow the path uphill through the mountains to the south-east by turning to 898.

1739

You give the taurcents your best pleading look which, like most of your expressions, looks more than a bit like a smug smirk. Summoning up crocodile tears you beg for your life.

"Please, noble stallions, let me go. Don't you have any mercy?"

Your entreaties fall on deaf ears.

"Neigh" whinnies a black taurcent grimly and delivers an iron-hooved kick to your head that knocks you completely senseless.

Turn to 446.

1740

You'd rather not spend your waking hours with this heap of bones, and anyway aren't you going to Bilgeton somewhere in the south? The Alp of Abandoment sounds seriously out of the way…

Exhausted after a long night of horrors you lay down in the gravel and pass out. You sleep pretty well and wake to find the sun up and the golem gone. Nothing physical remains to prove to you that it all wasn't just a terrible dream, but you'll always have the psychological trauma, you suppose. Restore up to 15 EFFORT from the rest.

You stand up, brush the gravel out of your clothes and set off further into the mountains. Turn to 521.

1741

Sir Witold twitches his great grey moustache. The butler nearly cracks a smile but settles for raising an eyebrow before translating the meaning of the old man's facial hair movements.

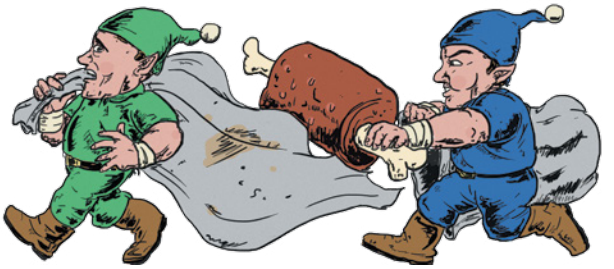
"Very good. You should know that no emissary we've sent to the Big Rock Goblins has returned, but we believe the creatures to dwell in the very middle of the range". While you're digesting this he continues, "As this is a diplomatic mission you will require the appropriate attire and some 'walking round money'. His excellency will provide you with the necessities".

Witold claps his hands and another servant scurries out of the house bearing a folded garment with a pouch containing some money perched on the top. You take these with gusto - add the Dapper Garb and 5 Bilgeton Guilders to your Adventure Scroll. As you're pawing at the loot the old man relays a final message to you with a fierce "harrumph".

"His excellency says that should you succeed in clearing away the blockage caused by the Rock Goblins then you should return here for your reward, and that while this is a diplomatic mission you shouldn't fear to use all the options at your disposal. In fact, if you find opportunity to use your other, more direct, options then it is desirable you should. Now go! I shall see you through the town gates".

After this cryptic interlude the butler brusquely escorts you off the premises and out to the small northern gate to the town. The extremely fat guard occupying almost all of the adjacent gate-house looks like he'd dearly like to shake you down for his share of your bounty but a sharp look from the butler dashes his best-laid plans. Slowly and grumpily, the oaf comes out to open the gate for you. The butler wishes you a curt and final-sounding "Good-bye", as the gate slams shut behind you. You now set out along a rocky trail that winds high into the mountain range ahead.

Turn to 1698.



1742

Distraught and miserable, you nail the pissing and moaning part but you don't manage to wander in circles correctly. Basically catatonic with self-pity, you don't really pay a lot of attention to where you're going and injure yourself a few times running into trees and tripping over roots - lose 5 more EFFORT. However, despite your grief, you have tended to go either uphill or downhill more or less consistently.

Have you been going steadily upward, mainly because the ground is less covered in brambles, roots and other crap in that direction? If so turn to 1321.
Have you been going mostly downward because walking downhill is easier? If so turn to 1612.
If you can't decide or you're too distraught to care then flip a coin.

1743

You stagger out of the crypt and back outside, scarcely able to believe what's become of you. In your skeletonised form you're of no further interest to the undead aside from a few shamblers who make an approving groaning noise as you jitter past and back out of the crypt. You soon find yourself outside. You want nothing more than to get away from here, so you stagger back down the path until you reach the road once again. From there you just continue walking, heedless of direction and distance.

You have been SKELETONISED! For those of you who own the Bestiary, the incredibly useful guide to the world of The Sword of the Bastard Elf (available in many fine truck stops) you'll be aware that there are two kinds of animated skeleton: the good kind that comes back to life when it's killed, and the crappier kind which disintegrates when it's defeated thanks to the inferior magic used in its construction. You are, of course, the latter kind. Since you were already the crappier kind of mortal this change has remarkably little effect on your stats. Although nothing much has changed from your point of view, if you had a steed before entering the crypt it didn't stand around waiting for you - remove it from your Adventure Scroll.

Please note that you can no longer speak in a language the humans can understand - if the text implies that you can you'll have to use your imagination as to how you've gotten your point across! Luckily humans are used to skeletons and usually treat them with some respect.

You have no idea how long you spend shuffling along in a fugue state but eventually you snap back to your senses, or what passes for senses in a lesser skeleton. The sun shines down on your bony head as you stand motionless at a crossroads. Ahead of you the road splits, heading southeast over undulating plains dotted with farms and cattle. It winds gently to the huge main gates of Bilgeton, several hours' travel away and yet still clearly visible due to their massive size. To the northeast the road turns to follow alongside a forest, sloping down towards a river ford where a small human settlement squats over the water. You can see the smoke rising from chimneys and, more threateningly, the sun reflecting off steel helmets and blades in the watch towers. An obelisk set beside the road indicates that the southeast road is to Bilgeton via the Noble Gate, and the northwest is also to the same place but via Bilgeford and the Trader's Gate.

Neither place sounds appropriate for a recently-undead skeleton, but of you'd like to take the southeast path and head straight for Bilgeton through the Noble Gate turn to 1502. If the Trader's Gate sounds more like the kind of place you'd be expected to show up then turn to 678.

1744

The agent smiles, or at least tries to, flashing you an unpleasant rictus grin.

"Well done. And the skeletons seem to like you too", he says, apparently able to comprehend the chittering of your charges, "Here's your payment for services rendered" he says, holding out a single Guilder.

You stare at it in disbelief.

"What? How much do you think caravan hands get paid? That's more than a week's wage for a day's drive at most", he replies. "Anyway, how would you feel about escorting the wagons back? There's two groats in it for you".

Since you'd rather do literally anything else with your time, you take your money - add 1 Guilder to your Adventure Scroll - and wander off grumbling into Bilgeton in search of better opportunities. Turn to 1364.

1745

Giselle seems unimpressed by the entertainment on offer.

"We used to busk with these pedestrian hacks in Monteton. Now they're some bigshot troubadours" she says loudly enough for the band to hear.

"Actually, we're trouvères" says the shawm player. "Although I can see you're still mere jongleurs. Perhaps if you had paid more attention to your dyadic counterpoint, you could be here instead of begging for change in the gutter. If you had any talent, that is".

"Oh yeah?" shouts Harman, "We're a brand-new sound, it comes from the heart! We don't need to read our music off a score!" He reaches up to the stage and swats over a music stand, which is caught instantly and righted by one of the band members before it can dislodge its musical notes.

Dwarfs aren't a violent lot and usually pride themselves in their use of words over fists, so you have to endure Harman and Giselle yelling at the band for quite a while before you can hustle them away from the stage and out the exit. At least they're all fired up now - if you use the Dwarfen Troupe in any upcoming musical battles you may add 1 to your FIST rolls. For now you're just happy to be away from the place.

Turn to 827.

1746

They say that the hells hath no fury like a woman scorned, but they've never met an old peasant father who's trying to protect his daughter from the endless ranks of low-rent Lotharios who infest the highways of Nonce. In any case you soon get to see what other furies the hells have lined up for you as Aldrecht, displeased by your response, rams his pitchfork through your chest.

1747

Just as you settle on a name for your band, your continuous tumbling gets you into trouble. You nearly somersault right into one of the passing upper-class ladies of Brunnenfeld who drops a bag of shopping and yells in her outrage, "I declare! Watch where you're going, you fucking queynte!"

You stop dead in your tracks. That's it! The troupe will be known as QUEYNTE!

Make a note in ink on your Adventure Scroll that you're on A Mission From The K-NG. Nothing will get in the way of you putting together the finest ricercar and ballata act that the world has ever seen! That's as far from a real job as you can get, and it'll drive Jeff up the wall! Unless you lose interest and wander off, or maybe go the wrong way or something. In any case add 1 ÉLAN and 10 maximum and current EFFORT thanks to your brush with the divine.

Since you're out on the street anyway you decide to continue along the lane, your renewed purpose putting a spring in your step. Turn to 1236.

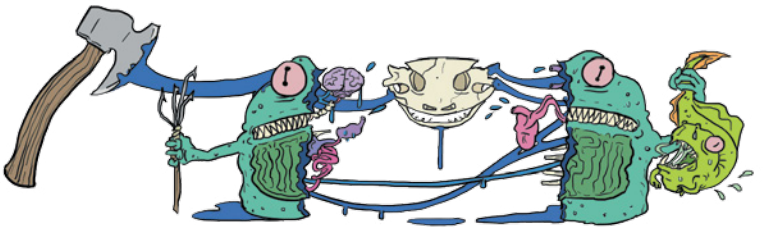
1748

The pixies seem happy about your haul and the inn's doors swing wide to allow you and your fellow workers access. Once you're inside the door is slammed shut behind you and you hear the disquieting sound of a latch clicking shut. Your eyes soon adjust to the darkness inside the Lodge of Travellers and you quickly realise you've been had! There's no concierge, the bedding is little more than louse-infested old straw heaped in a corner, the food's disgusting gruel and you can't sleep because of the constant noise of cart traffic outside. In short it's no Lodge of Travellers, it's a mere Travel Lodge! You look to the other workers but they seem resigned to the situation and are making themselves as comfortable as is possible within the confines of a Travel Lodge. The dwarf, noticing your consternation, finally speaks up,

"Don't screw this up for us, man. It's all the gruel and potions you can drink and all you have to do is a bit of digging."

This stumpy fellow might have had his mind destroyed by potion abuse, but he's making a lot of sense. After all, wasn't the whole point of this quest to find some place to crash? And here you are.

Since it's the path of least resistance you spend the rest of your days working for the pixies. In return for your help hollowing out the rocks they use for their cheaply-made homes and businesses you're allowed to share-house in their barely-habitable inn just outside the city limits where you can indulge in unhealthy food and even unhealthier potions to your heart's content.



1749

You order the caravan onwards, keeping your eyes peeled for any elfish tricks. Though this job pays suspiciously well, the jangle of your coin pouch is barely enough to settle the jitters in your nerves, and you swear to never work again. In any case work's the kind of thing Jeff wanted you to do and the thought of him not being disappointed in you is somewhat annoying to you.

A few minutes pass. The road curves very slightly and just around the bend you see a figure sprawled in the middle of the road - it looks like one of those human town guards wearing one of their cheap padded gambesons and hideous kettle helms. This one looks to be wounded - he's lying on his back with an elfen dagger protruding from his chest, with both hands clutched around the blade. It's hard to tell because you're approaching quickly but the man seems to be moving a little, and you think you can hear him groaning even over the sound of skeletal hooves, tinkling bones and rolling wheels. If you're going to stop you'd better call a halt right now!

To do this turn to 795. If you're in too much of a hurry to even think about slowing down then turn to 1789.

1750

Well, the river's carried you this far, no sense tiring your legs out walking now. You get back into the water and shove off.

The impressive stone walls of Bilgeton loom closer and closer. Also looming closer and closer - an archway set in the wall to allow the river to flow into Bilgeton, lined with thick iron bars to prevent anything human-sized or larger from flowing in with it. A huge heap of detritus has piled up against the bars, and you're about to join it. Luckily the river isn't moving fast enough to hurt you if you run into the mess up ahead, but you doubt you're getting through that way.

Just as you've given up hope of an easy way into the city you spy a dark tunnel in the north bank, just above the water line. Something's been impeding the flow of the springs in the Big Rock Goblin Mountains lately so the Bilge isn't running as high as usual, otherwise it'd be hidden. Could this be a way in, or is it just another dark pit in a book with more than its fair share of unlit caverns?

If you'd like to steer towards the hole and hope for the best then turn to 1536. If you'd rather test your luck against those iron bars then turn to 1515.

1751

Slicking your hair back and cocking your greasiest eyebrow you stagger to the other end of the bar to commence hitting on the dwarven ladies. Accosting the nearest one, you say, "Hey baby, what do you and my cock have in common? They're both short and sweet..."

If Nilde's with you turn to 506. Otherwise read on:

The dwarven lass delivers a terrifyingly hard blow to your shin with her hobnailed court shoe and you go down like a sack of potatoes, taking your flagon and a barstool with you. You guess dwarfs will stick up for themselves even if they're generally opposed to violence on principle!

Luckily the lady refrains from giving you any more of a stomping while you're on the floor, settling for recording your description in her dwarfen book of grudges.

As soon as she's gone you get up and try again, working your way up and down the party until you've single-handedly repulsed them enough to leave and earned a few good bruises in the process. In addition, you've got so many grudges recorded against you that it'd be inadvisable to ever show your face in the dwarfen stronghold of Monteton, but that's not really as much of a concern to you as your tenderised shins and battered internal organs. Remove 5 EFFORT.

When you return to your place at the bar to order another drink you find a man in a black leather jacket has taken your stool! He lets out a mean chuckle as he notices you getting all pissy about his seating choices.

If you want to make something of it then turn to 154. If you just want to get back to drowning your sorrows then turn to 692. If you've had enough humiliation for one night and want to settle your "tab" then turn to 502.

1752

You duck under the woman's swing and, unbalanced, she falls down into the muck of the field. Your horseback escape is much too fast for the old farmer and before he can get at you with his pitchfork you're back out on the road with your valuable equine prize! Add the Clapped-Out Old Nag to your Adventure Scroll.

Both you and the horse are pretty beat so once you've put the farmstead far enough behind you on the road you look for a place to rest, settling on a convenient hedgerow located just beside the thoroughfare. You dismount and hit the hay, leaning up against your bony new friend.

You wake the next morning refreshed (restore 20 EFFORT) to find your nag gnawing on a nearby thistle. You mount up on the old girl and continue trotting along the road to Bilgeton.

Turn to 1455.

1753

You don't want to march out through the main exit in case one of the locals saw you robbing the musician. Looking around you see the entrance to the little elfs' room behind the raised platform - maybe you can find a way out through there?

You find yourself in a wretched little oubliette containing a foul-smelling pit and a small lead glass window set at chest level which allows a modicum of moonlight in from outside. You smash this while trying to force it open and climb out, miraculously slithering out the other side unharmed. It's doubtful that the rowdy elfs inside heard anything but just to be on the safe side you decide to get the hells away from this pub and find somewhere safe to hole up for the night.

Turn to 1714.

1754

The archers don't stand a chance against your frenzied attack and flee into the undergrowth. While you'd like to chase them down and finish them off, you've got a caravan to save! Yelling for the drivers to follow you, you return to the road and gallop away. The first wagon, no longer pinned down by the archers, rolls away, followed by any wagons you saved from the raiders earlier.

You managed to save the front wagon plus however many wagons you successfully protected in the rear. Record that you've either got 2 or 3 WAGONS as appropriate and turn to 382 to leave the stunned elf raiders behind to pick over their relatively scanty haul.

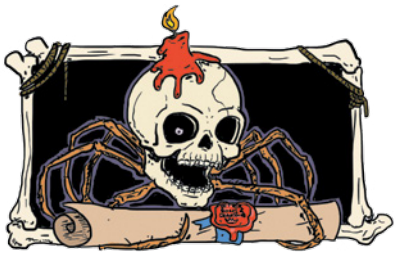
1755

There's no way you can win a fist fight against someone in full plate armour! As you're expounding this theory to the announcer, Krung (who has no qualms about using his unfair advantage) punches you in the back of the head. You see stars and dimly perceive the raucous laughter of the goblin spectators before everything goes black.

When you come to a short time later you find yourself outside in the back alley, lying on top of the unconscious body of the bloodied fighter you saw dragged out earlier. You sit up and check yourself for damage. When you touch the back of your head you feel a blast of searing pain and your fingers come away sticky. Your noggin has been cracked and your brain will probably never work quite right again. Lose 1 ÉLAN.

Mercifully you haven't been robbed, though that doesn't stop you looting the unconscious boxer you woke up on. He has 1 Guilder and a set of Knuckledusters you can take with you if you wish, though they didn't do this doomed fighter much good.

This disgraceful act completed, you rise and, still reeling from the injury, stagger down the alley around the side of the Gobl Inn and out into the thoroughfare. Turn to 192.



1756

Since Hulagu and the taurcents are clearly colluding, this wasn't the brightest move. You just manage to leap aboard the wagon as it picks up speed, but the taurcents just wave at Hulagu and he stops the caravan again for long enough for the monsters to haul you back out of the wagon again. Your escape attempts earn you a good, solid kicking as the caravans roll away without you. Lose 5 EFFORT.

Now well and truly on your own against these man-horses, will you make a last-ditch scramble for freedom (turn to 519), or will you beg for mercy (turn to 1739)?

1757

The red-faced elf isn't a serious threat to you, but he manages to clobber your steed with the flat of his blade. The unfortunate critter starts in shock and takes off with you along for the ride. When it finally calms down enough to listen to you again you are miles away from your caravan. By the time you get back nothing remains except the smouldering, burnt-out wreckages of the wagons on the side of the highway. They've been propped up on blocks and even the wheels have been removed. The hapless skeletons you were hired to protect have all been scattered or destroyed and the bony horses are nowhere to be seen. It appears that you weren't much of a caravan guard after all which, if we're being honest, would hardly come as a surprise to you, that mocking bastard Jeff (who you will never, ever call 'Dad') or anyone else who's ever met you.

Well, at least you got out unharmed even if the same can't be said for the skeletons or Aggie's business. Sensing that the sweary sorceress might be a bit miffed if you return to her, you decide to simply pocket all the money she gave you and carry on as if nothing happened. Whistling a jaunty tune you continue trotting towards Bilgeton. Turn to 294.

1758

Withdrawing the union card from wherever skeletons traditionally keep these things you flip it across the desk to the rep. He looks at it and then back at you with disbelief.

"Greenbones? What the hell happened to you? You look like shit" he chatters in shock. You make up some bollocks about quitting your job over unpaid overtime. The rep shudders.

"Well, it's alright now. We'll get you a decent job around here. The employers know who's in charge in Bilgeton".

You try to explain that you don't want a job but the rep chitters over you. "Got just the thing for you, actually. Job for a gardener has opened up at the Church of K-NG the Confessor just a short ways north of Bilgeton. Like most priests the employer's a drunk so it'll be easy work, short hours and double pay for working outside of the city limits, of course. Let's get you out there today".

Your protests fall on deaf ears - not that skeleton union reps have ears - and you're more or less railroaded out of town just as quickly as you arrived. A few hours north of the Trader's Gate you find yourself at your new home - a tumbledown church with a weedy, overgrown garden. Still, as promised, the priest is drunk nearly all the time and the hours are very short. In return for a few hours of very mediocre topiary clipping a week you are paid something like five times the going rate for the same labour by a human, while also enjoying six weeks of paid holiday a year, sick leave for when your bones ache and free lodgings in the church's comfortable rectory, whereas the human workers get no time off and have their wages garnished for completely substandard accommodation. While you resent the fact that Jeff would see you dying and then getting a job as a victory, you've learned the power of collective bargaining and union membership and realised that you should always be part of a workplace union, even if you're a poorly-enchanted skeleton who has to bullshit his way in with a stolen identity card.

1759

Stepping out from behind the heap of garbage you clear your throat to announce your presence and approach the guard. He's less than pleased at being interrupted during what should be a cushy shift, and his displeasure doubles when he realises he has an intruder on his hands. He blows a tin whistle furiously and takes up his halberd which was leaning against the wall beside him until just now. No matter how much you try to explain why your presence here is perfectly legitimate and normal he just keeps blowing that whistle and advancing on you, and over the musical strains emanating from the building you now hear the stomping of heavy boots as reinforcements burst out through the rear entrance...

Since you don't stand a chance against a squad of guardsmen you do what comes naturally and panic, letting yourself out of the garden the way you came in and fleeing back out into the streets. Since these guys aren't being paid extra to chase gatecrashers further than the property bounds they let you go as soon as you're not in their line of sight and go back to their posts, but you keep running until you're completely clear of the Noble District and back on the poorer northern side of the River Bilge where out-of-hours militia response times favour you a lot more.

Anyway, that experience was a bust. It's getting late now and you reckon it's time to go try to track down your father and, more importantly, that place to crash you came all this way for. Turn to 1793.

1760

You take a hearty swig of the poisonous brew, a harder proposition than the first time round even though you've developed a minor tolerance for it:

DRINKING PROBLEM: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2

If you succeed you manage to slam the entire bottle down, to the amazement of the trolls - turn to 1730. If you fail then you get most of the liquor in your throat, but not for long. Turn to 1125.

1761

"HAVE YOU SEEN THE LIGHT?!" hollers the cleric.

You respond by somersaulting repeatedly backwards through the air, clean through the double doors and out onto the street once again, ignoring the churchman's desperate requests that you come back and get Redeemed or at least leave a tithe.

You've got to put the troupe back together! Not that you've ever been in a troupe, but you're pretty sure you'll make a great front man for:

The Bastard Elf Experience - turn to 272.
The Troupe - turn to 766.
The Half-Man Bastard Band - turn to 1491.
Steppenelf- turn to 944.

1762

The Brute barely lays a finger on you before you take a dive rather than risk any damage to your precious face. This embarrassing and obvious display of self-preservation earns you a chorus of boos from the audience and other bar patrons, which is swiftly followed by a barrage of bad bar snacks, mead horns and ale tankards. The good name of the Jabbing Jabroni is now mud. Probably not for the last time in your life, you slink out of a tavern in disgrace.

Turn to 54.

1763

You reach into the sack and filch a fruit undetected. As you take a bite out of the suspiciously pale produce and get a blast of pure starchy flavour you realise you've made a terrible mistake! These might be apples, but they're the kind the dwarfs call "pommes de terre" - the dreaded "earth apple" beloved of humans, also known as the potato!

Still, waste not want not. You somehow choke down the fruits of your crime. Restore up to 5 EFFORT. While the raw potato doesn't taste great, it temporarily fills you with the unfamiliar feeling of pride for having accomplished something without completely messing it up. This feeling will remain until reality crashes in on you and cruelly reveals your limitations once more. Add 1 ÉLAN until the next time you fail a round in a Hassle or get humiliated somehow.

With your boredom at least partially relieved by your undetected dishonesty, the line seems to move quicker and soon it's your turn to step through the door into the gatehouse. Turn to 851.

1764

You lie down on the shale and try to get some rest. You have trouble getting comfortable on this cold hard stone and the feeling of razor sharp edges jutting into your spine keeps you awake almost as much as your constantly chewing over how much you hate that scumbag Jeff for doing this to you. Eventually your white-hot indignation subsides to a warm, seething hate and you are lulled to sleep. Restore 10 EFFORT.

You wake in the mid-morning, murderously early for you, not feeling particularly refreshed. At least you can see where you're going now and are no longer at risk of being eaten by a grue or, more plausibly, tumbling down a mountainside. Turn to 521 to press on.

1765

Your attempt to surrender just earns you a brutal pummelling from the taurcent. Eventually one of the monster's wildly thrashing hooves connects with your forehead and you fold like a lawn chair. You black out long before you hit the deck. Turn to 446.

1766

The bravery of these diminutive warriors is beyond question, but it takes more than bravery for a bunch of two-inch-tall fairies to bring down even an incompetent and cowardly half elf. A few flails and stomps on your part and the cream of brownie nobility is smeared into a past at the edge of the Feewald. The few survivors flee back into the woods, shedding their armour and weapons as they run for their lives.

If you want to get after them, turn to 959. If you'd rather loot the battlefield then turn to 1009.

1767

Through guile, luck and good old-fashioned violence you've seen off every half-decent boxer in Nonce. The legend of the Jabbing Jabroni is so great that no one dares challenge you for your title and you remain the undisputed champion of the world. Women want to be with you, men are terrified of you and the Guilders keep rolling in. You parlay your fame into commercial success.

One day as you're opening a new location in your used horse and carriage franchise you spy a familiar face working its way forward through the crowd - that homewrecker Jeff! As soon as he reaches the front of the audience he throws himself to his knees before you and grasps the hem of your cool boxing gown in supplication.

"My son... I know you must be angry with me but please hear my words. I met you and your mother when you were but a babe of ten years, and watched you grow to be a young man. Although it almost slew me to be so harsh with you, I knew that you would squander your life among the elfs, and so I pushed you from the nest so you could realise your potential. I followed along behind you all this time, helping where I could without being seen, hoping I could help keep you safe. And now, here you are, the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world and owner of a fine chain of used horse and carriage stores. I am so very proud of you, my son, and I was hoping you could see your way clear to loaning me and your mother a few hundred Guilders so we can dig out the dungeon under the tower...."

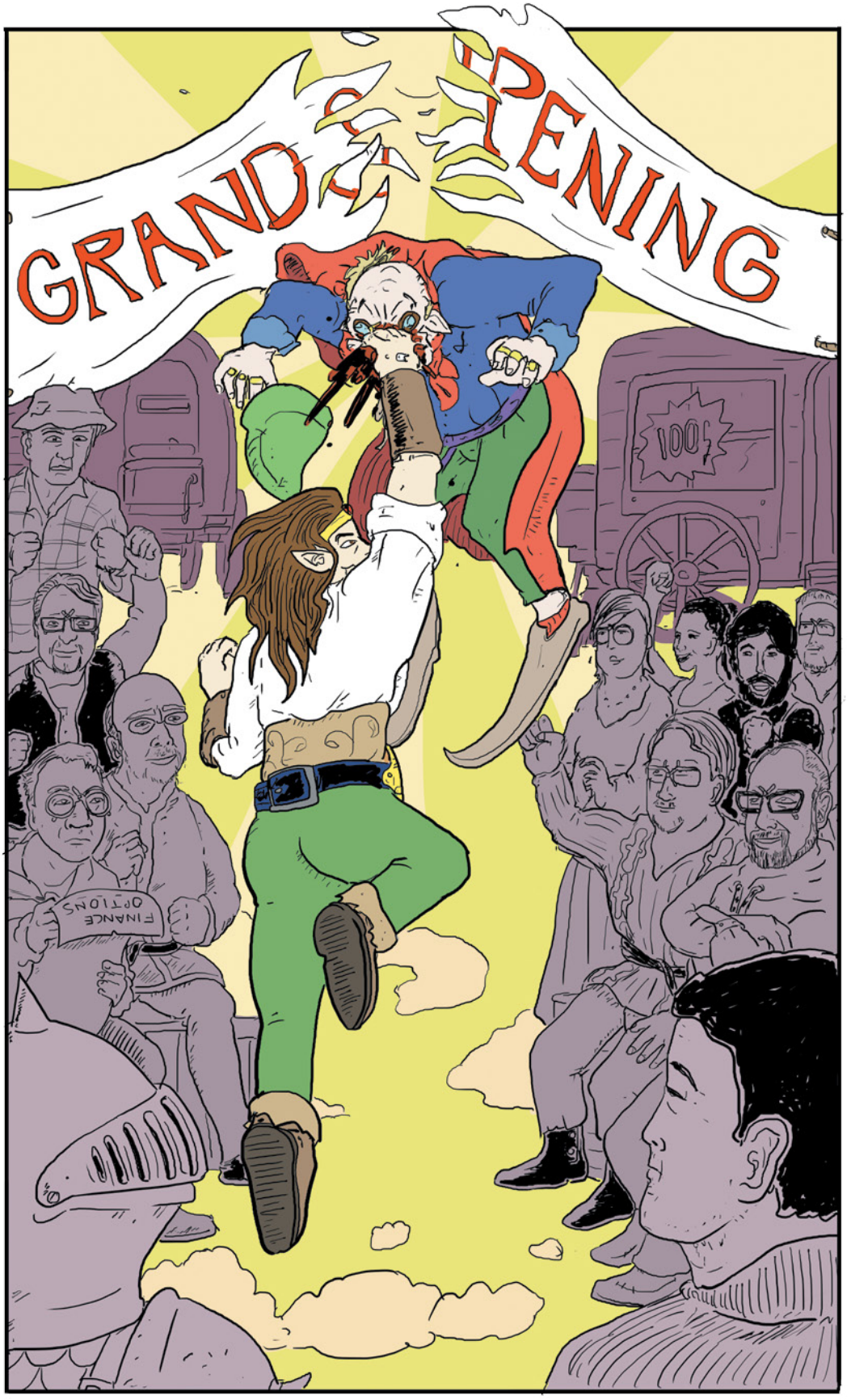
Before you can prevent it, your right fist - guided by the fighting spirits of the boxers you've defeated along the way and your own burning soul of vengeance - snaps out as if of its own volition and plants itself right in the centre of Jeff's face. As he crumples to the ground the roaring crowd surges forward, trampling over the home-wrecker in their excitement to get your autograph and a great deal on a used shooting brake. You never do find your father or locate the titular sword of this book, but you do learn a valuable lesson - revenge is a dish best served with your fists.

1768

The unfairly difficult early-game encounter is big, powerful and fast, but it has lousy depth perception. Taking advantage of a poorly-executed lunge you slide under the cyclops' legs and sprint down the mountain pass. It follows you for a while, but try as it might it can't keep up. You don't stop running until its animalistic shrieks and roars fade away in the distance behind you.

You escape the cyclops! All this running has worn you out a bit - lose 5 EFFORT. If you're still going you allow yourself a quick breather before continuing your hike through the mountains.

Turn to 505.


GRAND OPENING
100!
FINANCE OPTIONS

1769

The spire is extremely tall and narrow, like a spike jutting out of the earth, but it's craggy and covered in handholds and dead bits of vegetation to cling to. You start to pull yourself up.

Apparently your attempts to climb up to the eagles' nest are considered threatening in some way because, once you're about twenty feet up the spire, one of the eagles dive-bombs you. The huge animal pecks at your head, tearing away at your hair while it buffets you with its massive wings and claws away at your weapon hand and your back with its talons. You cling on for dear life with one hand while you try to fight the monster off with the other.

🔪**ONEAGLE: DIFFICULTY 7 - FISTS 2**

If you defeat the bird turn to 825. If you lose then turn to 1273.

1770

Clutching the book to your scrawny chest and screaming wildly, you run as fast as your bare feet can carry you along the road to the north and out of town. The guards can do little but watch you incredulously - clad in full armour they don't have a hope of keeping up with a naked madman, and they're not going to get on horseback to chase you down.

You don't stop running until you reach a milestone which states that you've reached the Bilgeford town limits and you don't stop screaming until a mile after that, by which time you're completely certain that you're not being followed. Lose 5 EFFORT from the exertion. You find that you're on a wide, paved road which is beginning to curve around to the south-east now that you've left the hateful little town behind, following along a wide river at a mile's distance. Further along the road, perhaps half a day's quick walk away, you see the tall walls of a great city. It must be Bilgeton! Despite your nakedness and general exhaustion you set out with a spring in your step, the end of your long journey in sight.

Turn to 1732.

1771

This time the skeleton is fighting carefully, doing little more than blocking your blows and throwing out a feint once in a while. As a result the fight drags on until suddenly you hear a bell ring from a little shack outside the tower. With this the skeleton chitters at you, lowers its guard and simply walks off back towards the shack. Since you haven't had any luck killing it so far you just let it go.

As you watch it wander away you notice that a light which was glowing at the top of the tower has been extinguished as well, and all the windows bar the one at the very top have been shuttered. Perhaps it's clocking out time? Either way you don't seem to be in mortal danger anymore and are left alone outside the front of the tower.

If you desperately want to get inside for some reason then you could attempt to scale the tower - turn to 1680. Failing that if you're on good terms with the elfs you met earlier then you can go back and look for them - turn to 879. If you'd rather leave those losers to their fate then you simply return to the road and continue your journey in the direction of Bilgeton - turn to 294.

1772

You continue to wander along the mountain pass, at times little more than a goat-track cutting across the side of the mountain, and the menacing-looking spire looms ever closer. The things circling the top are definitely eagles, probably of the giant variety, and you can hear their keening and screeching echoing through the mountains. You wonder if they've seen you yet, and whether they'd consider you food, as scrawny and unpalatable as you are.

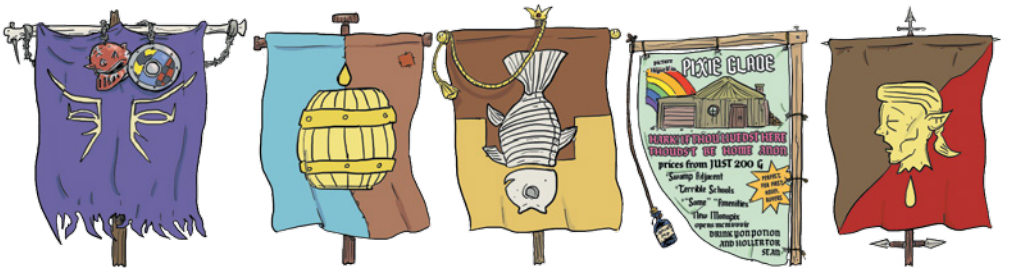
After a bit more trudging you come to a fork in the road. The path continues to approach the spire, winding gently downwards through the mountains towards the base of the spike. If you'd like to press onwards towards this foreboding place then turn to 892.

If you'd really prefer not to risk becoming eagle food you can try to make your own way through the mountains, as dangerous a task as that is. A gravelly path leads from here to a broken series of ledges, craggy cliff walls and risky-looking leaps over bottomless chasms. If you have Enough Rope then your mountaineering attempt is automatically successful - turn to 259. Otherwise you must attempt it:

ELFS GOING THEIR OWN WAY: DIFFICULTY 11

This is a strenuous task. If you succeed you must double the amount of EFFORT used in that attempt.

If you make it turn to 259. If you can't do it or don't want to make an effort then turn to 1453.



1773

The guard fails to suppress a yawn as you unsling your instrument in preparation for rocking his world.

"Buskers are barely a notch above beggars in Bilgeton", says the guard, "and the only musicians that Count Hugues likes are those new avant garde dwarfen troupes. You don't look like a dwarf, so..."

If you're on a Mission From The K-NG, have an instrument and have been joined by at least one musician then turn to 723. Otherwise lose 5 EFFORT as you play your guts out only to be rewarded by the guard shaking his head sadly.

"Can't help you, pal. You'll either have to come up with the 20 Guilders or forget about it".

If you want to (and can) pay the requested fee then turn to 808. Otherwise you're going to have to admit that you've got nothing - turn to 201.

1774

You regain consciousness to find yourself lying on a filthy mattress in a dimly-lit room. The room is in a horrible state - it smells even worse than your room in Elfsdale Downs and it's even messier, with odd rubber clubs and scrunched up and hard tissues littered everywhere. But more importantly and even more horribly, in the scant light emitted by a wide-screen scrying crystal mounted in the corner of the room you can see that the dragon is seated on the mattress right next to you! It's clumsily wrapping a gauze around your dented head. The dragon notices you're awake and speaks.

"I'm so, so, so sorry. I know who you remind me of now. He's a good friend of mine. You look just like him, sort of... but you're much younger. Much, much younger. I'm so glad you didn't die. I'd love to.... get to know you better". Perhaps we could be good friends too", hisses the over-grown lizard, moving its cold, scale-coated tail firmly into contact with your leg in a manner which you are sure is meant to be sexual but merely scrapes a bunch of skin off your outer thigh.

Hells, you've probably done worse for yourself. If you're willing to go with it then turn to 1810. Otherwise you push the dragon's tail away and reject its inappropriate and weird advances by turning to 667.

1775

You've got no interest in meeting another caterpillar so you ignore the creature and step through the entrance into the next section of the Mazyrinth. Once again both directions look the same so you just pick one and go to stride off.

"Don't go that way!" shouts the caterpillar, "Never go that way!"

You freeze as you consider the worm's words. If you want to heed his advice then you thank him and head the other way: turn to 823. If you're not going to take instructions from a creepy crawly then you ignore him and keep going the way you picked: turn to 571.

1776

You have no idea as to why you're doing this, but heaving a sigh you tie the rope against a tree, rappel into the pit and haul the gigantic mutt out. Lose 5 EFFORT from the exertion.

This creature which was formerly trying to kill you is absurdly appreciative, bounding all over you and covering you with slobber. You tell the depressingly stupid animal to get out of here but he won't leave you be. You've made a friend for life!

Add the Dire Wolf to your Adventure Scroll and turn to 452.

1777

You creep into the mansion and dig in like a tick. Since you are appallingly rude to the staff they don't notice much difference between you and the real Tedbald, and as minimum-wage churls no one in the city guard is going to take their word over yours anyway even if they did have suspicions. Tedbald never comes back and you pretty much get away with stealing his identity.

Months pass and you've ingrained yourself into society as Sir Tedbald of Bilgeford. Half elf knights are not unheard of, and your rough manners and general ignorance of comportment and etiquette are put down to your years roaming the hinterlands. In any case these are considered mere eccentricities given your vast wealth - as the lord of the Bilgeford estate you have all the toll income you can shake out of the bridge guards and taxes from several small hamlets and a lumber mill, not to mention the numerous extra estates you award yourself through creative use of the Count's seal. Count Hugues "The Mark" of Bilgeton is not known for his comprehensive accounting or control of his pocket book and even your quite frankly sickening plundering of the exchequer is lost among the Count's incredible gambling losses. You appoint Karol as your advisor and crony-at-large and award him numerous fiefs, holdings and concessions as well as the use of your knightly swimming pool.

For your part you abandon errantry or roaming around the country looking for somewhere to sleep. Instead, you ensconce yourself firmly in your cosy manor in Bilgeton, enjoying the comforts that only the huge metropolis can offer the discerning minor noble on the fiddle. If you do not have The Sword of the Bastard Elf your adventure ends here in abject, filthy luxury. If you do have the Sword of the Bastard Elf then turn to 82.

1778

If you didn't come into this maze via the crypt turn to 1220. Otherwise read on:

You stumble along the dark tunnels for a while and wind up in an open cavern once again. Actually, this place seems real familiar. It's where you started! You'd recognise that groin-ruining stalagmite anywhere!

The exits haven't changed - from here you can go west (turn to 319), northwest (turn to 279), north (turn to 1301) or east (turn to 529). If you're done with this maze nonsense after giving it a crack you can give up and climb back out into the crypt, assuming you haven't collapsed it or there's no barrier in place - to pass back through the crypt and out to the graveyard turn to 566.

1779

The golem turns to face you. He lets you know via a series of vague messages displayed on his orb that he's grateful for your assistance but that he calls dibs on the skull cave and that you will under no circumstances be allowed inside his head. You think it'll look a bit big on him but you're glad he's happy with his new skull.

Before he disappears into his own head the golem turns to wave goodbye. You take this opportunity to ask if you're going to get paid, and the golem display the helpful message "YOU MAY RELY ON IT" before vanishing inside.

It's a little while before he returns, and you occupy yourself with looting The Spectre. He's carrying very little of worth but you can grab his Skull Ring if you want. Just as you're considering the unpleasant prospect of stripping the vigilante of his bizarre garb the golem returns bearing a gift - a beat-up, blunted and corroded old sword, though since it's human-made the quality way outstrips even the fanciest elfen sword. He throws it into the dust at your feet, waves farewell and retreats into his own head like some kind of skull hermit. You bend over to pick up the sword - add Excalibur to your Adventure Scroll.

With the golem gone will you continue trying to loot the fallen hero of his last earthly possessions? Turn to 318. Otherwise if you'd like to continue out of the mountains and into the shifting vapours of the relatively flat Mist Steppes then turn to 1812. If you'd prefer to get closer to Bilgeton rather than much further away then you can commence following the path running uphill to the southeast by turning to 898.

1780

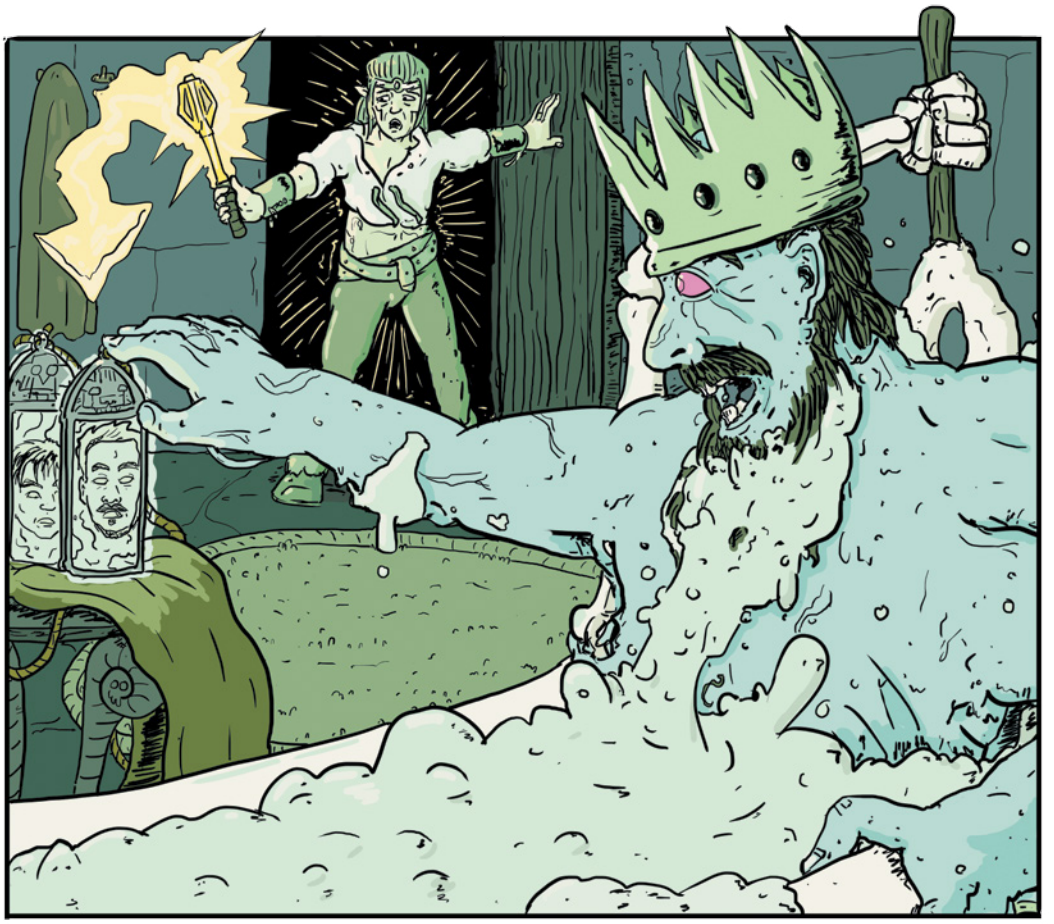
You've been waiting a very long time for this day - ever since Biff half-castrated you with his very first wedgie when you were both only twenty years old you've dreamed of revenge, and here it is! Unfortunately you can't quite reach Biff from birdback while he's lying in the dirt. You're about to dismount to finish him off but one of the human guards, having slain his share of elfs and growing bored watching you gingerly trying to lower yourself from your mount, rides over and idly runs Biff through with a spear.

Oh well, he's dead and that's all that counts. Add 5 EFFORT from the satisfaction of achieving pretty much your only life goal by proxy. You eventually manage to get down from the bird and help the guards chuck the elf corpses off the road while you wait for the rest of the caravan to catch up. As soon as it arrives you hitch up the bird to its wagon and climb up into your spot in the rear carriage. Shortly afterwards, Hulagu yells a command in his rough language and the caravan moves off again, the rattling of the cobblestone beneath the wheels reassuring you that you're well and truly on your way to Bilgeton.

Turn to 1124.

.

1781



You step over the smashed skeletons. Although the Bestiary (the indispensable guide to the world of the Bastard Elf, available adjacent to the d20 section of any nerd supply store) says the things should reanimate when they're battered apart, these ones don't seem to be doing anything much. Could the mace have robbed them of life? You trample the ancient bones underfoot as the enchanted, possibly cursed weapon leads you onwards down the hall and towards a large oak door. You can see an eldritch green light shining under the door but before you can think about your options the mace commands and you boot the door in, nearly crashing it off its rusty hinges. On the other side, a terrifying four-armed lich sits up in his bathtub in utter shock. The soapy, swirling liquid slops over the edge of the tub while the undead horror stares at you in abject shock, his crown slipping comically over one eye as he drops his loofah into the tub. On the stand next to the tub are a pair of sinister-looking lanterns filled with what appear to be screaming souls which emit the bright green glow which is illuminating the room.

You freeze - you don't want to fight this abomination, even if you've caught him with his pants down - but the mace urges you onwards. You notice that the lich is trying to reach for the glowing lanterns on the stand. The mace screams into your mind: "QUICK! BEFORE HE TOUCHES THE PHYLACTERIES!"

That sounds important. Do you want to go with whatever the mace is suggesting? Then turn to 1481. If your cowardice or, more charitably, your keen instincts for self-preservation allow you to resist this command, then turn to 1375.

1782

You saunter over to the sex worker and tell her all about your revolting sexual fantasies. To put it mildly your prurient suggestions do not go down well. The rock troll delivers such a ferocious kick to your groin that the windows rattle. You heroically suppress the desire to vomit out your own testicles, but you'll never walk normally again. Lose 1 ÉLAN.

You perform a movement something like a stagger crossed with a waddle out through the brothel door and back into the market. Turn to 244.

1783

Milner's weird behaviour causes you to lose your nerve. Truth be told, you've been nervous ever since you came under the shadow of that weird mountain - maybe it's the dull glow emanating from within a cave set into its base or perhaps it's the little wisps of dark smoke occasionally rising from cracks near its snowy peak. These are sure to be the doing of Bhad the Black, a name that doesn't exactly inspire confidence. In factm it's the name of a person who you are increasingly certain you never want to meet. You therefore allow Milner to have his head and let him turn away from the peak.

This turns out to be something of a mistake - as you're turning around the donkey takes advantage of your lack of skill and consequent wobbliness in the saddle to throw you hard. You land heavily on the frosty ground but as you struggle to get to your feet again Milner aims a two-legged kick at your head. You fall back to dodge this unprovoked attack and the donkey uses the time to race away over the steppes to the east, braying obnoxiously. You have no hope of catching up so you're forced to watch the hateful animal go.

Nothing much changes in the mountain and you're beginning to wonder if you were letting that stupid donkey get to you for no reason. If, on second thought, you'd like to continue on to the Alp of Abandonment then turn to 387. If you'd prefer to get out of here and maybe head back south in the rough direction of Bilgeton then turn to 114.

1784

You throw yourself on the mercy of the bag of bones. Luckily Greenbones is a gentle skeleton who just wants to garden for exactly forty hours a week at twice the average wage with 28 days guaranteed annual leave and three months of long service leave every ten years. Instead of killing you he just chitters victoriously, but this combined with your miserable begging summons the attention of the priest, a fat balding man in a brown cassock who comes bustling out of the church to see what all the fuss is about.

"Caught a thief, eh Greenbones?" says the priest, a dumpy, bald man in a brown cassock. The skeleton points at you and chitters menacingly.

"Is that so? Well, you'd best come with me, my bro. Unless you want me to call the militia." Beaten, you accept the priest's offer and meekly follow him into the church through a back entrance.

Turn to 353.

1785

Your instincts are screaming at you to flee but your noble soul won't let you run from a fight or (more plausibly) risk hurting yourself by leaping off a moving carriage. Whatever your motives, you're along for the ride as the wagon comes to a stop just behind the first and second carriages.

The guards dismount quickly and charge towards the advancing horde of man-horses while the drivers remain with the wagons. Although they're armed with bows they're not doing any shooting and they seem unusually relaxed for a group of people who are in the kind of danger that these guys are in. Hulagu himself is watching with interest but shows no signs of getting stuck in himself.

If you think your best chance is to help defeat these monsters then you leap down from the carriage and charge into battle: turn to 1369. If you think you might be safest nearer to the wagons then turn to 1180.

1786

Taking advantage of the giant's being off balance you rush in to work him over with a flurry of blows. Although you land a few decent hits on him (by your standards), they seem to have no effect but to make the ogre laugh. You realise you've fallen into a trap! Recovering from his wild swing he lifts his mighty arm up and drives his elbow down onto your skull, knocking you temporarily senseless and probably doing permanent damage to your brain. Lose 1 ÉLAN and 5 EFFORT as you fall flat on your back.

If you survive you notice that Fistface is in no hurry to finish you off - in fact, he's bellowing at you to get up. Is he toying with you? If you want to get up then turn to 324. If you'd prefer to stay down for the count then turn to 1334.

1787

If you've already come this way turn to 36. Otherwise read on:

Ignoring the smell you force your way into the tunnel to the north. As you proceed the air, already musty, becomes downright sickening. Then you suddenly begin to hear the sound of voices ahead, chittering out laughter and words in a language you don't understand but which you are quite sure are at least fifty percent obscenities. You strike a flash from your flint and see a group of ten gaunt, slimy-looking humanoids about the size of an adult elf but even more wasted, hunched over some kind of obscene card game. As you strike your unexpected light the disturbing beings recoil from you, shielding their reflective yellow eyes and baring their awful little fangs. They soon recover and advance on you as menacingly as they're able to. Luckily they're as thin and unintelligent of the rules of the game they're playing and once you get over their initial rudeness you're pretty sure there'll be nothing to this fight:

C.H.U.D.s AGAINST HUMANITY: DIFFICULTY ___ - FISTS ___ - TOUGHNESS ___

Put whatever numbers in there that you think might be fun.

If you win turn to 864. If you lose you retreat back the way you came, pursued by the hungry chuds. Luckily they're halfway through whatever game they're playing so they don't pursue you too far before going back to it. Turn to 279 to return to the chamber from which you came.

1788

The priest collapses to the ground, quite dead. His blue lifeblood spills out of him into the dark stone floor of the First Church of Hells, soaking right into the stones almost without a trace. You wonder briefly if that's a good thing, but not for long because you busy yourself collecting the padre's possessions. You may take the Detachable Tail, Padre's Cassock and the Frill Neck if you like - add any of these to your Adventure Scroll should you choose to do so. If you were on some kind of mission to kill this priest, make a note that you've done so.

As you loot the stones absorb the blood and the sigils and whorls carved into the flagstones begin to vibrate ominously. Have you summoned the Shiny Demon in any playthrough and not yet banished it? If so turn to 1574. If not, the vibrations mercifully cease before anything too awful happens. Allow yourself a sigh of relief and turn to 587.

1789

Gotta go fast! With no time to stop you order the skeletons to urge their horses on. Unlike living horses these skeletal steeds aren't adverse to stepping on people! The armoured figure has just about enough time to let out a yell of panic before he goes under a medley of hooves and wagon wheels, leaving nothing behind but a gross smear on the road.

Whether you were refusing to fall for an obvious elf trap or indulging in a spectacularly disgusting act of sociopathy is beyond the abilities of this book to discern, but either way this depraved act seems to have upset a bunch of elfs who were laying in wait for your caravan: you hear a collective gasp of shock from the tree line on both sides of the road. Belatedly the elfs spring their trap and leap out from the bushes, racing towards the middle of the convoy with weapons raised.

Turn to 1200.

1790

A brisk walk along the lake shore will do you some good. You set off towards the shimmering body of water you can see not too far ahead of you in the plains. It's absolutely huge and you spend much of the day walking along the edge of the lake, breathing in the fresh air of the Mist Steppes and trying not to worry too much about the patches of water boiling away in the lake or the intimidating-looking alp looming up before you.

Restore 5 EFFORT from the refreshing walk (and you can remove any negative effects from potions and alcohol as well thanks to the bracing air) and turn to 806.

1791

Your grating commentary finally wears on the nerves of a short, balding merchant a few spaces ahead of you in the line. He steps out of the queue and put his dukes up. You think he looks ridiculous in his garish but trail-worn silks until he slams you hard in the guts with a ring-coated fist. You must fight:

🔪**ANNOYED MERCHANT: DIFFICULTY 5 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2**

If you win turn to 1583. If you lose the surprisingly tough little man topples you with a nasty right hook to your glass jaw. Having silenced his irritating opponent he returns to his place in the line. By the time you've picked yourself up you find that some treacherous human has taken your spot! Not willing to go all the way to the back of the line or risk another beating like that you decide to go check out the wagons for an easier way in. Turn to 586.

1792

You're desperate to get out of this wilderness so you can have a lie down without being eaten or robbed, so you press on for the forest. Soon you find yourself once again among the trees, a setting which as a half elf you'd be at least semi-familiar with if you weren't a pathetic shut-in back home. Still, it beats mountaineering.

The forest you've just entered is called the Schleimwald and it's one of the two great woodlands in this part of the world. It's also a pretty gross place as the name might suggest - the filthy river Bilge runs right through it and the pollution has spread to the trees which have become twisted, deformed and diseased. They drip with fungus and slime which sticks to your clothes and hair and generally feels icky. Going is slow through the tangled trees and the marshy, muddy forest floor, and after a couple of hours of trudging you're filthy and exhausted. It's already pretty dark in this dense woodland but you can see the sky taking on its evening colours through some breaks in the canopy. You hear the cacophony of hooting, roaring and screeching as the no-doubt dangerous crepuscular woodland animals begin to rouse from their daytime slumbers.

If you'd like to press on as fast as possible in hopes of finding some safe place to rest then turn to 1799. If you'd rather not stumble around in this morass after sunset then you decide to rest right here - turn to 56.

1793

You wander the streets for a while before you realise that you have no idea how to find any particular person in this town. People are rude in big cities and the passers-by you encounter don't seem interested in helping you with your problems, and doubly so when you mention that you're looking for the wandering milkman.

Unless you've got a lead you're sunk. Do you have the Milkman's Calling Card? If so turn to 226. Otherwise, turn to 1824.

1794

You think you heard about a legend like this. The Woman of the Waterhole or something, a lake-based blesser of swords. If you give her your sword she might do something really cool with it. Based on this flimsy premise you chuck your weapon towards the hand, which reaches out of the water to catch it neatly by the hilt. The hand turns the blade from side to side for a moment, as if inspecting it, before releasing its grip and dropping the weapon into the depths of the lake with a loud splash. Remove the sword from your Adventure Scroll.

You feel horribly scorned. Will you wade into the water to settle the score with this Woman of the Waterhole? If so turn to 633. If you're ok with losing your sword in such a rude manner you can instead move on - turn to 1632.

1795

The dragon, though a bit lost in thought, notices that you're not in the mood to settle down. It lets out a tired-sounding sigh and blasts you with a blue jet of flame. You're cooked through almost instantly.

Your adventure ends here.

1796

You steal through the woods and quickly find the source of the glow. Not too far from the road you spy a cosy little campfire in a small forest clearing. An insanely muscular man is sleeping next to the fire, wearing nothing but a pair of shiny calf-high blue boots and a matching pair of undies. Close to hand lies an impressively huge broadsword.

If you'd like to creep up and pinch this guy's sword along with anything else he might have on his scantily-clad person then turn to 1528. If you'd rather not mess with a guy who looks like he could snap you in half even in his sleep then you return to your own campsite: turn to 91.

1797

You slog on under the increasing bombardment of sharp sticks and darts, now joined by little pebbles and sharp stings in the ankle as something slashes at you whenever you walk too close to a bush or a clump of grass. Finally you catch sight of one of the little bastards that's attacking you - it's a brownie, usually a two-inch tall misery that inflicts itself on human towns. You don't have time to wonder about what they're doing out here - it's all you can do to carry on through the hail of blows that are landing on you.

BROWNIE BOMBARDMENT: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 2 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you make it through the pelting then turn to 148.
If you can't go on like this then turn to 1608.

1798

In the grip of some manic energy, you plunge into the swamp, not worrying too much about whether you sink or swim on the way to the mystical ribbon that beckons to you from beyond the trees. As a consequence you do a lot more sinking than anything else as you drop into several neck-deep pools of swamp water. These dunkings fail to dampen your enthusiasm as much as they do your clothes and possessions so you carry on, though any food, maps, diplomas and scrolls you might be carrying are ruined and must be removed from your Adventure Scroll.

Despite these soggy setbacks you are making reasonably good time through the difficult terrain, when before you appear the most beautiful things you've ever seen - four glowing orbs the size of your fists, weaving an intricate pattern in the air and leaving magical trails of light behind them. They almost sing to you. You feel drawn to them. You must touch them. And yet.... something inside of you wants to resist.

SONG OF THE SPHERES: DIFFICULTY 6 - FISTS 1

If you overcome the temptation to go anywhere near the things turn to 1397. If you can't resist - or won't - then turn to 494.

1799

You're eager to get to whatever passes as civilisation among the humans, so despite your mounting exhaustion and the dangers of roaming alone a forest at night you press on.

Were you involved in an elfish ambush on the Count's Road a couple days ago? If so, turn to 1394. Otherwise read on.

Hours pass - how many you're not sure since you're not wearing a watch - when you begin to hear the unmistakably baroque, complicated and off-key tootling of Elfish music coming from somewhere up ahead. Following the faint strains you shove through a dense cluster of tangled branches and behold lights coming from ahead.

Creeping a little closer you emerge from the forest and find yourself at the edge of a clearing. The moon, high overhead, illuminates a small elfish village - Aelfsburg, according to the large white letters affixed to the trees on the other side. You see about ten towers, roughly as poorly-built as the ones back home and made of the same materials, and just like Elfsdale Downs there's a large tree in the middle of the clearing which presumably houses the semi-famous Aelfsburg School of Lorewardening, hateful old Jeff's alma mater.

All but one of the towers are dark: the music and lights are coming from a single tall spire with a pub sign hanging out the front. You creep up for a closer look and hear the typical sounds of an elfish good time being had - petulant arguments over nothing, loud and repeated whines about poor service, passive aggressive comments and self-effacing statements which serve as a vehicle to deliver barely-concealed and very smug little boasts. In short, the Lorewarden's Arms reminds you of home!

If you'd like to go in and join the elfs for a drink then turn to 276. If you'd rather not risk the same frosty reception here as you'd get back home then you can instead find somewhere safe to sleep for the night - turn to 1714. If you want to break into places and steal things then turn to 1678. If you'd prefer to bypass this place altogether and carry on then turn to 1804.

1800

It's the only sensible course of action. They'll think the priest perished in the fire and won't come looking for you. The perfect crime!

You slink in through the rear door of the church where you find the priest's living quarters. There's not much of value in there, just a few Bilgeton Guilders which you add to your pouch (roll a die and add that many Guilders to the cash section of your Adventure Scroll). But you do find a large cask of baptismal whiskey, which you break open with the shovel and begin sloshing everywhere. Dragging it behind you into the main hall of the church you coat the altar, pews and supporting beams with the flammable fluid before grabbing one of the smoking censers from the wall. You manage to knock a Knightly Shield down as well, which you can also take if you wish. As you leave through the large double doors at the front of the building you throw the bronze burner into the pool of booze.

As you leg it down the street the fire flashes back into the booze barrel. Seconds later it erupts into a column of flame which gouts out of the window of the church, spraying burning alcohol and glass shards everywhere. You've started a fire which will go on to burn Brunnenfeld to the ground - with no fire code, no fire department and rows of tightly-packed buildings the town is a tinder box. Already the flames are spreading to the trees around the church and the wooden palisade - soon all will be ashes. Make a note that you've destroyed Brunnenfeld on your Adventure Scroll.

It's time to go. If you want to let yourself out by the south gate then turn to 1594. If you want to continue north to see if there's a way out into the mountains then turn to 1351.

1801

You approach the gate. It's a large ironwork lattice with a heraldic seal painstakingly worked into its design. It functions as both a gate and a way for its owner to display the wealth locked up behind it. In this case that's a large manor with a nice green lawn - an oddity in a town mostly resting on the side of a rocky mountain. Within the grounds you can also see a large ornate fountain, though it seems to be dry. The gate's fancy and overwrought enough to be of elfish make except it's sturdy enough not to break into pieces after a good hard kicking.

As you're ascertaining this fact a scowling man with a little curled moustache appears behind the gate. He's dressed in a simple but impeccably clean outfit - black tunic and leggings with the same heraldic symbol sewn onto the breast as is displayed on the gate. You guess he's a butler. He fixes you with a cold stare to go with the scowl.

"Kindly stop kicking the gate", he says.

While you've got the butler's attention you ask to be let in to the grounds.

If you've got (or had) the Enchanted Tools then turn to 1586. Otherwise the butler invites you in as polite terms as possible to piss off and marches away from the gate. If you really want to get inside you can try kicking the gates some more (turn to 239), or you can scale the walls for a look around - turn to 1023. Otherwise you can make your way to the northern town exit at the end of the road (turn to 963) or backtrack through the town and leave via the southern gates by turning to 338.

1802

You spend a long time walking along the road to Bilgeton. There are plenty of travellers though none of them are particularly helpful - they certainly don't want to offer you a lift, or food, or company. In short, over the next couple of days you become very tired of the sight of trees, paving stones and smug-looking humans in carriages and wagons. Still, you get a bit of rest, even if the thought of Jeff sleeping in a warm, comfortable bed while you make do with grass next to monster-infested forests drives you nearly insane.

You wake unbearably early in the morning, covered in dew. Restore 20 EFFORT and remove the temporary effects of any potion or alcohol that might be afflicting you, then turn to 1455 to continue your wearisome trudge into another day.

1803

You move on, rest, rise and stumble on for what could be hours or days. The fog is unrelenting, the ground is miserably cold and, though you keep seeing flashes of light moving around in the mist, their unpleasant eldritch glow gives you no hope. All you can do is press on, rest where you can, and hope against hope that this miserable slog is getting you somewhere. Fortunately, you're not attacked by any of the numerous nasties that live out in the mists but what little sleep you get is broken by your constant anxiety and the wretched cold of these frozen plains. You regain no EFFORT from rest but if you're affected by a potion or alcohol or the like the negative effects pass.

After a brutally chilly night you're idly looking up into the sky to see if you can get any hint of where the sun may be when you notice something startling - you can actually see patches of blue for the first time in what feels like forever! As you march on you notice that you can see further and further - the freezing mists are dissipating. Your steps quicken into a run and before you know it you're completely free of the mists! Squinting in the bright morning light you can see the dense fog roiling away behind you to the west. Far to your north you see the breath-taking backdrop of the Skytrap Mountains many leagues distant and way outside the scope of this adventure gamebook. Before them, jutting out of the otherwise flat tundra like a huge, menacing tooth, stands a single mountain which you'd know from the Bestiary (once again, available where all mediocre books are found) as the dreadful Alp of Abandonment. Closer still is a huge placid lake, fed by numerous streams and rivers flowing down from the Big Rock Goblin Mountain range which juts out of the earth perhaps a day's walk south of here. The straightest route to the Alp from here involves following the northern shore of this lake for a while.

While you'd rather not go to a place like the Alp of Abandonment you sort of feel that the whole journey across the Mist Steppes has been leading here, somehow, and if you were going to go to Bilgeton, somewhere to the south over the plains, you might have taken a less indirect route to get there. Still, you can go that way. There's nothing stopping you if you're really keen to avoid most of the content of this book.

If you'd like to continue on to the Alp of Abandonment via the lakeshore then turn to 1790. If you'd rather turn south and go towards Bilgeton after all then turn to 889.

1804

This forest is as treacherous as it is trackless - you get tripped up continually, find your way constantly blocked by foliage and you get turned around so often that under the pitch-black canopy you can barely figure out which way is up. More importantly, after such a hard slog you're completely exhausted and the thought of taking even another step sickens you more than the thought of staying in this slimy dump. You squint in the darkness, hoping to find somewhere - anywhere - to lay your head.

Your options are sadly limited - you can either crash under a nearby tanglevine bush on what you hope is relatively dry ground by turning to 1065, or you can attempt to climb up into a large and unusually dry tree growing nearby - you might be able get a night's sleep up there on a wide branch by turning to 1333. If both of these options seem even more unbearably grim than carrying on then turn to 632 to continue this horrid trek.

1805

Never having ridden anything before, you don't really know how to do the thing you're trying to do. You rush at the bird and grab the harness around its neck. You intend to use your momentum to fling yourself up onto its back, but instead the gigantic creature rears its head back, pulling you off balance. As you stagger the bird delivers a very hard kick to your groin with an enormous foot. You're flung hard to the ground, crying in pain.

The bird scrutinises you quizzically as you roll around on the dirt road clutching your family jewels but, being a gentle creature, it doesn't press the attack. Eventually the pain subsides enough for you to get to your feet though you find that you can't face the bird again. Just looking at it makes your balls ache. You decide to get away from the animal and begin to waddle as quickly as you are able along the road to Bilgeton. Shortly to the south the dirt road becomes paved which makes limping along a little easier.

Lose 5 EFFORT from the pain. You also suffer -1 ÉLAN until sunrise the next morning due to the difficulty of moving with testicles that have swollen to the size of grapefruits.

Turn to 614.

1806

You pummel the brainless slime quite expertly and it disintegrates into a shower of ooze which leeches into the frozen ground. Unfortunately the acidic antifreeze which made up the lifeblood of this monstrosity did a number on the weapon you used on it! If you were equipped with a weapon it will no longer provide any ÉLAN bonuses from here on out - this is true even of your ranged weapons as you find that the ammunition you punctured the creature with is now horribly corroded. If you weren't equipped with a weapon at all then you fought it with your bare hands and have received a horrible and potentially life-ruining case of frostbite for your troubles - lose 1 FIST!

Cursing your luck and possibly your ruined hand you continue on. Turn to 1803.

1807

Turn to 1654.

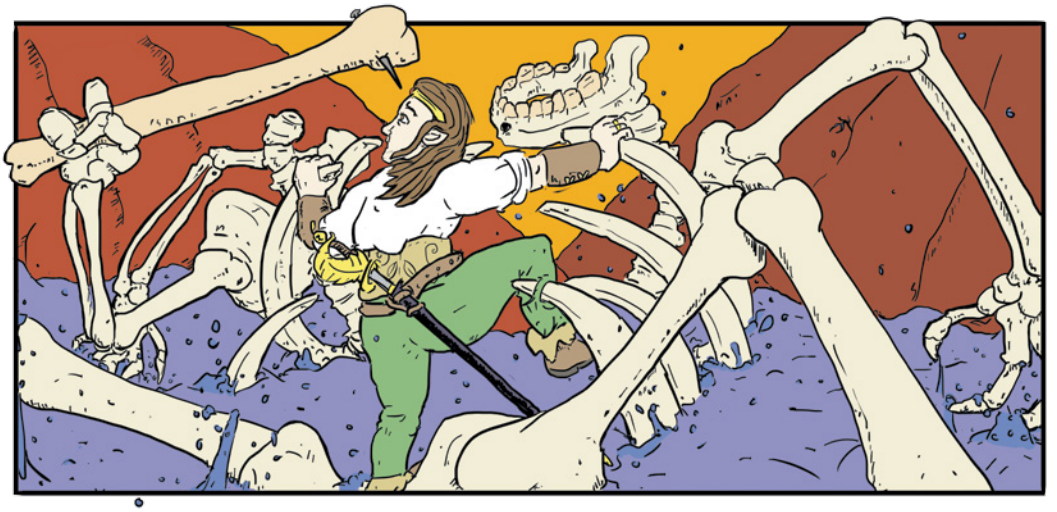
1808

You've hit on every elf lady in Elfsdale Downs at least twice, and the litany of rejections flashes before your eyes as soon as you consider busting a move on this beautiful woman. You stand there gawping wordlessly, your mouth suddenly too dry to speak. The elf lady doesn't wait for you to muster up the nerve to speak to her - she shoots you a filthy look and returns to her home, slamming the door shut behind her.

Well, she wasn't your type anyway, you tell yourself. Her cheekbones were too high for your liking and her ears weren't quite pointy enough. Consoling yourself with such thoughts you leave town and make your way through the forest (a far safer and easier prospect during the daytime). Eventually you emerge from the woods and find yourself approaching a wide, dusty highway with most of the cobblestones missing. More importantly, only a few miles down the road to the south-east, you can see the tall stone walls of Bilgeton!

Turn to 1732.

1809



Your eyes flick open to regard a scene of mind-bending horror. Your life-force has reactivated a badly damaged and long-defunct bone golem which has been slumbering under the stones, perhaps for generations. You are currently encased in its rib cage which is jutting out of the ground and closing tight around you as its arms and legs flail wildly for purchase. You can't see a head - the skull seems to be missing entirely - though a huge lower jaw juts out of the ground, spraying gravel everywhere as it works up and down.

You must get free!

BONE GOLEM : DIFFICULTY 9 - TOUGHNESS 2

If you break free then turn to 1372. If this struggle is too hard for you then turn to 1137.

1810

SCENE DELETED.

Turn to 1618.

1811

By the time you've regained your senses you've been dragged clear of the mosh pit. The goblin who knocked you out is standing nearby, holding a card in its iron-gauntleted fist. It's your Milkman's Calling Card!

You must have made some noise as you woke up because the goblin lowers the card and looks right at you. It lifts the visor of its metal helmet, revealing a vaguely goblinoid face, though with a few familiar features - her eyes are just like yours, and she has the same smarmy half-smile on her face as you... and she's unusually tall for a goblin, too. Could she be...

"Yep, I can see the family resemblance too. I'm your bastard half-sister" she says, without preamble. "Our father knocked up an armoursmith in Gobholme forty years ago and when my godsdamned STEP-father grew weary of raising a goblin who didn't want to spend her days in the mines they sent me away to find my father in Bilgeton".

You're about to commiserate but she talks over you.

"Listen. I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news but he's dead. Humans don't live all that long. I visited his grave twenty years ago - he'd been dead a long time even then. Visit the grave if you need closure, but I wouldn't bother waiting around for him. I didn't. I needed to move on. So do you".

She looks a bit wistful as she says this (or at least as wistful as a heavily-armoured goblin can look), but she snaps herself out of it.

"There are lots of other bastards just like us. Come to the support group when you need a shoulder to cry on. And now if you'll excuse me I don't want to miss the end of this concert. I guess I'll see you at the group".

With that your half-sister hands the card back and disappears back into the mosh pit. Seed Drille is only up to the bit about increasing the product of the corn fields, but you're not in the mood for agricultural music any more, nor do you want your head banged again. With plenty to think on you climb back out of the quarry and go off in search of your father and that place to crash.

Turn to 1793.

1812

Descending from the mountains, you make your way into the swirling mists of the plains below. You have taken your first steps into the barren and deadly Mist Steppes!

Turn to 240.

1813

Your aggressive actions surprise the dragon, but you're not armed heavily enough to make an impression even on the dragon's relatively soft underbelly. A swift swipe of its foreclaw and you're disarmed and staring right into its toothy maw. Remove whatever weapon you were equipped with from your Adventure Scroll, or if you were fighting it bare-handed lose 5 EFFORT.

After the impetus of your charge is halted so easily you begin to regret your actions a little. Since you don't feel like fighting a monster you can't hurt, your options are limited to fleeing (turn to 1264) or grovelling for mercy (turn to 1537).

1814

The pathetic apprentice necromancer crumples to the ground, beaten. The skeletons chitter in concern.

Wasting no time, you crouch down to have a rummage around in his robes. You find your pay - a pitiful 2 Guilders - which you may add to your Adventure Scroll, but before you can pry that sweet staff out of the man's hands you hear a whistle blowing and boots stomping down the road towards the union shop. It's the fuzz! You leg it!

Were you equipped with a weapon or tool other than rings or a knuckleduster? If so turn to 1664. If you were unarmed or only equipped with the punching implements listed above then the guards swiftly lose interest in chasing you and you're able to lose the heat somewhere in the Bilgeton crowds. Turn to 1364.

1815

Somewhat predictably you are jolted awake in the middle of the night by the sound of something, or somethings, treading around outside your abode with a loud slapping sound. The footsteps stop and then, even more horribly, you hear the awful sound of something fumbling with the door handle!

Did you latch the door? If so then turn to 1378. If not then turn to 175.

1816

Its voiceless jaw clicking a victory chatter, the skeleton knocks you to the ground where you lie defenceless, begging for mercy. Although reanimated skeletons are not normally violent by nature, this one is a bit too worried by the rush of oncoming elfen raiders to waste time capturing you. Instead it runs you right through with its spear and, finding it stuck, leaves it in. As you slump to the road it draws its sword and rushes towards the nearest elf raider, at which point you black out.

You don't think you were out long - the sun has barely moved in the sky - but by the time you wake up the battle is long over. All around you is a scene of devastation - four wagons smashed to pieces and upturned along the road, a few dead elfs scattered around but mostly hundreds of bones distributed all along the highway. It's only then that you notice that you're being tended to by a one-armed skeleton missing its lower jaw and a bunch of ribs. While you were out the skeleton managed to remove the spear and patch you up using some healthy poultices. Although the pain when you try to move is almost bad enough to make you pass out again, it probably beats being dead. The skeleton, noticing that you're awake, quickly finishes patting a poultice into place over your wound and moves on down the road to the west, its work here done.

You begin to wonder whether you were in the right attacking these noble skeletons but these thoughts are instantly dispelled when you realise that the skeleton has taken your entire purse in payment and also used up any medical supplies you were carrying in your treatment. Wincing in pain you force yourself upright in hopes of catching the burgling bone bag. By the time you're up it's out of sight and you don't think you'll catch it at the pitiful hobble you've been reduced to.

Lose 2 ÉLAN and 10 maximum EFFORT from the serious injury you've sustained and remove any currency, Healthy Poultices and Potions from your Adventure Scroll.

Since everything worth stealing here has no doubt been carted away by the elfs who just left you to die, you decide to limp off to the east in what you assume is the direction of Bilgeton.

Turn to 294.

1817

The guard looks at the sign.

"That's advisory. The magnitude of your crime calls for a stiffer penalty" he says, turning slightly red in the face as he realises you've caught him in a lie. You look unbearably smug.

"He's resisting arrest!" shouts the guard's companion suddenly, lowering his halberd to menace you with its spear head. The guard to whom you've been talking roars a challenge and draws his shortsword. Time to get out of here!

Taking advantage of the stall being between you and the guards, you've got time to grab a couple of items before you have to flee. Remove all but two non-equipped items from your Adventure Scroll (not including cash or equipped items - you're carrying those on your person) - after that you must flee! The guards clatter after you but you give them the slip in the crowded maze of alleyways around the market square. Still, there's no way you're going back there.

With your wheeling and dealing done with for the day you decide that it's time to get on with whatever you came here to do in the first place. Turn to 827.

1818

You don't know much about humans and even less about witches, but you know a fine rump when you see one bobbing around in front of you. You let the witch know that you like what you see.

The horrible old crone starts and turns around with evil eye at the ready. As soon as she sees you though her look softens - as much as is possible for a green-skinned crone with a horrible long, warty nose and massive yellow snaggletooth stabbed into the middle of a permanent scowl.

"You look like... no, it couldn't be. Oh well, witches can't be choosers. Why don't you come here and show grandma your goods?" she croons as sensually as possible for a horrid old crone, waggling her hips seductively.

One thing instantly leads to another and five minutes of loving and a much longer period of post-coital snoozing later you find yourself alone in bed. The witch is up, humming to herself as she cooks away at her stove. The mouth-watering smell of roasted meat fills the cottage.

If you'd like to escape your shameful actions by climbing out a convenient window then turn to 979. If you want to stick around and see if you can make this work then turn to 311.

1819

Although you're less angry than you were, you're still really angry and not in the mood to be merciful. You strike the gnome down with a brutal sucker punch as soon as he turns his back on you and then you draw your knife and finish the poor woodland sprite off.

Gnomes have big heads for such small "people" and this one is wearing a pretty nice-looking hat - you can add the Gnome Hat to your Adventure Scroll if you wish to emulate your victim's styles. He doesn't really have anything else of worth, which rekindles your anger once again. Looking for a focus for your rage in a town which lacks living people or decent loot, your eyes fix on the expansive boughs of a great oak tree in the middle of the town clearing - the site of the moderately famous, province-renowned School of Lorewardening - Jeff's alma mater, graduating from which was one of his fondest memories. A horrible idea occurs to you.

DO IT - turn to 1223.

No: don't. Turn to 57.

1820

You're not feeling all that brave, but your antipathy towards the notion of backtracking through that maze is greater than your natural cowardice. While you're fighting your demons the walls stop quaking and the ceiling stops dumping dirt on you, and the sound of the stampeding fades away into the distance along with that strange pulsating high pitched noise. Encouraged by this development you begin down the slope and into the darkness below.

The tunnel is quite steep and you begin to slide down it. Losing your footing your scoot along on your buttocks until you slam into an earth wall at the end of the tunnel. Another tunnel, equally as large but far more level than the one you just slid down, continues to the right. With no other option you head that way.

As awful as the place you're probably going is, it beats the hells out of the maze section of an adventure gamebook. Restore 5 EFFORT for coming through that in one piece and turn to 1355.

1821

Aiming carefully, you chuck the potion in. The bottle hits the bed's headboard and explodes, showering the warlock with its potentially toxic contents. If the warlock is harmed by this she doesn't immediately show it though - as soon as the liquid splashes her she lets out a furious growl and leaps out of bed in a fluid motion. Rubbing her sleep-filled eyes she glares at you with a look of pure hatred. And then wobbles a little on her feet as the potion takes effect.

You must roll on the Potion Effects table for the warlock and apply the effects, positive or negative, to her score on the next page. Add or subtract the ÉLAN from the warlock's DIFFICULTY and add or subtract FISTS from her FISTS score, obviously. If you get a result which increases or decreases EFFORT then add or deduct 1 TOUGHNESS respectively. Should you get the Grandma! result then subtract 1 TOUGHNESS as well. A roll between 6 and 9 inclusive has no effect.

Having put your risky and unpredictable plan into motion you can now only wait to see the result. Turn to 1335.

1822

You helpfully explain to Hulagu that the markings indicate a site for the elfish art of whimsy-flickery. Hulagu's mouth turns up in a cruel smile and he turns in his seat to yell something in a harsh, guttural language at the other drivers. They suddenly appear a little tense and several of the men sitting on the wagons begin stringing bows and hefting quivers onto their backs.

"Thank you for this map. It will be most... helpful", says Hulagu somewhat ominously as he rolls up the map and slides it into a fold in his robes. "In return you are welcome to join us as an honoured guest as far as Bilgeton". He gestures at the carriage at the rear of the procession. "Kindly take your seat in the rear and we will be underway".

You walk back to the rear carriage, climb up on the running board and sit down. Shortly afterwards the driver cracks the reins and the wagon train is away!

Remove the Feewald Map from your Adventure Scroll and turn to 166.

1823

Before you stands a huge, shiny demon. It's at least twice your height, with stereotypical red skin, terrible horns on its head, sharp fangs, a long red tail ending in a tip like an arrowhead, and eyes and legs a bit like those of a goat. Seeing you it sneers and flicks out a bifurcated tongue.

"Play the best song in the world... or I'll eat your soul" it hisses unpleasantly.

If you have a musical instrument and are ready to rock then turn to 1557. If you wish to attempt this challenge with nothing more than your vocal cords then turn to 358. If you'd like to point out that you don't have anything to play (or lie about it to get out of this jam) then turn to 1232.

1824

With no leads and nowhere to crash the only thing left for you to do is to try to make a life for yourself in Bilgeton. You'll need to find someplace to live, and to do that you'll need to find a job.

Since there's no way you're going to do anything like that you decide to leave town. As you've had no luck among the humans you decide to head north, following the road to the distant Dwarfen Kingdoms. You depart Bilgeton via the Trader's Gate and continue your trek in search of a place to crash.

If you left Bhad on good terms then turn to 1690. If you've never met Bhad or it turned out badly, turn to 710.

1825

You show your father the sword which you crafted. He holds it carefully and gives it a quick swish before giving it back to you.

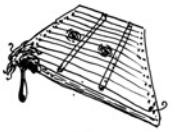
“That’s real neato, son”.

Your adventure ends here.

ITEM LIST

Included here are all the items available in the game in alphabetical order. If you don't really care to leaf through the item list every time you pick something up, you can use the following rule of thumb : any equipped weapon or armour adds 1 ÉLAN in combat, any equipped clothing adds 1 ÉLAN out of combat, any food, wholesome drink or healing item adds 10 EFFORT, all potions and booze make you drunk (-1 ÉLAN until you next rest or sleep) and roll once on the potion table if you drink a potion. All other items do nothing unless the text says so.

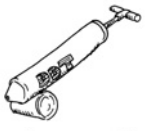
	+1 Ring of the Silver-manes	Junk	If you lose this ring or discard it then turn to 297.
	+3 Loaded Dice of "The Mark"	Junk	There's something wrong with whoever rigged these dice. Discard to re-roll any or all of your dice in a single roll, but only if they rolled 4 or higher. Second roll stands.
	10-Foot Dungeoneering Pole	Junk	Add 30 to the number of the paragraph you're on, then turn to that paragraph. If the entry you're reading makes sense then keep reading, if not turn back to the original paragraph.
	Aggie's Staff	Equip	You can't wield the magicks of this staff but it has a cool intimidating skull on it. All enemies have -1 DIFFICULTY for the first round of combat.
	Air Scepter	Junk	-
	Ant Rid	Junk	A sweet, poisonous substance which ants find irresistible, and deadly. Rid-Ants: Get Rid of Them!
	The Axe of the Bastard Elf	Equip	Musical instrument. +5 ÉLAN in musical HASSLES, +1 ÉLAN in all other HASSLES, +10 MAX EFFORT.
	Azari PCS with 4000-in-1 games cartridge	Junk	-
	Baby Rukh	Junk	-

	Bag of Child Bones	Junk	-
	Barrel	Equip	If you take damage roll a die. On a 6 the barrel absorbs all the damage but disintegrates and must be discarded.
	Bastard Sword of the Elf	Equip	You're not sure this thing has ever been sharp. +1 ÉLAN outside of combat only. *Combine with Sword of the Elf Bastard or Calibur to form the Sword of the Bastard Elf. Combine with Idle Hands or the Fender Lute to form the Axe of the Bastard Elf.*
	Bathrobe	Equip	It's comfy, but something's wrong... Counts as a cloak. Protects you and all items from effects of corrosion. -5 max EFFORT.
	Better Bones & Graveyards	Junk	You'd have to be in desperate danger to root around in this mighty tome of insane magicks. Can only be used in combat - turn to 1447 to leaf through it for a "hail mary".
	Big Rock Goblin Mountain Oyster	Junk	Discard to restore 10 EFFORT and counts as a night's sleep. If you see the words "got a lot of balls" in the text then you can add 23 to the paragraph number and turn to that paragraph.
	Bilgeton Championship Belt	Equip	+5 max Effort
	**Bloody Dulcimer**	Equip	It's covered in your blood but still counts as a musical instrument.
	Blue Pot	Junk	It's just booze. Discard to get drunk (-1 ÉLAN until you next rest).
	Book of Unknowable Secrets	Junk	The secrets in this book claw at the back of your mind, begging you to just take a peek. Ever paragraph you turn to costs 1 EFFORT until you give in and turn to 573 to open the book.
	Boots of Elfish Stomping	Equip	If you win a round of combat against an Elf then gain back half the EFFORT expended, rounding down to the nearest whole number.

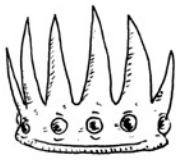
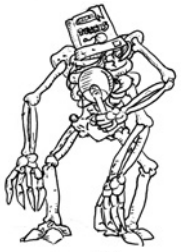
	Bottle of Booze	Junk	Discard to get drunk (-1 ÉLAN until you next rest)
	Bottle of Milk	Junk	Discard to restore 5 EFFORT and add the Milkman's Calling Card to your LOOT.
	Bottomless Thermos of Scalding Soup	Junk	Once per day restore 5 EFFORT at the cost of 1 ÉLAN, or discard to throw at an enemy in combat or in a musical battle and remove all FISTS from that opponent for one round.
	Bow of the Wood	Equip	+1 ÉLAN outside of combat. -1 ÉLAN in combat but restore 1 EFFORT for each round of combat where you spent any EFFORT and won.
	Brenda	Junk	Discard an item or 5 Guilders to gain 1 FIST for a round. Every time you rest she will steal a JUNK item from you assuming you have any - remove one from your LOOT.
	Brunnenfeld Championship Belt	Equip	+5 max EFFORT.
	Butthead	Junk	Can't be discarded. +1 FIST but all HASSLES now count as MULTIPLE HASSLES.
	Calibur	Equip	+1 ÉLAN, +1 FIST. *Combine with the Bastard Sword of the Elf to form the Sword of the Bastard Elf.*
	Cape Made of Elf Skins	Equip	Smells horrible but it's a good conversation starter. HASSLES involving humans are -1 DIFFICULTY.
	Cast Iron Skillet	Equip	Restore 5 extra EFFORT whenever you regain EFFORT from rest. *Combine with the Giant Bird Egg to make the Gigantic Fried Egg.*
	Chamber Pot	Equip	Might make a nice helmet, if you can see out of it. +1 ÉLAN in combat, -1 FIST outside of combat.
	Cheap Halberd	Equip	The head feels a bit loose. In combat: -2 ÉLAN, +1 damage to TOUGHNESS. If you roll a 6 on your FIST dice it breaks at the end of the round and must be discarded.

	Clapped-Out Old Nag	Junk	-
	Class Ring	Equip	+1 to your FIST rolls if neither you nor your opponent are armed.
	Cockeye	Junk	-
	Confessor's Shovel	Equip	+1 ÉLAN. Can't be voluntarily discarded, sold or given away. Should you lose it, turn to 207.
	Cornamuse	Equip	Musical instrument. +1 ÉLAN in musical HASSLES.
	Creaking Maille	Equip	A very obsolete shirt of heavy armour. Every action which costs any EFFORT costs 2 more EFFORT. If you are injured from any source roll a die: on a 3 or higher the Maille protects you and you take no damage.
	Crowing Club	Equip	+2 ÉLAN first round of combat only. Undead HASSLES have -2 DIFFICULTY. Can't be discarded until the text says so.
	Crystal Spectacles	Equip	+1 ÉLAN. If you lose a round of combat and you have a 1 on any FIST dice, they are smashed, unless you're equipped with a ranged weapon.
	Cut Purse	Junk	Discard to gain 5 Guilders.
	Dapper Garb	Equip	+1 FIST. Can't be worn with any armour, helmet or shield. *Combine with Full Harness of Goblin, Shining Brass or Steel Plate to form Imposing Attire.*
	Debaucherous Hat	Equip	+1 FIST in all conversational HASSLES.
	Dented Helm	Equip	+1 ÉLAN in combat, -1 ÉLAN out of combat.

	Detachable Tail	Junk	Discard to avoid the CONSEQUENCE of losing a round or fleeing combat entirely.
	Dire Wolf	Junk	Use to force MULTIPLE HASSLES to attack you one at a time: they are dealt with as single HASSLES in turn. Each turn the Dire Wolf causes this effect, roll a die. On a 1 or 2 he gets himself killed and must be discarded.
	Dire Wolf Cloak	Equip	The poor animal this belonged to wasn't too bright but it always tried hard, and maybe wearing its skin has made it rub off on you. Or maybe it's just the blood oozing from this uncured hide. -1 ÉLAN, +5 max EFFORT.
	Dragon Balls	Junk	-
	Dwarfen Troupe	Junk	Band member. +1 FIST in musical HASSLES. Keep this FIST die aside - if you roll 5 or 6 then roll it again and add the result to the first roll to find your FIST score.
	Eagle Eye	Junk	Discard to gain +1 ÉLAN until next rest, or +2 ÉLAN when using a ranged weapon.
	Eau de Bilge	Junk	The foul odour of civilisation that humans crave. Discard to deduct 2 from the DIFFICULTY of a HASSLE involving a human or humans.
	Elf Bastard	Junk	-
	Elfen Dagger	Equip	-1 ÉLAN in combat. Re-roll a FIST dice once per HASSLE.
	Elfen Ration	Junk	Discard to roll a die, adding 2 to the roll if this is the ration you started the game with. On a roll of 1-3 turn to 658. On 4-6 turn to 1092. On 7 or more turn to 1348.
	Elfen Secret Herbs and Spices	Junk	Discard when eating a food item to double its effects.
	Elfish Cloak of Invisibility	Equip	You think it looks "dashing". +1 ÉLAN for any HASSLE involving hiding, running away or sneaking around.

	Elfish Prodigy	Junk	Band member. + 3 ÉLAN in musical HASSLES.
	Enchanted Tools	Junk	Can stand in for any item when crafting clothing or hats.
	Enough Rope	Junk	-
	Esky Full of Cold Ones	Junk	All HASSLES are +1 DIFFICULTY while you're lugging it around. Discard to get very drunk: -2 ÉLAN until next rest but restore 10 EFFORT.
	Excalibur	Equip	Rusty and blunt but still better than most elf swords. +1 ÉLAN.
	Extra Buckles	Junk	An elf must-have. Discard to get 1 extra FIST for one round.
	Fairy	Junk	Called "Hann" or something. Can't be discarded and disables all magic items you might have. No magical effects function - you can safely remove cursed items and not turn to the pages they indicate. You may no longer read spells off scrolls or invoke magical powers.
	**Fairy Repellent**	Junk	Works fine on most other living things too. Discard to reduce the DIFFICULTY of all enemies in a combat HASSLE by 1.
	Familiar Cat	Junk	Discard during a multiple HASSLE to not have to re-roll your FIST dice for one round.
	Feewald Cake	Junk	Discard to restore 20 EFFORT, but you will deal with the next HASSLE at -1 ÉLAN because you are stuffed with chocolate.
	Feewald Championship Belt	Equip	It's more like a ring than a belt. +5 max EFFORT.

	Feewald Map	Junk	You can check out the Feewald Map on page 68 if you're ever feeling lost.
	Fender Lute	Equip	+3 ÉLAN in musical HASSLES, +1 ÉLAN in other non-combat HASSLEs. *Can combine with the Sword of the Elf Bastard to form the Axe of the Bastard Elf.*
	Flagon of Ant Goo	Junk	-
	Fly Hat	Equip	+1 ÉLAN in conversational HASSLES. *Combine with Great Feather to make the Foppish Hat.*
	Foppish Hat	Equip	+1 ÉLAN. *Combine with Gold Crown or Massive Helmet to form Debaucherous Hat. Combine with Imposing Attire to make the Magnificent Outfit.*
	Frill Neck	Equip	Can't be worn with a helmet. Covers up Skull Mark on chin if equipped. *Craft with Padded Vest to form Dapper Garb.*
	Full Harness of Goblin Plate - **Full Harness of Shining Brass Plate** - **Full Harness of Steel Plate**	Junk	It doesn't fit. *Combine any Full Harness of Plate with Dapper Garb to form Imposing Attire.*
	Giant Bird Egg	Junk	Discard to restore 5 EFFORT.
	Giant Drumstick	Junk	Discard to restore 10 EFFORT.
	Gigantic Fried Egg	Junk	Discard to gain 5 max EFFORT and restore 20 EFFORT.
	Glorious Vessel	Junk	-

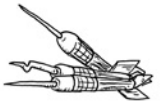
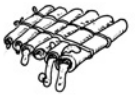
	Glowing Jar	Junk	Discard to retrieve the Pickle.
	Gnome Hat	Equip	Each time you win a round of a HASSLE where you spent at least some EFFORT, regain 1 EFFORT.
	Gobholme Championship Belt	Equip	+5 max EFFORT.
	**Gold Crown**	Equip	+2 ÉLAN in conversational HASSLES. Discard to chuck it into your cash pile - gain 10 Guilders. It cannot be retrieved once you've done this. *Can be combined with the Foppish Hat to form the Debaucherous Hat.*
	**Golem Entertainment System**	Junk	Just enough juice for one game... The Golem Entertainment System can be controlled to stand in for you for one entire HASSLE. You will regain any EFFORT you used during the HASSLE afterwards, when you discard the Golem. If you are reduced to 0 EFFORT during the HASSLE, you will die as normal.
	GRANDMA	Junk	-1 FIST. Getting rid of GRANDMA will take a night of terrifying introspection - you will not rest that night or regain any EFFORT but you may discard GRANDMA.
	Great Feather	Junk	*Combine with Fly Hat to create Foppish Hat.*
	Healthy Poultice	Junk	A medieval first aid kit. Hopefully healthier than it smells. Discard to regain 1 point of ÉLAN lost to an injury.
	Heavy Crossbow	Equip	Trigger action's too heavy for you, let alone that winch. Use as a club in combat: +1 ÉLAN first round, -1 to FIST rolls second round onwards.
	Heavy Packs	Junk	-2 ÉLAN while you're carrying the HP around for your lady friend.
	Heirloom Sword	Equip	+1 ÉLAN.

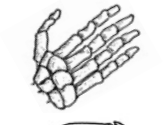
	Heroic Cloak of the Half Elf	Equip	No EFFORT is expended in hassles where the enemy is described as scared, terrified, wavering, fleeing or the like.
	Heroic Sword	Equip	You can hardly lift the thing but the sight of you waving it around is terrifying. -2 ÉLAN but enemies can only ever attack you one at a time: no more MULTIPLE HASSLES.
	Hiking Boots	Equip	HASSLES related to climbing, balancing, swimming and getting onto horseback have -1 DIFFICULTY.
	Humanhide Whip	Equip	First round of combat only - 2 DIFFICULTY. -1 FIST for rest of combat.
	Idle Hands	Equip	+3 ÉLAN in musical HASSLES, +1 ÉLAN in combat HASSLES. Once you've won this you can take it as one of your starting items. Combine with Sword of the Elf Bastard to form The Axe of the Bastard Elf.
	Imposing Attire	Equip	+1 ÉLAN, +1 FIST. *Combine with the Mighty Codpiece or the Foppish Hat to create the Magnificent Outfit.*
	Ink Pouch	Junk	If you tie a combat HASSLE you can discard this to make it a win. Regain half the EFFORT you spend in the HASSLE back, rounding down.
	Interesting Herbs	Junk	If you're "down" to smoke a "doobie" then turn to 420, the funny weed number.
	Ivory Wand	Junk	The lich's wand commands a terrible price. Lose 10 max EFFORT to deduct 1 FIST from an opponent during a HASSLE. Do not discard the wand. Both changes are permanent.
	Joe Louis	Junk	+1 FIST, -5 EFFORT restored due to rest because he won't stop pestering you to train.
	Knightly Shield	Equip	Can equip in arms or on back. **If equipped in arms**: can't also equip a weapon. Whenever you're hurt roll a die. On 4+ disregard the injury. **If on back: can wield a weapon**. The 4+ rule only applies for injuries incurred fleeing from combat. Whether equipped in arms or back, any action that costs EFFORT costs 1 additional EFFORT.

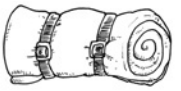
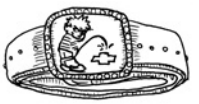
	Knuckledusters	Equip	-1 DIFFICULTY if opponent is unarmed.
	Large Calamari	Junk	Discard to restore 10 EFFORT
	Lavender Bleggings	Equip	-1 ÉLAN for wearing something so embarrassing. If you're fighting an opponent with a skull mark next to the HASSLE, it gets -1 FISTS or -2 DIFFICULTY if it has no FISTS. Can't be worn under clothes - it's a top layer.
	Leg of Moth	Junk	Discard to restore 5 EFFORT.
	Lich's Loofah	Junk	Discard to prevent another item from being corroded or to prevent a single injury from corrosion.
	Lorewardening Key	Equip	When the book tells you to pick a number of items from a list, you can pick one extra item (except for the choice on paragraph 1).
	Magical Pick	Equip	-1 ÉLAN. Re-roll any FIST rolls of 1 in combat. Second roll stands even if it's another 1.
	Magnificent Outfit	Equip	+2 ÉLAN, +1 FISTS, +10 max EFFORT.
	Manly Hairs	Junk	Can't be discarded.
	Manticore Tail	Equip	A very dangerous thing to swing around. -3 ÉLAN in combat, -1 ÉLAN out of combat. If you hit an opponent you will kill it instantly. If you roll 2 1s on your FIST dice with this equipped you trip and fall on it, dying instantly.
	Marked Cards	Junk	You can freely investigate the item list or item cards whenever you want, even while deciding on which items you want to pick up.

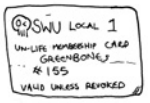
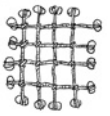
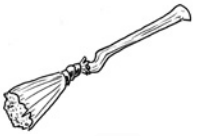
	Massive Helmet	Equip	+1 ÉLAN in combat, -1 out of combat. Can be combined with the Foppish Hat to make the Debaucherous Hat.
	Meat	Junk	Discard to restore 10 EFFORT.
	Medical Diploma	Junk	Each time you rest you can restore 5 less EFFORT and instead restore 1 ÉLAN or 1 FIST lost to an injury.
	Mediocre Codpiece	Junk	*Combine with Padre's Cassock or Soiled Gambeson to form Dapper Garb.*
	Mighty Codpiece	Junk	Combine with Imposing Attire to form Resplendent Regalia.
	Milkman's Calling Card	Junk	-
	Mink Stole	Equip	Very now. +1 to conversational HASSLES involving humans in Bilgeton.
	Moth Eggs	Junk	Can't be discarded, sold or otherwise gotten rid of.
	Natty Calf Boots	Equip	Each time you win a round of a HASSLE where you spent at least some EFFORT, regain 1 EFFORT.
	Necklace of Elf Ears	Junk	*Combine with the Pixie Skin Cloak to create the Heroic Cloak of the Half Elf.*

	The Necromancer's Undies	Junk	-
	Nilde Aldrechttochter	Wife	Now that you're married you can finally let yourself go. -1 max and current ÉLAN, +10 max and current EFFORT.
	Noble Steed	Junk	-
	Obscene Monkey	Junk	-
	Owl Eye	Junk	Discard to check a paragraph before you turn to it (without being considered a cheat).
	Owlet	Junk	-
	Padded Vest	Equip	Everything that costs 5 or more EFFORT costs one extra EFFORT. If you're hurt from any source roll a die - on a roll of 6 you may ignore the damage entirely. *Combine with Frill Neck to form Dapper Garb.*
	Padre's Cassock	Equip	HASSLES involving skeletons, magic users and priests have -1 DIFFICULTY. *Combine with Mediocre Codpiece to form Dapper Garb.*
	Palavan Army Knife	Junk	Discard to have it count as any item called for in the text aside from a person, outfit, animal, residency scroll or calling card.
	Pauper's Skull	Junk	Good for theatrics. Discard to gain +1 ÉLAN for the duration of one HASSLE involving humans
	Peach	Junk	Discard to gain 5 EFFORT. Cross out a Word of Power or an item written in ink on your Adventure Scroll.

	Peculiar Mushrooms	Junk	Negates the negative effects of being drunk, and adds an extra point of ÉLAN until next morning. You're still drunk though.
	Pickle	Junk	Turn to 1673 to consume this delicious snack.
	Pixie Hide Cloak	Equip	+1 ÉLAN while under the effects of potions. Combine with Necklace of Elf Ears to create the Heroic Cloak of the Half Elf
	Pixie Bits	Junk	A large collection of pixie bits and grindings. *Combine with Sugar Sack to create Ant Rid.*
	Pot of Grubs	Junk	Discard to restore 5 EFFORT.
	Potion	Junk	Discard and suffer -1 ÉLAN for rest of day to roll on the Potion effects table on page 11. *Combine with Sugar Sack to make Ant Rid.*
	Pouch Full of Shrapnel	Junk	-
	**Pub Darts**	Junk	Discard to reduce one opponent's DIFFICULTY by 1
	**Pukey Pan Flute**	Equip	Counts as a (gross) musical instrument. -1 ÉLAN.
	Regular Shortsword	Equip	+1 ÉLAN in combat only.
	Residency Scroll	Junk	Record in ink on your Adventure Scroll : once obtained by any means you will start each adventure with the Residency Scroll.
	Respendent Regalia	Equip	+2 FISTS, +2 to all FIST rolls, +20 max EFFORT
	Roast Leg of Person	Junk	Discard to restore 10 EFFORT but suffer -1 ÉLAN when talking to humans, elfs, dwarfs and goblins from now on.

	Robe and Wizard Hat	Equip	When equipped, discard at any time to gain +1 FIST in a HASSLE involving other sentient beings.
	Rubber "Club"	Equip	There's something disturbing about this slippery, floppy club. Combat HASSLES have -2 DIFFICULTY first round only.
	Rusty Scythe of Scything	Equip	If you inflict TOUGHNESS damage on an enemy then deduct one point of TOUGHNESS from another enemy in the fight with equal or less DIFFICULTY.
	Screaming Skull on Spider Legs	Junk	Turn to 1377 for the brochure which explains everything you need to know about your exciting new travelling companion.
	Scroll of Dispel	Junk	It's too complicated to read.
	Scroll of Witherdick	Junk	Discard during a combat HASSLE to reduce an enemy's FISTS by 1.
	Scrying Orb	Junk	Has three charges. Use a charge to read a paragraph before you turn to it - you may choose to turn back to the paragraph from which you came if you like. Discard when it's out of charges.
	Shinsplints	Junk	Can't be voluntarily discarded. Costs 1 Guilder each time you turn to a new paragraph. Will depart as soon as you run out of Guilders. All HASSLES are -1 DIFFICULTY. Also counts as a band member - re-roll all 1s and 2s on your FIST dice in musical HASSLES: second roll stands.
	Signet Ring	Junk	-
	**Skelehand**	Equip	This feels horrible... +1 ÉLAN, -10 max EFFORT. Costs 5 EFFORT to unequip: discard if you do this.
	Skeleton Friend	Junk	If you roll a 6 on any of your FIST dice, roll that dice again and add 6 to the result.
	Skellybones	Junk	-

	Skull Ring	Equip	If you defeat an enemy in a combat HASSLE draw a skull mark next to the HASSLE in ink.
	Snail Slime	Junk	Discard to reduce a combat HASSLE's DIFFICULTY by 2, or to destroy any item you're carrying or have equipped instantly and without consequences, even on a page with a check to see what items you have on you.
	Soiled Gambeson	Equip	Every time you lose at least 1 EFFORT, lose 1 additional EFFORT. If you become injured, roll a die: on a 5 or 6 ignore the injury. *Combine with Mediocre Codpiece to make the Dapper Garb.*
	Staff of Elfen Magick +3	Equip	-1 ÉLAN.
	Stale Loaf	Junk	Discard to roll a die and regain that amount of EFFORT.
	Star Bastards	Wow!	Your very own copy of Star Bastards from the acclaimed gamebook author, Herman S. Skull! And at a price you can afford - show the cashier at your local Two-Fisted Fantasy stockist your Adventure Scroll with this item to get 50% off the cover price of Star Bastards! Valid until December 1985. Participating stores in the Outer Hebrides (excluding Lewis and Harris, Uist and Benbecula) only
	Sturdy Pick	Equip	-1 ÉLAN. Re-roll any FIST rolls of 1 in combat. Second roll stands even if it's another 1.
	Sugar Sack	Junk	Discard to restore 5 EFFORT. *Combine with a Potion, Pixie Parts or Trollbräu to create Ant Rid.*
	Suspicious Canteen	Junk	-
	**Swag**	Junk	You can't be bothered rolling it back up. Discard to double the EFFORT restored during a rest.
	**Sweet Belt**	Equip	+1 FISTS, but keep the extra die aside. If this die ever comes up as a 1 the belt slips off and leaves you for a better owner.
	Sword of the Bastard Elf	Equip	+1 ÉLAN, +1 FISTS, +10 max EFFORT

	Sword of the Elf Bastard	Equip	It's too heavy for you but looks cool. +1 ÉLAN out of battle, -2 ÉLAN in battle, does 2 damage to TOUGHNESS on winning a round in combat only. *Combine with the Bastard Sword of the Elf to form the Sword of the Bastard Elf*
	**SWU Card**	Junk	-
	Target Targe	Equip	Can equip in arms or on back. **If equipped in arms**: can't also equip a weapon. Whenever you're hurt roll a die. On 5+ disregard the injury. **If on back: can wield a weapon**. The 5+ rule only applies for injuries incurred fleeing from combat. Whether equipped in arms or back, any action that costs 5 or more EFFORT costs 1 additional EFFORT.
	Tasty Burg	Junk	Discard to restore 10 EFFORT and remove the negative ÉLAN effects of drunkenness.
	Toby the Baby	Junk	Someone forgot about the babe
	Trollbräu	Junk	Incredibly toxic. Discard to get blind drunk: -2 ÉLAN until you next rest. *Can combine with Sugar Sack to make Ant Rid.*
	Twin Swords of Corruption	Equip	-1 ÉLAN for all HASSLES, does 2 TOUGHNESS damage to combat HASSLES. Costs 5 EFFORT to unequip.
	The Ultimate Codpiece	Junk	*Combine with Magnificent Outfit to form Resplendent Regalia.*
	Vegemite Sandwich	Junk	Discard to roll a dice. If odd, lose that amount of EFFORT. If even, gain that amount.
	**Weighted Net**	Junk	Discard in combat to give one enemy -2 DIFFICULTY for the duration of the HASSLE.
	**Witch's Broom**	Equip	-1 ÉLAN.
	Worthless Steak Knife	Equip	Re-roll a FIST die once per HASSLE. If the result of that roll is 1 or 2, the knife breaks and must be discarded.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to thank the people who made this nightmare of a book a reality. Without them it would be a half-formed thing bumping around at the back of my brain, but now it's a misshapen and awful monster which is lumbering off into the world on its own mighty legs and roaring its terrible oaths at other people at long last. It's finally done with me: I'm free.

I'm not going to mention your individual deeds in relation to this book. You all know what you did. But it couldn't have been done without any of you: your time, interest, money and at least tacit support is what made it possible. In roughly alphabetical order:

Aaron Randol, Adam, Adam Thomson, adobo40, Airyque Xailr, Alan Graham, Alastair Kelly, Amanda Jeffries, Andrew Pierce, Anoop Sheshadri, Anselm keiser, Arnold Kaiser, Austin Hofeman, Ben 'Aileander' Drew, Ben Levesque, benjdot, Beorn, Bram van Mosselveld, Brian Foster, Bryan C., Callum Stoner, Camelia Iacob,Carmen Trübe, Cheong Ngai Mike, Chris Chester, Chris Constantin, Christian Pirkheim, Christian Stark, Christopher A Sprunger, Christopher Lee, Ciaran Charalambou, Leon Bradford, Cody Endres, Coleshill Family, Colin ('Kiwi Mac') MacMillan, Colin Campbell, Colin Oaten, d Bavo n, Dan Starman, Daniel (The Magnificent) Nester, Daniel Norton, Darrin Hill, Dave Billington, David Alim, David Harrison-Brown, David Phan, David W. Bauer, Derek Dadian-Smith, Dion Bradley, Doug Connelly, Dustin Lewis, Emma & Simon Miller, Eoghan Courtney, Eric Claypool, Erik Brammer, Everett Owen, Fallonjane, FBSW, FDN, Gábor Joe Telekesi, Graham Hart, Grant Chen, Guy Adshead, Harrison Simmons, His Excellency Lucio of the House of Renfield, Ian Crockett, Ian McFarlin, Jake Magnuson, James J. Marshall, James Love, James Michael, James Spearing, Jeff Lorence, Jeff S, Jennifer Wilson, Jeremy Robinson, Jesper Ostersen, Jesse Goodman, Jessica Jones, Jim Heath, Joe "The Fedora Fan" Amon, John Humpage, John Loner, Jonathan Caines, Jordan Burattini, Josh Welbourn, Joshlyn Dane, Joshua Goodbar, Joshua Lee Duren, Joshua Mattern, Joshua Spooner, Julian and Gabriel Latter, Kenn Bashaw, Kenneth Q. Oaf, Kenny Beecher, Kevin Abbotts, KS66, Lady PuffButt, Lech Kazmirski, Leo Dreyfus, Luke Cullenkamp, Luke Reid, Magnus the Magnificent, Maik Seehafer, Marc S, Mark E Powell, Mark Lee Voss, Mark Lain, Mark O'Shaughnessy, Martin Bryant, Martin Gallo, Marty Jenkins, Matt Davis, Matt King, Maximillian Tompkins, Michael Bauer, Michael James Musumeci, Michael Jannusch, Michael Reilly, Michael Tindill, Michael Wilhelm Knowles, Mike Higgins, Mike Shema, Mike Vidales, MparmpaGiorgis, Nathan Collins, Nathan J. Hill, Nicholas Ivory, Nick Vitse, Nicodemus, Nicolas Tremblay, Nicolette Tanksley, NIXATA, Noelani Blueford, Oliver, Oliver M Traxel, Olivier Vigneresse, Ork of Fiction, Pablo Sancho, Pang Peow Yeong & family, Patrick S Hollingsworth, Paul L. Mathews, Paul Scanlan, Rhel ná DecVandé, Rich Harrison, Robert W. Polzin, Robin David, Roger Trombone, Ryan Schaub, Ryan Vincent, Saz Wells, Scambonious Funk, Simon Day, Sisyphus, "Slobbo", Spudnut and Spider Monkey, Stéphane Bechard, Steve "Stig" Morris, Steve Lord, Stuart Lloyd, Super Mario Batali, Sven "Silvermane" Berglowe & family, TDS, Thomas Ryan-Allen, Tom Burdak, Tom J Brosseau, Tom Pearson, Toni "tiger-spy" Apostoloski, Tony Hough, Tristan and Megan Miller, Vicky Eaton, Volkan Yildirim, Welis, Werner Pirnay, Wiggles McWiggly, William Lamming, Y. K. Lee, Yianni Charalambopoulos, Zach Roberts and Zacharias Chun-Pong LEUNG 梁振邦.

Special thanks also to the posters on the Skullmund and Something Awful forums who encouraged this madness in the first place, and the rest of the Kickstarter and pre-order backers who reacted to my endless delays and slow work with nothing but patience and encouragement. And most of all thank you Saul and Ioana, who put up with an awful lot.

Let's do this all again sometime.

S. Iacob,

Two-Fisted Fantasy

More from Two-Fisted Fantasy

Star Bastards

An exciting deep space chase story where you play as both sides of the law. Can Detective Leo Canid catch the 10-Foot Space Exploration Pole before he slips through the steel jaws of justice, or will the unreasonably long Pole turn out to be even longer than the long arm of galactic law? You decide!

COMING SOON

Brass, Bastards and Steam: The Clockwork Cycle Part III

Void Racers

The Wizard of Warlock Tower

Codename: CyberFISTS

Crypt of the Bone Lords

and keep an eye out for Bastard Elf accessories
available soon from DriveThruRPG via

drivethru.twofistedfantasy.com
&
bastardelf.com

Keep in touch:
twofistedfantasy.com|facebook.com/twofistedfantasy|hermitskull.com

You're not allowed to go home, but you can't stay here!

The Bastard Elf has been kicked out of home at the cruelly young age of 60 and he needs to find a place to crash! With nothing more than the name and last known whereabouts of his human father, The Bastard Elf must set out on a perilous quest through the magical land of Nonce - a realm full of crooks, brigands, scumbags and assorted monsters - armed only with his wits and whatever he can steal from his stepfather Jeff.

You call the shots: reunite with your old man, get revenge on Jeff (who has obviously turned your mother against you somehow and has never treated you with the respect you deserve), and carve your own destiny with the Sword of the Bastard Elf. Or (more likely) fall in a pit and be eaten by something horrible. Inside you'll find a complete set of rules and items to help you battle and sleaze your way across the County of Nonce: all you need to provide is a couple of dice and your two rock-hard fists!

"When [Skull] said he was doing a choose-your-own-adventure ... I was not expecting this monstrosity. This is a huge seething mass of a thing, a ridiculous enterprise, a waking nightmare, a towering achievement of futility and an offense against God and man. I quite like it."

--Kenneth Q. Oaf

"So far I have been equally uncomfortable, disturbed [and] nauseated"

--Mark O'Shaughnessy, Two-Fisted patron

"After an unknown amount of time rotting in a jail cell because of how I look, I failed to defend myself in court and died."

--A satisfied gamebook reader

TWO-FISTED FANTASY