

Quest: Waking the dead

‘Remind me again why we’re here...?’

Nyms is huddled in his cloak, the cold rain dripping from the peaked brim of his hood. In the valley below, lies a vast necropolis – its crumbling buildings veiled by a ghostly mist.

Next to you, Caeleb gives a heavy sigh. ‘I’m going on a hunch, nothing more. We’ve seen what Zul can do. His necros are raising the dead.’

‘And you want us to do the same?’ Nyms blows out his cheeks, rubbing his gloved hands together nervously. ‘We’ve done some crazy things together, my friend, but this one...’

Caeleb points to a large domed structure, looming tall and ominous amidst the swirling fog. ‘That is Arthurian’s tomb. He was a great warrior; the leader of the Tor Knights. It was his sacrifice that helped win the shadow war.’

‘The last charge,’ Nyms snorts. ‘Always sounded like a suicide mission to me. A hundred knights against an army of thousands. No wonder they were cut to pieces.’

Caeleb brushes the wet hair from his eyes. ‘They knew they would not survive, Nyms. But their sacrifice bought time – time for crucial reinforcements to arrive from Talanost. Without their sacrifice, the king’s army would have been overrun.’

‘Hmm, history does have a way of over-glorifying the past.’ Lansbury leans forward, scrutinising the tombs and ruins in the valley below. ‘Let’s concentrate on the facts. Zul is using necromancy to raise the Tor Knights – turning them against us. It is only a matter of time before his mages desecrate these tombs.’ The elderly medic turns to Nyms. ‘We cannot allow them to do this.’

‘And the horn?’ Nyms folds his arms stubbornly. ‘I’m not risking my life for some fireside fable.’

Caeleb tugs his visor down. ‘It’s not a fable. Arthurian swore an oath with his last dying breath, that he would return to Valeron in its time of greatest need.’

‘Oh really? And who was around to hear those grand words?’ Nyms puts a hand to his ear, grinning. ‘According to your famous legend, all the knights were wiped out – to the very last man.’

Caeleb shakes his head. ‘You should read more, Nyms. It was Jorvic Moore, the Tor Knight’s standard bearer. He was mortally wounded... the medics couldn’t save him, but he managed to return to the camp with Arthurian’s horn – the one he used in battle a hundred times to sound his charge.’

Nyms rolls his eyes. ‘And if we find this horn, he’ll come along and help us battle Zul. That *is* what you’re saying, right?’

Caeleb takes up his shield, its surface slick with rainwater. ‘It comes down to faith, Nyms. I believe it’s worth a try – at least.’

‘And that’s good enough for me,’ you interject impatiently. Beneath your clothing, you can feel the shadow mark burning... eager for battle.

Nyms nods, glancing up at the broiling, storm-heavy sky. ‘Ok, you win. But really... couldn’t we have picked a better day for this?’

Caeleb draws his sword and starts down into the valley. Within seconds the plated warrior has vanished – swallowed up by the thick banks of white fog. Drawing your own weapons, you follow the knight’s tracks through the sludgy black ash. Turn to 12.

At the end of the corridor, another passageway branches to the left, ending in a statue of a knight, his head bowed. In the wall facing you is an immense door, fashioned from ivory and gold. Each of its panels has been intricately decorated, depicting a number of embossed scenes. As you edge closer, you see that they all feature a knight on horseback, battling a nightmarish menagerie of fearsome monsters.

In the centre of the door is a gold circle and inset within it is an ivory chalice.

'Where does this lead to?' you ask in wonderment.

Lansbury moves her light closer to the door. 'These panels depict scenes from Arthurian legend. This could be the entrance to his tomb – or a treasure vault perhaps.'

Nyms places a hand against the centre of the door and pushes against it. Nothing happens. He looks back at the group with a meekish smile. 'Okay, it was worth a try.'

'How does this open?' snaps Caeleb impatiently, glancing at Lansbury. 'Some magic?'

Lansbury steps back, her eyes quickly roving across the door's surface. 'I sense magic here – very old magic. But clearly Zul's followers couldn't open it... or they never made it this far.'

'Then this is a dead end,' growls Caeleb, gesturing to the statue at the end of the passageway. 'We'll have to go back.'

'Hmm...!' Lansbury raises her staff and walks towards the knight. Her white light picks out its detailed features – a young man, with a fringe of hair curling out from beneath a chainmail coif. His eyes are closed, his hands resting on the pommel of his sword. Lansbury leans closer; then reaches forward with a finger, pushing the stone at the centre of the sword's guard. There is a click followed by a deep rumbling, as the statue slides back into a hidden recess, revealing a secret archway in the wall.

'Good find,' grins Nyms, nodding with approval.

Caeleb shoulders through the group. 'Let's finish this,' he murmurs. Turn to 60.



Determined not to allow the mysterious assassin to escape, you dive across the tomb in an effort to reach him. As black lightning streaks from his fingertips, you know you only have seconds to spare. Frantically, you grab hold of the man's robes, bunching the soft material in your fists.

'No!' You hear Lansbury cry out.

There is a flash of bright light and suddenly the room falls away into nothingness. Your stomach gives a lurch as you feel yourself rushing forwards at great speed...

Another flash.

Freezing cold water splashes against your face, forcing you to recoil. As you stumble backwards, you see that your surroundings have changed. All around you, water pours over jagged black rocks, spilling out from a gorge high above you.

'What the...?'

You look around frantically, having lost all sense of your bearings. There is hard rock beneath your feet – a ledge, jutting out like a giant's tooth from a mossy cliff side. A few metres away a curtain of water breaks against its pitted edge, filling the air with a fine white spray.

For a second, all you can hear is the roar of the waterfall. Then, you catch something else... the scuffle of feet.

Spinning round, you see Fetch lunging for you with a knife. You react instantly, snatching his wrist and twisting it back, forcing him to drop the weapon.

'Fool!'

You feel the air around you charging with static... the water roars louder in your ears, a deafening pain... then there is another flash of white light. You find yourself falling forwards, hands flailing for something to hold onto. There is nothing to see – only a white light; piercing and cold.

Then a stone floor rushes up to meet you. Unable to stop yourself, you slam down hard with a cry of pain. Turn to 33.

4

As a mage you may also take the following item:

Bone fetish
(talisman)
+1 armour

Ability: necromancer career (see below)

You must have the *bone fetish* talisman equipped if you wish to learn the necromancer career. As soon as this item is unequipped or you learn a new career, you lose the abilities associated with this career.

The necromancer has the following abilities:

Shades (pa): At the start of combat, you automatically summon a group of shades to aid you. The shades add 2 to each dice of damage you roll, for the duration of the combat. Once the shades have been summoned, they remain in play until you *sacrifice* them (see below).

Sacrifice (co): You may use this ability after an opponent has rolled their damage dice/damage score, to instantly *sacrifice* your shades. The shades absorb all the damage instead and you are unharmed. This destroys your shades instantly.

Once you have made your decision, turn to 14.

5

As you land the killing blow, you step away from the robber, leaving him to fall to his knees on the muddy ground. His dagger drops from his hand, his pale fingers going to a cord around his throat.

'Judah protect me.' A flash of lightning picks out the silver crucifix he is now clutching between bloody fingers. When he looks up at you, he is smiling. 'Did I pass the test? Did I prove my faith?'

Then, with a cry of anguish, his body begins to unravel, spinning into black coils of shadow that rise up before you in a whirling column.

Your eyes widen in shock. 'It... can't be!'

The robber was a Nevarin, just like yourself. There is a sharp tingling from your shadow mark. You tug back your sleeve to reveal the diamond-bodied serpents branded into your skin.

As you look back at the writhing mass of magic, you feel the familiar desire welling up inside of you – the overwhelming need to absorb the magic into your mark.

Will you:

Resist the urge **46**

Absorb the magic **67**

6

'Look for yourself,' sneers Fetch, waving a hand towards the nearest wooden crate.

You give the assassin a longing stare, still distrustful of his motives. 'No, you open the crate.' With a ring of steel, you draw your weapon and hold it to his throat.

'Very well,' he scowls, waving you away with the back of his hand. 'Does everything have to be so dramatic with you?'

'Sorry, did you miss the part where you were trying to kill me?'

Fetch looks back at you, his eyes bright beneath his hood. 'I call it self-preservation. Something that has kept me alive these many years. You're not so bad at it yourself.'

Grunting with discomfort, the assassin takes the lid of the crate and pushes it aside. 'Travelling leaves me weak, tired. I am not interested in playing games. See for yourself.'

You step closer and look into the crate. Resting amongst folds of linen are a number of jade figurines. You shrug your shoulders. 'Some nice ornaments. What is the big deal?'

Fetch throws open his arms, turning on the spot to take in the whole of the room. 'Here are treasures so rare and priceless that even the king of Valeron would crawl on his belly for a chance to possess them. These are Avian's. He is a collector.'

'And what does he plan to do with all this?' You scan the room, filled with hundreds and hundreds of similar boxes.

'Its not what *he* plans to do,' grins Fetch folding his arms. 'It is what he hopes to stop others from doing.'

You scowl. 'I hate riddles.'

Fetch walks back over to the door, his eyes lingering on your own. 'Riddles are all you deserve, shadow walker.'

Turn to 71 to ask another question.

7

The robber spits on the ground. 'What am I doing here?' he growls. 'Like you wouldn't know, demon!' He continues to circle you warily, the blade of his dagger glinting in the lantern-light. 'Did they send you? Are you here to finish what they started?' He hisses like a cornered serpent, making a tentative lunge for you with the knife. You dodge away, watching him intently.

'Finish what?' you ask, frowning.

'Oh games – yes, your kind like games.' The robber taps the side of his head with the hilt of his dagger. 'Get inside my head, yes!'

'I'm not here to play games.' You raise your hands as a sign of submission. 'I was brought here by some magic. Perhaps you were too.'

The robber shakes his head, sniggering. 'Witch magic. Took my soul... stole my soul. If you cannot give it back, then you are no use to me!'

Before you can say anything, the robber comes running at you with his dagger. Turn to 58.

8

You find yourself back in the paved stone room. Caeleb and Nyms have already passed beneath the archway in the west wall, their footfalls echoing back from the passageway beyond. Turn to 11.

9

The apprentice is defeated, his ghoulish creation dropping to the ground in a jumble of blood-flecked bones. Meanwhile, Caeleb is still trading blows with the tutor, who has summoned a black blade into his hands. Deflecting the mage's desperate strikes with his shield, the cavalier thrusts his sword past the necromancer's guard, taking him down.

'Nice work,' grins Nyms, wandering over. He brushes the wet ash from his leathers. 'Anyone would think you no longer needed me.'

Caeleb kneels beside the necromancer, wiping his bloody sword against the mage's robes. 'And anyone would think a rogue couldn't dodge a fireball.' He looks up, his eyes glinting mischievously beneath his helm.

Nyms scowls, rubbing his right shoulder. 'Yeah, took me a bit by surprise, that's all.'

You cast a nervous glance over your shoulder, fearful that the battle might have drawn the attention of the bone sentry. But thankfully, there is no sign of the winged abomination. Sheathing your weapons, you search the body of the apprentice. You find 30 gold crowns and may help yourself to one of the following items:

| Home brew (2 uses) (backpack) | Cracked spectacles (head) | Stink bomb (1 use) (backpack) |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Use anytime in combat to raise your <i>magic</i> by 3 for one combat round | +2 speed +2 magic Ability: focus | Use at the start of a combat round to reduce an opponent's <i>speed</i> by 2 for that round |

If you are a mage, turn to 4. Otherwise, turn to 14.

10

Your eyes flutter open, the rain-drenched hills of the bone fields swaying before your blurred vision. Ahead of you, an indistinct shape moves quickly across the uneven terrain. As colours and detail swim into focus, you discern flowing robes and a bright staff of light.

You try and speak but the words clog at the back of your throat, producing little more than a guttural croak. The ground sways once again.

'They're awake,' mutters a voice close to your ear.

You are dropped to the earth, landing in the sodden ash. As you struggle for breath, you look up to see Caeleb standing over you, sweat and dirt staining his face. 'You aren't so light to carry, now get up.'

Nyms paces into view, looking around warily. 'We need to keep moving. Can you walk?' He glances your way, a grimace etched deep into his pale, narrow face.

'Get up!' snaps Caeleb, kicking ash in your direction. 'You have already slowed us down!'

In the distance you hear the shriek of some infernal creature.

'What happened?' you rasp, aware of a throbbing pain coming from your arm.

'Good question,' says Nyms, nervously tapping the pommels of his swords. 'We thought you were dead and then....' He shrugs his shoulders.

'Demon magic!' Caeleb scowls, turning away.

'But the tomb... our mission.' You push yourself back onto your feet, swaying slightly as you try and regain your balance.

'Zul's forces overwhelmed us,' states Lansbury, looking back to survey the dark skies. 'We were lucky to escape – but now they have scouts looking for us. We must hurry.'

Another deafening shriek dashes the uneasy silence. You take a tentative step forward, relieved to find that your strength is slowly starting to return. 'I'll be fine. Lead the way.'

Lansbury nods, before starting down into a narrow ravine. You follow, slipping on the loose stones and bones that carpet the ground. As you catch sight of a skull, grinning back at you from a mound of ash, you find yourself pondering your strange immortality. (Return to the Act 3 map to continue your adventure.)

11

You follow the corridor through into a wide circular chamber. It is nondescript save for a pattern of runes carved into the floor. Each one is surrounded by intricate lettering, the characters flowing in a spiralling array of designs. The effect would be almost hypnotic, if it wasn't for the dust and rubble that is strewn over most of the engraving. As you pass through, you see that someone or something has smashed many of the flagstones, disrupting the detailed scripture.

'The work of a fine inscriber,' comments Lansbury. 'Such a shame that its power has been broken.'

Caeleb has not halted, showing little interest in the runed tiles. Instead, he is intent on heading deeper into the tomb. As you follow him into a side passage, you hear a strangled cry from up ahead, accompanied by the ringing boom of a voice raised in anger.

'Looks like we've caught up with the necros,' mutters Nyms.

Caeleb doesn't slow, advancing down the corridor into the next chamber. Turn to 30.

12

The rain falls in relentless grey sheets, pounding the ash-covered ground and spattering off your cloak and hood. The mist that once afforded you

cover has now dispersed, forcing your party to use the cover of the outlying tombs.

Minutes later, huddled cold and shivering beside the crumbling statue of some long-forgotten hero, you find yourselves looking out on a cracked stone square. At its far side stands the domed building, looking more like a temple than a tomb. A staircase leads up to its main entrance: an open doorway, flanked by two pillars of rune-covered stone.

‘We’re too late,’ growls Caeleb.

You follow his gaze to a tall tablet of rock, rising several hundred metres into the chill grey sky. Perched on the rock’s summit is a huge demonic creature.

Nyms sucks air through his teeth. ‘Judah’s light...’

The creature’s skeletal body and tattered wings share a passing resemblance to a bone wyvern, but this monster is at least four times their size, its serrated-beak and talons covered in spiked iron plates.

‘What is *that*?’ you gasp.

‘Some mockery of life,’ hisses Lansbury, her grip tightening around her staff. ‘Zul’s forces are already here. We should go back.’

Caeleb turns in surprise. ‘But their presence here only lends our task a greater urgency. We have to stop them raising Arthurian and more of his knights!’

Your eyes haven’t left the undead creature, marvelling at the dark magics that have given it life. ‘Are you suggesting that we try and slip past that?’ A red fire burns in the creature’s hollow eye sockets, forming a gleaming trail as its head roves back and forth. ‘It’s a sentry. It will alert others.’

‘Bah, its nothing worse than we’ve faced before,’ says Nyms, drawing his twin blades. ‘I have no fear of it. Besides...’ He cocks his head to one side, his eyes flicking to Lansbury, ‘we have a healer.’

The medic purses her lips. ‘Don’t be foolish. There is always another way. Look.’ Lansbury points to a row of smaller outbuildings that form a ring around the temple. ‘We can use those for cover and go

around the other side. I’m sure this place will have another entrance of some sort.’

‘What do you think?’ asks Caeleb, his narrowed eyes peering at you through the visor of his helmet. ‘If we don’t make a decision soon I’ll be standing here in fifty pounds of rusted steel.’

Will you:

Risk a frontal assault on the temple? 22

Look for a back entrance? 34

13

You take a hasty swipe at the stranger, who skitters back on his heels, dodging your blow with ease. It appears there may be more to this vagabond than meets the eye.

‘I’m still sharp,’ he cackles, watching you with dark, hungry eyes. ‘This is another test. You try my faith!’ (Turn to 58.)

14

You pass around the back of the domed building, hoping to find an alternative entrance to Arthurian’s tomb. However, as you gaze upon the wide expanse of mildewed stone, your hopes are dashed.

‘Nice idea,’ groans Nyms, pushing against a section of the wall. ‘Were you hoping to find a secret door, Lans?’

You glance over your shoulder, waiting for the medic’s retort. To your surprise to find that Lansbury isn’t there.

‘Over here!’

Your attention is drawn to a wedge-shaped mound of dirt, set away from the building. Lank yellow reeds and tangled thorns cover much of its surface. Lansbury is standing next to it, her staff pointed to a section of the mound.

'What have you found,' grumbles Nym, walking over. 'A new herb for your collection?'

When you join the medic, you give a snort of surprise when you see the secret entrance that she has discovered. It is a slab of dark grey stone, set into the earth. Someone or something has pushed it inwards, revealing an ash-clogged set of stairs, leading down into darkness.

'A back entrance,' grins Lansbury. 'You just need to have faith.' The medic utters a quick word of magic, summoning a brilliant white light to the tip of her staff. 'Care to join me?'

With a smug smile, the medic starts down the stairs. Nym draws his swords and gives you an uneasy frown. 'I've a bad feeling about this.'

'That's not like you,' chuckles Caeleb, pushing him forwards into the earthen tunnel. 'Need me to hold your hand?'

Nym gives Caeleb a playful shove as they head down the stairs. You pause, your eyes shifting to your shadow mark, which has started to tingle beneath your skin. Not a good sign, you realise grimly.

Readying your own weapons, you follow the others into the secret passage, grateful – at least – to be finally out of the incessant rain. Turn to 69.

15

The warrior's body collapses into a swirling vortex of purple light. Eagerly, you tug back your sleeve and expose your shadow mark to the magic. The runes writhe and twist beneath your skin as they greedily devour the ranger's essence, healing your wounds and gifting you with even greater power.

If you are a ranger, you may now learn the shadow ranger career (turn to 35). Otherwise, turn to 49.



16

The blood-smeared passageway opens out onto a large, rectangular room. In each of its corners is a stone pedestal, above which an orb of green light hovers in mid-air, casting an eerie glow over the room's cluttered contents.

At the centre of the subterranean chamber is a tomb, bearing the effigy of Valentine D'Azzuro. The lid of the tomb is still intact. At the foot of it, two necromancers lie sprawled in the dust, their wounds coated with a bubbling green poison.

Around the edges of the room, smashed pottery and overturned chests litter the space. Several racks have been pulled down from the wall and their weapons lie strewn across the floor, joining the tattered scrolls and discarded books that have been tipped out of their cases and trunks.

There is the sound of angry cursing. A figure, previously hidden by the tomb, suddenly straightens into view – the ghostly-green light catches their features.

It is a hooded man, dressed in velvet-black robes. His long, pale figures are curled around an object, which looks like a sceptre or rod. With a snarl, he tosses it aside... then his head jerks around, as your party enter the room.

Your eyes meet and recognition dawns.

'Fetch!'

The hooded man mumbles another curse, then throws his arms up towards the ceiling. Black light flickers around his body.

'He's teleporting!' you cry, starting forward into the room.

'No!' shouts Lansbury. 'Do not go near it!'

Will you:

Grab Fetch before he can leave?

3

Heed the medic's warning?

28

17

Caeleb carefully places the weapon he was inspecting back onto its rack; a poignant but futile gesture, as the rest of the room still remains a cluttered mass of upturned chests and trunks. ‘They will pay for what they have done,’ he mutters, casting an angry glare around the room. ‘Come on.’

He leads the way back down the corridor. As you near the inscribed room, you feel the air growing thick again... your limbs weakening. The shadow mark hisses beneath your clothing.

Nyms gives you a worried glance as you stumble into the room, your head pounding with pain. Without pause, Caeleb crosses the room, taking the north passage. You follow, your concentration focused solely on putting one foot in front of the other. Turn to 36.

18

The anomaly’s sparkling strands are almost hypnotic, blurring into intricate patterns of light as they dance before your vision. Mesmerised by its gentle radiance, you find yourself moving closer and closer, until you are almost touching its glowing, rhythmic form.

Then, in an instant, the web-like strands wrap around you, encasing you in a suffocating prison. There is a scream from somewhere behind you – then you are enveloped in a white light. You feel yourself falling forwards. Frantically, you put out your hands to cushion your fall, but there is nothing to hold on to – the space is empty, featureless. Then there is a rush of cold air followed by another flash.

You land heavily on your stomach, the air punched from your lungs. Rolling onto your back, you gasp for air, your whole body trembling.

‘Lansbury?’ you croak.

There is no answer.

Something is wrong... different.

As you push yourself up, you realise that you are in the same chamber, but it has somehow changed. It is darker, night time – the rough-hewn walls cut by shadows of flickering torch light. Rain pours in torrents from the open shaft, the rain glittering as lightning flashes overhead.

You catch the sound of dirt being scraped beneath a boot heel...

Agilely, you spring to your feet, your weapons drawn and ready. In the corner of the room, a figure is watching you. They have one hand around a lantern and the other gripping a jewelled dagger.

‘Who are you?’ he snarls, his voice shaking with anger. ‘Are you more spirits to punish me?’ A peel of maddened laughter echoes around the chamber. ‘Yes, yes. You are here to test me. Test my faith.’

He cautiously circles around you, a flash of lightning picking out his grime-stained features. The man is thin and wan, clad in a tattered black coat. It hangs open, revealing the faded remnants of a military uniform. Between his long and ragged hair, you catch a cruel smile.

‘Did you think I would fail?’ he spits with scorn. ‘I am a great man. I was not born to this.’ He holds out his dagger, his hand shaking. ‘I can cut you, yes – yes. Do you bleed, spirit?’

You glance past the stranger, towards the entranceway in the far wall. It appears to be blocked by something. There is no sign of the skeleton or your companions.

Will you:

- Attack the stranger? 13**
- Try and convince him you mean no harm? 21**
- Demand to know what he is doing here? 7**

19

The icelock is defeated, her final scream accompanied by the ringing clink of ice on stone as Caeleb’s magical prison is shattered.

You may now help yourself to one of the following special

rewards:

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Crown of ice (head) +2 speed +3 magic Ability: barbs | Hunger (ring) +2 brawn Ability: leech | Hoarfrost (main hand: staff) +2 speed +3 magic Ability: chill touch |
|--|---|---|

When you have made your decision, turn to 40.

20

You find yourself back in the paved stone room – opposite you are the stairs that lead back up to the surface. Caeleb and Nymys have already passed beneath the archway in the west wall, their footfalls echoing back from the passageway beyond. Turn to 11.

21

‘Did they send you? Are you here to finish what you started?’ The robber hisses like a cornered serpent, making a tentative lunge for you with the knife. You dodge away, watching him intently.

‘Finish what?’ you ask, frowning.

‘Oh games – yes, your kind like games.’ The robber taps the side of his head with the hilt of his dagger. ‘Get inside my head... head, yes!’

‘I’m not here to play games.’ You raise your hands as a sign of submission. ‘I am here to help you. Perhaps that is why I was brought here – to this place.’ You speak slowly, emphasising each word in the hope that you can calm this crazed vagabond.

‘Help?’ he sneers. ‘Why would you help me?’

You glance around at the dark chamber. ‘I sense you are trapped here... or perhaps you are looking for something that you can’t find. Am I right?’

The robber steps back, looking momentarily disarmed. ‘I just

want what was mine.’ You notice him tug his coat over his chest, trying to obscure a silver chain. Dangling on the end of it is a crucifix.

‘And I’ll help you, I promise.’

‘Promises?’ The robber snickers. ‘It is already too late for me! I will not play these games!’ He takes the dagger he is holding and, with a cry of defiant rage, he plunges the blade into his chest.

‘No!’ You rush forward, grabbing the robber by the lapels of his dirty coat. Blood flecks his lips as he looks up at you between his matted hair. ‘I cannot die,’ he rasps. ‘I cannot die. What harm can you do to me?’ He laughs, crimson spit bubbling down his dirt-stained chin. ‘You cannot harm me demon!’

Then, with a cry of anguish, his body begins to unravel, spinning into dark coils of shadow.

Your eyes widen in shock. ‘No! It can’t be!’

The robber is a Nevarin, just like yourself. There is a sharp tingling from your shadow mark. You tug back your sleeve to reveal the diamond-bodied serpents branded into your skin.

As you look back to the writhing mass of magic, you feel the familiar desire welling up inside of you – the overwhelming need to absorb the magic into your mark.

Will you:

Resist the urge

46

Absorb the magic

67

22

‘Frontal assault it is!’ Caeleb starts the charge, racing forward with his shield held high. Nymys and Lansbury fall in behind him, the latter uttering words of holy magic. A second later and the medic’s staff flares into white brilliance, its shining light settling around the group like a glowing shroud.

You follow, aware that the bone creature has already spotted

you. It throws back its enormous head and from its steel-encased beak it gives a series of sharp, guttural calls.

'Whoa, someone's happy to see us,' smirks Nyms, spinning the grips of his blades.

The undead creature takes to the air, pushing off from its rocky perch and sending jagged cracks branching through the stone. It isn't until you near that you see that the tablet is some kind of memorial – its surface etched with hundreds of neatly-scripted names.

Before you can ponder its significance, Nyms breaks away from the group. He has spotted four necromancers advancing towards you, their wands and staves crackling with dark magic.

'Nyms, wait!' Lansbury calls after him, but the swordsman shows no sign of slowing, his magical blades deflecting the necromancers' incoming blasts. 'We need to stay together!'

Another guttural screech draws your attention skywards. Above you, the bone creature wheels in the air, its immense body blotting out the sky and drowning you in shadow. Caeleb moves in front of Lansbury, raising his shield as the beast dives towards them.

Will you:

Help Nyms battle the necromancers? 32

Help defeat the bone angel? 39

23

'Ah, tired of my company already,' chuckles Fetch, with a mock expression of hurt. 'I forgot how impatient your kind can be.'

'I need to return to the tomb,' you state firmly. 'Zul's mages are raising the dead. We believe they're going for Arthurian next – the leader of the Tor Knights.'

Fetch rubs his chin thoughtfully. 'Yes, that would make sense.'

'Well?' you snap irritably. 'Can you travel back there or not?'

Fetch is silent for some time, studying you intently with his bright, piercing eyes. With a shrug of his shoulders, he finally appears to have reached a decision. 'My magic should now be strong enough to take us back. But I will not stay. I must return to Avian at Ravenwing's camp.'

'Fine.' You place a hand on the assassin's shoulder. 'I am ready.'

You wince as the air ignites around you, crackling with black lightning. It is followed by a blinding white flash...

A heartbeat later and you are lurching forwards into a cold dark room. Shapes whirl in a dizzying blur around you. Desperately you reach out, seeking to slow your momentum. Hands slide across slippery stone. Then your knees buckle and you drop to the dusty floor, gasping for air.

'They're back!' shouts a voice.

You hear the scrape of metal and the rush of feet... somewhere amidst the spiralling haze you see figures moving. There is a loud crack and another flash of light.

'He got away,' snaps a female voice.

'Lansbury?' you croak hoarsely.

You feel yourself being lifted to your feet. Nyms' face appears inches from your own. 'You okay? Wake up.' A gloved hand takes hold of your chin, lifting your head up and forcing you to focus.

'Just a little... travel sick,' you grimace.

The swordsman chuckles. 'Good, glad to have you back. Now, care to tell us what just happened?' Turn to 31.

24

You enter a small square chamber, hewn from the bare rock. The low ceiling peaks into a natural shaft, which angles upwards through stone and roots to reveal a narrow band of daylight above.

In a corner of the room, lies the skeleton of an adventurer. Their clothes are rotted with age, brushed with a carpet of tangled cobwebs. A jewelled dagger is still clutched in the bony fingers of one hand.

Lansbury kneels beside the skeleton, her brow creased. 'I wonder what happened here.'

'Tomb robber,' snorts Nym, looking up at the narrow shaft. 'Probably climbed down here hoping for some easy loot. I guess they found more than they bargained for.'

Lansbury frees a loose bone from the cobwebs, turning it over in the light from her staff. 'This arm was severed,' she states grimly, tracing the uneven edge with a finger. 'I think they may have done it themselves.' The medic nods to the dagger in the other hand.

'Why would someone do that?' asks Caeleb.

'An infection perhaps.' Lansbury lets the bone drop from her hand. 'It doesn't really matter now. I think they are beyond helping.'

'No, I meant... this.' Caeleb is stood facing one of the walls, his head craned back. You move to join him, your jaw falling open in bewilderment when you see what has caught the warrior's attention.

The entire wall is covered in hundreds of marks, cut deep into the rock by a blade or stone. Most are purely random symbols, but some are clearly an attempt at communication. You edge closer, the light from Lansbury's staff casting flickering shadows over the crude engravings.

Not me. Not me. One God punishes. I punish. Punish. Not me! I die for him. Not me. Not me. The rest descends into gibberish, the marks becoming more erratic.

Lansbury looks back at the skeleton. 'Perhaps they were trapped in here. That anomaly could have existed a very long time.'

You feel a sudden prickling along your skin. Instinctively, you spin round – to face the far wall. There, hanging like a glimmering curtain, is another anomaly. Whereas the previous one had been a glutinous mass of mould and decay, this one is sparkling like dew on a spider's web, its thin strands rising and falling on an unfelt breeze.

'What is it?' asks Nym, trading confused looks between yourself and the far wall.

You glance at your companions. 'Don't you see it?'

Lansbury's face hardens. 'Another anomaly...'

'Then why can't we see it?' growls Caeleb, raising his shield as he turns slowly on the spot. 'It's something to do with that *thing* you absorbed, isn't it?'

Nym has started backing up, edging towards the entranceway. 'This could be very bad. I think it's time to leave, don't you?'

Will you:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Agree and leave the stone chamber | 2 |
| Investigate the anomaly | 18 |

25

The icelock is defeated, her final scream accompanied by the ringing clink of ice on stone as Caeleb's magical prison is shattered.

You may now help yourself to one of the following rewards:

| Witch's finger | Blood winter | Deep freeze |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| (left hand: wand) | (ring) | (main hand: staff) |
| +2 speed +3 magic | +1 brawn | +2 speed +3 magic |
| Ability: curse | Ability: leech | Ability: stun |

When you have made your decision, turn to 40.

26

Your opponent is a wild-haired man, dressed in a mud-spattered coat. In one hand he holds a black short bow, its arched length glowing with purple runes. As he draws back the bowstring, you see another bolt of black fire forming from thin air...

You roll beneath the shot as it goes sizzling overhead. Springing onto to your feet, you barrel into the archer, knocking the bow from his grasp and sending you both tumbling into a fist-flailing tangle.

With a bestial snarl, the warrior tugs a knife from his belt. At that same moment you notice the shadow mark glowing on the back of his other hand. You roll away, as a jagged set of black thorns burst out of the mark, wrapping around the man's fist and pounding the ground where you had been lying.

'That's a neat trick,' you grin, turning your arm to reveal your own shadow mark. 'Want to teach me that one?'

There is a flicker of surprise on the warrior's face. Then his grubby face settles into another rictus snarl. 'You are no Nevarin!'

Before you can answer, the ragged man is surging forward, his deadly thorns pulsing with a dark and unnatural magic:

| | Speed | Brawn | Armour | Health |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Baalim | 12 | 10 | 10 | 80 |

Special abilities

✧ Thorn fists: Each time your damage score/damage dice causes health damage to your opponent, you must take 4 damage in return. This ability ignores *armour*.

✧ Heightened senses: You cannot use *evade*, *sidestep* or *vanish* in this combat.

If you defeat the shadow ranger, turn to 15. If you are defeated, turn to 10.

27

You race along the tunnel, passing the broken remains of Arthurian's lantern. As the passageway widens into a circular chamber, you suddenly experience a wave of nausea. You stagger, falling to your knees, your vision blurred.

'What's happening?' you croak hoarsely.

From somewhere up ahead you hear the crack of magic and someone crying out in pain. Gritting your teeth, you push yourself back to your feet. A white light lurches into view as you stumble onwards, its radiance is almost blinding.

You stagger and fall, your strength rapidly ebbing away. From your mark, you feel a terrible burning. Again, you struggle to rise, another flash of magic illuminating the space around you.

As you regain your feet, you see that you are standing in a large runed circle. At its centre is a glowing white figure – an angel, with immense wings arching out from its flowing robes. The face is that of a wizened old man, his features drawn into a scowl of rage. 'Be gone, infidels!'

Arthurian is on his knees, gasping for air. 'These are holy inscriptions,' he rasps. 'They are weakening us. Try and break... the seals.'

'You cannot trespass here!' booms the angel, its pale form flickering like a ghostly flame.

'What is this?' you wheeze, struggling to focus.

'It's the master architect,' pants Arthurian. 'Part of him, part of his soul remains here to guard the tomb...'

The angel throws back its arms, summoning white flames into the palms of its hands. 'By holy light, I smite thee!'

You throw yourself into a dive, as the flames smash into the ground, sending stone fragments flying through the air. As the dust clears, you catch sight of a raised rune, glowing with white light. You notice two more, gleaming at the edges of the circle.

'Break the seals,' cries Arthurian, stumbling breathlessly to his feet. 'It is the only way!'

| | Speed | Magic | Armour | Health |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Architect | 12 | 13 | 15 | 80 |
| Holy flame | - | - | 4 | 15 |
| Holy circle | - | - | 4 | 15 |
| Holy shield | - | - | 4 | 15 |

Special abilities

- ✧ Holy flame: The seal of flame adds 4 to the architect's damage score.
- ✧ Holy circle: At the end of every combat round, the circle heals the architect for 4 *health*. (Note: This ability cannot take the architect above his starting *health* of 80.)
- ✧ Holy shield: Once the seal of the shield has been reduced to zero *health*, the architect's *armour* is lowered to 8 for the remainder of the combat.

If you win a combat round, you can choose to strike the architect or one of the seals. If you destroy a seal, its ability no longer applies.

If you defeat this ghostly guardian, turn to 37. If you are defeated, turn to 61.

28

Lansbury's warning forces you to hesitate. A second later and the dark-robed assassin has vanished, leaving behind a scorched circle on the ground where he was once standing.

'Who was that?' asks Nym suspiciously. 'You knew him?'

You shake your head. 'Our paths have crossed, but as for his motives... I wonder what he was searching for?'

'We should have stopped him!' snaps Caeleb angrily, stepping over the debris. He bends down and picks up a sword, turning it over in the flickering light. 'They have no respect for the dead or the living.'

You turn to Lansbury with an accusatory stare. 'Why did you stop me?'

The medic looks startled by your tone. 'Why else – he reeked of the old magic. Whatever that creature is, it is no concern of ours.'

'Well, he clearly wanted something badly enough to fight for it.' You pick your way over to the black-robed bodies, lying amongst the

knight's ransacked belongings. Searching the mages you find 50 gold crowns and may help yourself to one of the following:

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Dark therapy (talismán) +1 speed Ability: regrowth | Ghoulish gloop (2 uses) (backpack) Use anytime in combat to raise your <i>armour</i> by 2 for the duration of the combat | Bewitched boots (feet) +2 speed +2 magic Ability: dominate |
|--|---|--|

When you have made your decision, turn to 17.

29

The anomaly breaks apart into glittering strands of green magic, which streak towards your arm. As they hit the branded flesh, you feel a cold surge of power rush into your body. The magic is old and corrupted, but it is welcome all the same, feeding your muscles and enhancing your senses. When the last of the anomaly has been absorbed, you stumble back, half-gasping and half-laughing at your newfound power.

Lansbury is at your side, regarding you with a mixture of horror and fascination. Nym on the other hand, is patting you on the back.

'Nice move,' he grins. 'And look – your way of finding secret doors is much more interesting.'

You look up, to see a square opening cut into the stone of the wall, previously covered by the magical growth. Caeleb helps you to your feet, watching you intently from between the slits of his helm.

'Are you okay?' he asks. 'Is that thing... *inside* you now?'

You nod, lifting your arm to reveal the absorbed magic, flickering along the branded mark. Caeleb jerks his head away. 'It reeks of evil,' he growls.

‘And it will be the death of you,’ hisses Lansbury, knocking your arm away with her staff. Her face is flushed with both anger and upset. ‘You have no idea of the magic you are playing with!’

Nyms shrugs his shoulders. ‘No complaints here, I don’t have to look at that disgusting snot-beast anymore. Now, what’re we doing people? I say, secret room equals treasure.’

‘And I say, we have more pressing concerns,’ snaps Caeleb. ‘We cannot let Zul’s followers gain the upper hand.’

Will you:

Leave the chamber via the archway **20**
Investigate the secret room **24**

30

As you hurtle into the room, you glimpse a stone tomb at its centre – and its carved-lid pushed to one side. A black-robed body goes flying through the air, to crack against the nearest wall. Your attention swings back to the centre of the room, where a broad-shouldered man dressed in a glowing white shroud is stalking towards another necromancer. They are cowering in fear, fumbling for the dagger at their waist.

‘Squire! Squire!’ bellows the man in the shroud. ‘Where is my squire?’ He looks around angrily, then starts back towards the mage. Before the necromancer can free their weapon or cast a spell, the man has grabbed them around the throat. He lifts them up off the ground with ease.

‘One God punish thee!’ With a growl of anger, the man hurls the body across the room. You wince when you hear the mage’s bones shatter on impact.

Nyms gives you a sideways glance. ‘Okay, this is new...’

The man fixes his attention on your group, his brow furrowed. ‘Squire! Bring me my broadsword.’ He looks around distractedly. ‘There

are shadow spawn here and I must defend my home. Squire!’

‘They have raised another Tor Knight,’ hisses Caeleb. ‘He still thinks he is in the past...’

Around the room are a series of alcoves, surrounded by shimmering white runes. Within each alcove there is a weapon or a piece of armour. The man throws out his hand, his fingertips curling. There is a flash of magic from the nearest alcove and suddenly the sword, that was once resting within it, flies out and lands in his outstretched palm.

‘If you need something doing,’ he growls, ‘do it yourself!’ The knight raises his sword and charges towards you. ‘For Valeron! For glory!’

You must now fight this crazed undead knight:

| | Speed | Brawn | Armour | Health |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Jorvic | 12 | 13 | 10 | 100 |

Special abilities

✧ To arms!: At the end of each combat round, Jorvic equips himself with another item from his armoury, boosting his attributes for the remainder of the combat. He equips these items in the following order:

- Breastplate – raises his *armour* by 2
- Cloak – raises his *speed* by 1
- Shield – raises his *armour* by 2
- Helm – raises his *armour* by 2
- Leg guards – raises his *armour* by 1

✧ ‘Heal me!’: Lansbury can heal you for 15 *health* anytime during this combat. This ability can only be used once per combat.

✧ Team effort: Nyms sweeping strikes add 2 to your damage score. Caeleb uses his shield to defend you from harm. Your *armour* is raised by 2 for this battle.

If you manage to defeat the mighty warrior, turn to 45. If you are defeated, turn to 10.

31

You are back in the tomb of Valentine D’Azzuro. While you recover from your ordeal, you recount your strange travels to Lansbury, Nyms and Caeleb. The latter is inspecting an antique sword as he listens to your story.

‘What was this talisman he was so interested in?’ he asks, turning the sword over to scrutinise the hilt.

You shrug your shoulders, before taking another drag from Nym’s water skin.

‘It matters not,’ states Lansbury stiffly. ‘Whatever that creature is, it is no concern of ours.’

‘He was a man,’ you add, lowering the skin. ‘Once.’

‘He reeked of old magic. Old magic gone bad.’

You hand the skin back to Nyms before pushing yourself back to your feet. ‘Avian trusted him, like he trusts me.’

Lansbury purses her lips, her back straightening.

‘Now, now...’ Nyms steps around the medic, pointing to the archway with the tip of his sword. ‘Can we save the drama for camp?’

You rub your shadow mark, which has started to burn again, beneath your skin. ‘I have no mind to delay here.’ Turn to 17.

32

You follow Nyms, knowing that the swordsman is worryingly outnumbered by the necromancers. However, a blast of black light sears down from the sky, slamming into the ground and sending you reeling backwards. Another series of blasts pepper the courtyard, spraying you with dirt and black ash.

‘Look to the roof! There’s a ranger!’

Through the rain and dust, you see Nyms cutting his way through a group of shades, summoned by one of the mages. You tear your eyes away, quickly scanning the roof of the tomb... as another blast of black

fire hurtles in your direction.

You dodge aside, as the spell rips past you and slams into the stone tablet, leaving a charred fracture running across its base. Turning back to the fray, you notice that the blasts are coming from a small balcony set above the door of the tomb.

Quickly, you race towards the steps that lead into the building, but are drawn up short when you see that the pillars either side of the entrance are now glowing with purple light, casting a flickering barrier across the doorway.

There is a cry from behind you. Turning you see that Nym is now surrounded by shades. Two of the necromancers have already fallen to the rogue’s blades, but the remaining two have now retreated behind a pillar of stone, summoning further spells to bring down the swordsman.

More blasts tear into the ground; one of which hits Nym and sends him sprawling backwards into the ash. He is quickly on his feet again, wincing with pain, as the shades rush in to attack.

‘Any help would be appreciated!’ he scowls, slicing his magical blades through the ghostly apparitions.

Your shadow mark courses with dark magic, heightening your senses and bolstering your strength. In an agile blur of cold fury, you charge into the black-robed mages, cutting them down before they have a chance to retaliate.

Leaping over their smouldering bodies, you hurtle onwards, towards the stone tablet. It’s base is now fractured and crumbling; the neat inscriptions broken by zigzagging cracks. Throwing your strength and magic against the stone you break through the last of its shaky foundations.

You dodge out of the raining rubble, as the immense tablet topples forward towards the domed building. Swiftly, you leap onto its top-side and race forward along its length. At the last possible moment, you kick off from your makeshift bridge and dive through the air – landing agilely on the narrow balcony to face your surprised assailant. Turn to 26.

You lurch to your feet, feeling dizzy and nauseous. As your hazy surroundings swim into focus, you see that you have been brought to a stone chamber. Light from a narrow window illuminates a jumbled assortment of boxes and crates, all dusted with a fine white sand.

You catch movement out of the corner of your eye. You spin round, expecting another attack. Instead you see Fetch limping away, towards the far side of the room. His breathing is ragged, the harsh gasps echoing in the shadowy chamber.

'Where are we?' you call after him angrily.

The robed assassin stops and turns. 'You are a long way from home, Nevarin,' he hisses.

Reaching to his belt, Fetch pulls out a short silver wand. With a pained grimace, he raises his arm and points the wand towards a corner of the room. Your eyes flick to the shadows, where a metal statue rests against the sandy wall.

'*Kymeet Malci*' snarls the assassin. There is a flash from the end of the wand. Bewildered, you glance back to the statue – and give a gasp of surprise. Lights are now flickering around its head, moving in a rapid arc as they build up speed. A second later and the lights are joined by a whirring sound coming from inside the plated chest.

'What is it?' you growl, backing away.

Fetch answers with a cold cackle of delight. 'Your doom, Nevarin!'

Suddenly, the armoured body jerks into life, its massive fists clenching and unclenching. You draw your weapons as the automaton staggers forward, knocking boxes and trunks aside with its steel arms. As it enters the band of light cast from the window, you see that it is fashioned from sheets of iron, bolted and riveted to form a crude human shape. Its head, however, is a whirring mass of cogs and wheels, spinning in a frenzied blur as magic crackles around the golem's glass eyes.

'Farewell, Nevarin.'

The strange assassin resumes his escape, leaving you to do battle with this outlandish guardian:

| | Speed | Brawn | Armour | Health |
|------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Clockwerk | 12 | 11 | 10 | 80 |

Special abilities

✧ Body of metal: The golem is immune to *piercing, impale, barbs, thorns, venom, disease* and *bleed*.

If you defeat the golem, turn to 42.



'A wise choice,' nods Lansbury. 'I'm glad to see someone listens to my counsel.'

Nyms starts past you, rolling his eyes as he does so. You grin back at him as you follow, with Lansbury and Caeleb bringing up the rear.

Moving quickly, you take a wide arc around the paved courtyard, keeping to the shadows of the smaller outbuildings. Most are grey and crumbling, their stonework clogged with weeds and thorny brambles.

As you pass around the side of the domed building, Nyms suddenly halts, dropping down for cover behind a fallen column. He waves for the rest of you to do the same.

'What is it?' you whisper, crouching beside him. 'I don't see...'

Nyms puts a hand on your sleeve to silence you, and then nods towards a smaller tomb over to the left. As you scan its weed-choked stonework, you suddenly hear voices amidst the drumming rain. They appear to be coming from the other side of the tomb, obscured from view by a mouldering statue.

Will you:

Insist that the party investigates 51

Ignore the distraction and continue onwards 14

35

The newly-absorbed magic twists beneath your skin, winding its way past muscle and sinew. When it reaches your heart, you feel its icy coils tighten... extinguishing the warmth and light of the dryad queen's enchantment. In its place there is now something darker – something borne of that same magic, but corrupted somehow to serve a more wicked purpose.

If you choose to accept this new power, the shadow ranger has the following abilities:

Black rain (co): (requires a bow in the left hand.) Instead of rolling for a damage score after winning a round, you can use *black rain* to shower your enemies with dark magic. Roll 1 damage die and apply the result to each of your opponents, ignoring their *armour*. You can only use black rain once per combat.

Thorn fist (co): When your opponent's damage score causes health damage, you can immediately retaliate using your thorn fist, inflicting 2 damage dice back to them, ignoring *armour*. You can only use *thorn fist* once per combat.

Once you have made your decision, turn to 49.

36

The passageway is lined with torches, their crackling flames casting a ghoulish dance of shadows across the flagstones. You stagger onwards, teeth clenched against the throbbing pain that is coming from your shadow mark.

Lansbury walks at your side, watching you with a curious fascination. 'The inscriptions don't agree with you, do they?'

You look up, struggling to focus. 'I don't feel good, if that's what you mean.'

The medic nods. 'Yes, your mark is strong in demon magic. I wonder what it is truly capable of... should your memory return.'

You wince as a hot pain shoots up your arm. You stagger into the wall, putting out a hand to regain your balance. 'Sometimes I am grateful that I do not remember.'

After several hundred metres, the passageway widens, ending in a tall pair of gilded doors. They already stand open, revealing a bright chamber beyond. With effort, you draw your weapons, preparing yourself for whatever danger might lurk in this new section of the tomb. Turn to 75.

37

With a shriek of anguish, the angel flickers and is gone. Warily, you drop to your knees, exhausted from the energy-sapping encounter.

'I thought the angels would be on our side,' you pant.

When you look up, you see that Arthurian is watching you with interest. He looks about to say something, but catches himself. Instead, he turns to face the doorway at the other side of the room.

'Yes. We are close. Come, the place I seek is just past the next chamber.'

Stumbling to your feet, you cast a last wary glance at the shattered circle of magic, before following him through the doorway. Turn to 48.

38

You hammer against the creature's warded flesh, striking faster than its magic can heal. Finally, the beast crashes to the ground, its thick black blood pooling around your boots.

'Glad to see you're back on form,' grins Nyms, sheathing his blades.

You give him a sideways glance, aware that your shadow mark is still pulsing with its stolen energy. 'I had a little help from a friend.'

Lansbury lays her hands on Caeleb's chest, uttering words of holy magic. A soft white glow spreads out from her palms, pooling across his broken armour and knitting together the wounds beneath.

'Thank you,' he grunts, pushing himself back to his feet. He walks over to his shield and lifts it up. 'Not much use now,' he grimaces, turning the twisted metal around in his hands. 'What was that devilish thing anyway?'

You look down at the defeated shadow creature. If you wish, you may now help yourself to the following item:

Branded bracers

(gloves)

+2 brawn +2 armour

Ability: heal

You follow the others past the smashed flagstones at the centre of the room, making for the rune-bordered archway in the far wall. Lansbury notices that you are prodding at your face, your expression dark.

'What troubles you, Nevarin?'

You glance her way. 'The Nevarin are shape-shifters – they can assume different bodies. What could...,' you pause, struggling to find the words. 'How do I know that this face, this body... is even me.'

The medic stares at you, deep in thought. 'The truth is, you can't.'

A shiver runs up your spine. 'But how is it even possible – to assume the shape of another?'

Lansbury chews her bottom lip, pondering the question. 'Hmm, some magic you have forgotten, I think. Perhaps you share a common bond, a shared conscience, with the others of your kind... through the mark.'

The thought sickens you, bringing bile to the back of your throat. 'I do not wish to share anything with their kind.'

Lansbury is silent, her attention shifting back to the decorative arch. You see that its keystone and several of the surrounding stones are smashed, disfiguring their runes.

'When in doubt, take the direct approach,' mutters Nyms, kicking at the loose rubble covering the floor.

Caeleb has moved ahead and is now peering through the archway into the chamber beyond. He looks back over his shoulder, motioning your party to prepare for combat. Turn to 60.

39

Nyms is a skilled swordsman and more than capable of handling the necromancers. The bone angel on the other hand...

Your shadow mark ignites with a blazing fury as you throw yourself forwards, directly into the path of the beast. With a hellish screech, the bone angel's talons rake through the air, as sharp and deadly as any blade:

| | Speed | Brawn | Armour | Health |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Bone angel | 13 | 11 | 11 | 90 |

Special abilities

✧ Terrible talons: For each [1] that you roll for your hero (either for attack speed or damage), they are caught by the bone angel's talons and must take 2 damage, ignoring *armour*. (If you have an ability that lets you re-roll dice, you may use this before determining the result.)

✧ Holy aura: The medic's holy aura raises your *brawn* and *magic* by 2 in this combat.

✧ Caeleb's shield: Your *armour* is raised by 2 for the duration of this combat.

If you defeat this infernal monster, turn to 57. If you are defeated, turn to 10.

40

On seeing their leader defeated, the necromancers scramble for the exit, the remnants of their magic sparking uselessly in the air. With a cry of triumph, Arthurian drops to the ground, shaking off the last of his magical shackles.

Caeleb kneels before the knight, his head bowed. 'Arthurian, My lord. My protector.'

Ignoring ceremony, you stride over to Arthurian and put out your hand. The warrior meets your gaze and smiles. He takes your hand and shakes it firmly. His touch is cold, like ice...

'Soul and body are back together again,' you smirk, looking over his ghostly features. The eyes are the same as you remember, but they now stare back at you from a handsome face, framed by bright locks of long curling hair.

'This life is fading,' states the knight, glancing back towards his tomb. 'Take my horn. Do it quickly.'

Without hesitation, you hurry to the open tomb. Inside the cavity, lined with plush white cloth, you find an ivory horn. Carefully, you lift it out of the tomb and carry it over to the waiting knight.

'Good... I can bind my essence to this.' He puts out a pale hand to touch the horn. 'When you need me, I will come to your aide – just as the bard's always said I would.' His eyes meet your own, his lips forming a knowing smile. 'I suppose one part of my legend should stay faithful to the truth.'

Before you can answer, there is a sound – like a long drawn out sigh – which echoes around the chamber. The ghostly form of Arthurian vanishes, his runed armour clattering to the ground. For the briefest second, the horn glows with a pale radiance... then the light is gone.

You have now gained Arthurian's horn – a sacred relic:

Arthurian's horn (1 use)

(backpack)

Use anytime in combat to summon Arthurian. He will automatically inflict 20 damage to a single opponent ignoring *armour*

Caeleb slowly gets to his feet, tugging off his helm to reveal eyes wide with astonishment. 'The horn...' he gasps, reaching out and touching it with reverence.

Nyms walks over and examines the runed armour with his foot, pushing the breastplate over to reveal an engraved insignia – a chalice, surrounded by a circle of seven stars.

'Arthurian's coat of arms...' Caeleb's expression hardens, his eyes coming to rest on the shattered remains of Arthurian's tomb. 'Zul will pay for this sacrilege.'

Lansbury places a comforting hand on the warrior's shoulder. 'We did a good deed this day. Be content with that, Caeleb, at least.'

You take the horn and place it in your backpack. It could prove to be a vital weapon in the upcoming battle against Zul. With little else of interest in the chamber, you leave Arthurian's tomb and head back into the bone fields. (Return to the Act 3 quest map.)

41

You are thrown against a stone wall, hitting it with force. There is the taste of blood and something wet against your face, as you crumple to the ground, moaning with pain.

'Look!'

You hear a cry from your left and the sound of booted feet.

Dizzily, you open your eyes, feeling nauseous as the stone chamber spins around you in a blur of colour.

'They're bleeding. It looks bad.'

The voice belongs to Nyms. You feel strong arms about your shoulders, helping to support you as you mumble groggily. 'Where am I?'

You feel a cold palm against your forehead. Struggling to focus, you can make out a white shape. Then there is a flash of white light. You flinch away from it, fearful that you are being transported once again. But instead, you feel a comforting warmth flow through your body, taking away the pain and restoring your vision.

Lansbury straightens, looking down at you with a petulant expression. 'What happened?' she asks briskly. 'One minute you were there and then...'. The medic snaps her fingers.

With Nyms help you struggle back to your feet. Caeleb is watching you from the other side of his room, his helm removed and held under his arm. His eyes are narrowed, his expression one of distrust.

'We deserve an explanation,' he adds sternly. 'We were about to leave you here.'

You glance over, to see that the anomaly has drifted away into another corner of the room, its sparkling sheen barely visible in the pale light from Lansbury's staff. After taking a deep breath, you recount your

adventure, aware that it must sound as far-fetched as a children's bedtime story.

'You met Arthurian?' Nyms gawps, his head jutting forward on his narrow shoulders. 'Why does that never happen to me?'

'Because you are not of the shroud, Nyms,' states Lansbury, eyeing you up with a grimace. 'I suspect that none of us could have interacted with the anomaly in such a way – or at least, survived to tell the tale.'

'What's the shroud?' you ask, confused.

Lansbury gives a sigh. 'Yes, I guessed you would be ignorant of such matters. The shroud is the place between worlds, the place where the old magic is drawn from.'

'It is a place of evil – of demons,' states Caeleb darkly. 'And demons tell lies.'

Your eyes widen. 'Do you not believe my story?'

'That Arthurian never led the final charge?' he snaps angrily. 'That the stories and songs are a lie?' He laughs softly, shaking his head. 'I believe that you... you took a blow to the head.' The warrior taps his forehead. 'Now, I think we have wasted enough time here.'

You watch as the warrior tugs his polished helm over his face, before striding out of the room. As your eyes follow him, your attention shifts to the skeleton of the tomb robber, still lying sprawled amongst the dust and cobwebs.

'I don't understand!' you gasp, walking over and kneeling beside the skeleton. You push aside the tattered remnants of the leather coat, revealing a silver crucifix. 'Why hasn't this changed?' You look up at Lansbury, begging for an explanation.

The medic shrugs her shoulders. 'Time is a complex weave – it is not a single thread but many. If your story is true, your meddling may have changed one aspect, altered a single thread, maybe others, but the weave will still follow its course.'

Nyms blows out his cheeks. 'I think I preferred it when I was just hitting things. Can we do that again, please?' Spinning his blades, he

follows Caeleb out of the chamber.

You take the crucifix, turning it over in your palm. You notice that the key-piece is missing. 'Do you believe me?' you ask Lansbury, lifting your eyes to meet her stare.

'Time will tell,' she says, gesturing towards the exit. 'Now, after you...'

Nodding, you place the crucifix in your pocket before leaving the room. Turn to 20.

42

You smash apart the golem's body, sending battered sheets of twisted metal careening across the room. Finally, you drive your magic into the beast's head, ripping apart the delicate array of cogs and wheels. With a wheezing low-pitched whirr, the automaton crashes to the ground in a pile of smoking body parts.

You may now help yourself to one of the following rewards:

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Charged core (necklace) +2 magic Ability: life spark (requirement: mage) | Meat grinder (left hand: mace) +2 speed +3 brawn Ability: pound | Steel gear solid (left hand: shield) +2 speed +3 armour Ability: retaliation (requirement: warrior) |
|---|---|--|

When you have made your decision, turn to 62.

43

A winding staircase leads you down into a high-ceilinged chamber. Torches flicker in sconces along the walls, illuminating a row of statues that stand solemn guard along either side of the room. These life-like sculptures appear to be Tor Knights, clad in full-body plate. Swords and shields rest at their side.

Turning back to the entranceway, you see the barrier of magical light fade. Lansbury steps between the once-glowing pillars. 'Amateurs,' she mutters with disdain. 'Thinking they could keep *me* out!' Nyms and Caeleb follow her into the room.

'Took your time,' you grin, folding your arms and assuming a mocking pose.

Lansbury playfully slaps your arm as she continues past. 'We're not through this yet. I suggest you stay on your guard.'

As she marches away, Nyms offers you an apologetic smile. 'If it makes you feel any better, she never laughs at my jokes either.'

Pushing back your rain-soaked hood, you follow your three companions down the hall, towards a large stone door set in the far wall. It stands slightly ajar, leading through to a set of stairs.

'The necros did a good job of breaking and entering,' sighs Caeleb, eyeing up the stone door. You note that its entire surface is covered in spiralling runes and detailed, intricate script work. 'These doors were warded.'

'Yes, and they are over a thousand years old,' states Lansbury matter-of-factly. 'A child could have broken through these defences. It is nothing to be admired.' The medic hikes up her robes and starts down the stairs.

'See what I mean?' grins Nyms. 'No fun at all.'

He starts after Lansbury, with yourself and Caeleb bringing up the rear. Turn to 55.

44

Fetch clenches his fists angrily. 'I was too late! Avian sent me there to find an artefact – a talisman. He was fearful it might fall into Zul's hands. The necromancers must already have it!'

Fetch lowers his shaking hands with a heavy sigh. 'It is no matter. Zul will be crushed. Avian will see to that.'

'He sent me on a mission also,' you state, remembering back to

that fateful moment in Talanost, amidst the chaos and destruction. 'I have to stop him from closing the gate. If he tries, he will fail.'

Fetch's eyes widen. 'Really? How interesting... I'll deliver your message myself, if I am not already too late. Although, Avian is rarely turned from a course of action, once he sets his mind to it.'

Turn to 71 to ask another question.

45

Up close, it is apparent that this is no earthly knight. The man's face is pale – almost transparent – the eyes burning with a dull red light. As you deliver the final blow, you watch as the knight falls to his knees, his sword rattling to the ground. He looks up at you, eyes widening as if with a sudden recognition...

Then the body diffuses into motes of light, which flicker and then are gone. The empty shroud and the knight's armour drop to the stone tiles.

You may now take one of the following rewards:

| Stalwart shoulders | Ever-sharp | Funeral gown |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
| (cloak) | (main hand: sword) | (chest) |
| +2 speed +2 armour | +3 speed +4 brawn | +1 speed +3 magic |
| Ability: might of stone | Ability: deep wound (requirement: warrior) | Ability: charm |

'This was Jorvic,' states Caeleb grimly, brushing the dust from the tomb's inscription. 'He was Arthurian's standard bearer.'

'Nut job if you ask me,' says Nym, out of the corner of his mouth.

At the other end of the chamber is an arch, leading through into a dark passageway. Lansbury raises her glowing staff and leads the way. If you have the word *vault* written on your hero sheet, turn to 56. Otherwise, turn to 2.

46

The endless rain drums against the floor of the cavern, splashing on the uneven rocks and forming ever-deepening pools of muddy water. You huddle in your cloak, shivering uncontrollably. You wish it was just the cold that was making you tremble, but deep down you know it is the result of your craving – the need to absorb more magic.

At the other side of the room, the shadow energy has started to coalesce, moulding itself back into a human shape. Once formed, the ghost drifts back into the robber's clothing, fleshing out its grime-stained folds.

There is a staccato flash of lightning.

When the brightness abates, you see that the robber is now lying on the ground – perfectly healed. With a gasp, he sits up, reaching instinctively for his throat.

You step forward, holding up his silver crucifix. 'Looking for something?' you ask.

The robber stumbles to his feet, his expression confused. 'Why do you still haunt me?' he mutters, shaking his head. 'Why do you test me?'

You throw the crucifix at his feet, watching as he scrabbles in the muddy water to retrieve it. 'Show me your arm.'

The robber looks up, a single crazed eye peering at you through long tangled strands of hair. 'What?'

'Your arm,' you insist angrily. 'You must have a mark!'

The robber straightens, regarding you thoughtfully. Slowly, he places his crucifix back over his head, tugging it down to lie over his chest. Then he proceeds to remove his coat. Holding it out at arms length, he lets it drop into the mud. The military jerkin is short-sleeved, revealing a purple brand running up the entire length of his right arm. It is identical to your own.

'Are you one of them?' he asks, his voice trembling. 'This is not my body. I am not... a shadow spawn!'

'Then tell me everything,' you insist, folding your arms. Turn to 80.

47

The passageway is swathed in darkness. Lansbury utters a word of command, summoning a white light to the head of her staff. Holding it out before her, the medic takes the lead down the narrow corridor, the magical light dancing along the smooth stone walls.

You stumble after her with your head bowed. Each step is a challenge – your limbs ache and your vision is blurred. The mark on your arm spits and hisses, as if enduring its own private battle with the strange aura that surrounds this place.

The further you progress from the inscribed room, the better you start to feel. As the passageway angles downwards, deeper into the earth, you find yourself catching up with the medic.

'What did you mean... old magic?' you ask, rubbing your sleeve where the shadow mark still burns.

Lansbury gives you a sideways glance. 'The Dwarves... they were the first to discover the shroud. They were the first to commune with the spirits of that other place.'

'The shroud?'

Lansbury takes a sharp intake of breath. You follow her gaze, to where the passageway ends in a decorative archway. Sprawled on the ground in front of it is a dark-robed mage. They are lying on their back, their gloved hands gripping a dagger that protrudes from their chest. Blood is smeared across the stone floor.

Next to the body, set back within a cobwebbed recess, is the statue of a man – a broad-shouldered warrior, encased in elaborate plate armour. The detail is almost lifelike.

Nyms races over to the mage and kneels beside them. After several seconds, he looks back and shakes his head. As you near, you see

that the mage is indeed dead – his eyes stare up at the ceiling; his face frozen in an agonised contortion.

'Valentine D'Azzuro'

Caeleb whispers the name, etched into the base of the statue.

'Who was he?' you ask, studying the stone figure closely. He was clearly a great warrior of some description – the hard solemn face is crisscrossed with a myriad of ugly scars.

'He was an inquisitor, before he became a Tor Knight,' says Caeleb. 'This must be his final resting place.' He turns to the archway, where a trail of blood snakes away into the dark.

'Several resting places,' adds Nyms darkly, prodding the body of the mage with one of his boots. 'Work of an assassin, by the looks of it. That blade was poisoned.'

From somewhere up ahead you hear a noise, like the smashing of pottery, followed by an angry muttering. Drawing your weapons, you follow Caeleb's lead as the warrior ducks underneath the archway and continues into the tomb. Turn to 16.



48

A short passage opens out into a long rectangular room, dominated by a stone tomb. An image of a knight is carved in high relief on its surface, his gauntleted hands folded in silent prayer. Around the edges of the room are a number of rune-bordered alcoves. Within each rests an item of equipment, from ornately-decorated weapons to highly-polished pieces of armour.

'Jorvic!' gasps Arthurian rushing to the side of the tomb. 'By Judah's light...' He makes the sign of the cross in the air as his eyes rove around the chamber. 'This was a good man.'

You walk over to the nearest alcove, studying the fine sword that rests within the dusty recess. 'And this is a fine weapon,' you comment, reaching out to touch it.

'No!' Arthurian's voice echoes around the chamber.

You hesitate, looking back at him with surprise.

'Do not touch his belongings!' he snaps. 'They are protected.' He stabs a finger at the runes above the alcove. 'Holy magic.'

You immediately back away, reminded of the strange circle in the previous chamber.

'Come,' hisses Arthurian. 'I will not tarry here!' He strides across the room, taking an archway through into a magic-lit corridor. You follow close on his heels, fascinated by the blue flames that flicker in the iron sconces along the walls.

At the end of the corridor, another passageway branches to the left, ending in a statue of a knight, his head bowed. In the wall facing you is an immense door, fashioned from ivory and gold. Each of its panels has been intricately decorated, depicting a number of embossed scenes. As you edge closer, you see that they all feature a knight on horseback, battling a nightmarish menagerie of fearsome monsters.

In the centre of the door is a gold circle and inset within it is an ivory chalice.

'Where does this lead to?' you ask in wonderment.

Arthurian removes the crucifix from around his neck. Holding it up, he unscrews the base, pulling it away to reveal a miniature key. 'This is a perfect copy.' His bright eyes regard you through his ragged strands of hair. 'You have no idea how hard it was to get this.'

He steps forward and places the key into a small cavity at the centre of the chalice. As the key slots into place, there is a deep rumbling sound. Suddenly, piercing strands of white light radiate outwards from the chalice, spilling along previously unseen cracks and trenches. Within

seconds, a spider's web of light has branched across the entire surface of the door, splitting it into sections, which suddenly start to revolve. You watch, mouth agape, as the door folds in on itself and then slides aside, revealing a small, dust-shrouded room beyond. (Make a note of the word *vault* on your hero sheet.) Turn to 54.

49

The ranger's belongings are now yours for the taking. You may choose one of the following:

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Raven eye (left hand: bow) +2 speed +3 brawn Ability: bolt | Sinister shadows (ring) +1 brawn +1 magic Ability: vanish | Dark queen (necklace) +2 magic Ability: heal |
|--|---|--|

You move to the edge of the balcony and survey the rain-soaked courtyard below. The immense bone creature is now lying in a crumpled heap of tattered flesh and bone. Lansbury is administering healing to a wounded Caeleb. Meanwhile, Nym has defeated the last of the shades. He looks up and waves to you, then starts towards the entrance of the building, spinning his bloodied blades in his hands. Turn to 43.

50

The shadowstalker goes for a lunge, but stumbles losing her balance. You note that her breathing is laboured, her movements lacking the sharp focus you would normally associate with one of her kind.

'This place does not agree with us, does it?' you state dourly, feeling the heaviness dragging at your own limbs.

The shadowstalker rights herself, raising her magical blades once again. You see that both are dripping with a thick black poison. 'On the contrary, I find you considerably more intolerable, coward!' With a

screaching cry, the stalker springs forward, her poisoned blades cutting deadly arcs of steel:

| | Speed | Brawn | Armour | Health |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Malaise | 12 | 11 | 10 | 90 |

Special abilities

✧ Withering strikes: Each time you take health damage from Malaise's damage score, you must lower your *brawn* and *magic* by 1.

✧ Deadly venom: Once you have taken health damage from the shadowstalker, at the end of each combat round, you must automatically lose 3 *health*.

If you defeat Malaise, turn to 72. If you are defeated, turn to 10.

51

You draw your weapons and start towards to the tomb, intrigued as to the source of the voices. As you near, there is the crunch of booted feet – and suddenly two black-robed figures appear around the side of the tomb. One is shorter than the other, his rain-sodden hood pulled low over a youthful face. You note that his hands are raised and magic is flickering around the ends of his fingers. His companion appears to be a tutor of some sort, offering encouragement.

'Yes, that's it,' he states in an eager tone. 'You don't have to force the magic. Once the connection is made...'

You freeze, aware that you are in full view of the mages, your sudden halt forcing Nyms to knock into you with a grunt.

The necromancers' notice you, their eyes widening.

Like lightning, the tutor tugs a wand from his belt and aims it at you. There is a blinding flash of magic and then the sound of crackling flames. You are able to dodge aside, but Nyms takes the full force of the blast, reeling backwards into the sodden ash.

Caeleb races to your side, raising his shield as another bolt tears across the space, slamming harmlessly against the shield's runed steel. Lansbury has hurried over to Nyms, who is groaning in pain. You see her hands flare with healing magic, as she passes a palm across his charred armour.

Then you hear a guttural snarl. Behind the young mage lurches a hunched, misshapen figure. It has the appearance of a ghoul: its body haphazardly formed from bones and rotted flesh. The creature shuffles forward, its scraggly arms ending in knife-like claws slick with rainwater.

It is then that you realise that the young mage is controlling the beast. With a cruel grin, the youth raises his hand and extends a finger out in your direction. The ghoul's glowing eyes narrow to angry slits, then with a gibbering cackle of delight, it scampers towards you, its claws raised to strike. Turn to 63.

52

You emerge in a high-ceilinged chamber. Torches flicker in sconces along the walls, illuminating a row of statues that stand solemn guard at either side of the room. These life-like sculptures appear to be Tor Knights, clad in full-body plate. Swords and shields rest at their side.

'Arthurian's tomb...' Nyms spins on the spot, taking in his surroundings.

You follow your three companions down the sombre hall, towards a large stone door set in the far wall. It stands slightly ajar, leading through to a set of stairs.

'The necros did a good job of breaking and entering,' sighs Caeleb, eyeing up the stone door. It's entire surface is covered in spiralling runes and detailed, intricate script work. 'These doors were warded.'

'Yes, and they are over a thousand years old,' states Lansbury matter-of-factly. 'A child could have broken through these defences. It is

nothing to be admired.’ The medic hikes up her robes and starts down the stairs.

‘Mages,’ sighs Nym. ‘So competitive...’

He starts after Lansbury, with yourself and Caeleb bringing up the rear. Turn to 55.

53

Your shadow mark flares brighter as your grip on the assassin tightens. ‘Tell me about the book. The Grimoire of Naraghost. Why was it so important?’

Fetch gives a wheezing cough. ‘It does not concern you. Now release...’

‘TELL ME!’ you growl, shaking him angrily. ‘I deserve to know. I risked my life for it.’

‘Yes,’ hisses the assassin, ‘and you chose to leave it behind with that rotting crusader.’

‘It was a thing of evil. It needed to remain there.’

‘No,’ sneers Fetch, staring hard into your eyes. ‘It needed to be taken *from* there.’

‘Why?’ Your brow furrows with suspicion. ‘What’s so special about a book?’

‘It belonged to a navigator,’ hisses the assassin. ‘One of the elves. My master had been searching for it for a very long time. Little did he know it had been right under his nose all along.’

‘And your master? Who do you serve Fetch?’

The man’s pale lips curve into a smile. ‘Avian Dale. I think you know him.’

You shake your head, scowling with contempt. ‘Lies, that can’t be true. Avian is a good man.’

‘Know him so well do you? Let me tell you something about Avian. He has a special talent – a talent for finding people like us. Those

who are broken and need fixing; those he can breathe new life into... give them fresh purpose.’

You release the assassin and back away, no longer certain if what he says is the truth or just more poison. ‘And the book,’ you ask, your voice little more than a whisper. ‘Why did he need it? The crusader said it was evil.’

Fetch’s glittering eyes fix on your own. ‘It is evil, Nevarin. And that is why it had to be taken, far away from Tithebury.’

Your confused expression urges Fetch to say more.

‘The book is a set of charts, to navigate through the shroud. It is how the elves used to travel between worlds, before they built the gates.’

‘The shroud.’ The word is familiar. You sift through your memories, trying to remember... ‘Lansbury. It has something to do with old magic.’

Fetch snorts. ‘It is the birthplace of magic. It *is* magic. Anything that touches or passes through that place is changed... and not always for the better.’

‘And that’s what happened to the book?’ you ask intently. ‘It was corrupted by this magic?’

Fetch gives a rasping laugh. ‘You are learning fast, Nevarin. Yes, the book is dangerous – something that will always draw unwanted attention.’

You smirk, shaking your head. ‘So you and Avian were doing the locals a favour. Never had you down as the altruistic sort.’

Fetch leans in close, fixing his eyes on your own. ‘There is much you don’t know about me, Nevarin.’ Turn to 71.

54

The room is a lot smaller than you had expected for such a grand entrance, however, what it contains more than makes up for any shortcomings. The entire space is filled with a dazzling array of treasures

– goblets, caskets, statues, jewellery – its glittering radiance reflected a hundred-fold in the polished armour, arranged in racks along the walls.

You are left speechless, your eyes roving from one treasure to the next. Arthurian, on the other hand, appears less daunted by the impressive spectacle. He strides into the room, looking around intently.

‘It must be here!’ he snaps. He kicks over a statue in his haste to reach a velvet bag. Lifting it up, he spills the contents onto the floor. You watch mesmerised as a stream of golden coins and fist-sized jewels rain across the floor. Snarling, he throws the empty bag aside, his eyes searching the room. Next, he marches over to a trunk, pulling out clothes and hurling them aside. He lifts up the empty box and turns it over, shaking it angrily.

‘The mage said it would be here!’ he growls, his head snapping round to focus on the next area of his search. He moves over to a silver casket and lifts it out of a sea of coins. Opening it up, he gives a maddened peel of laughter.

‘Yes! Yes!’ he casts the casket aside, raising his left fist to reveal an onyx necklace. Hanging on the end of it is a round pendant, its glassy centre swirling with black smoke. ‘The witch’s charm!’

‘Wait!’

Before you can stop him, Arthurian throws back his arm and brings the pendant down hard against the nearest wall. It shatters, sending black smoke spiralling up into the air.

Arthurian gives a gasp, stumbling backwards. ‘Yes. Yes...’

His eyes grow wide, his mouth gagging open, gulping for breath. You move quickly to his side, catching him as he falls.

The body goes into spasm, gripped by a series of abrupt seizures. Then the warrior’s eyes close and he is still, the body becoming limp in your arms.

‘Arthurian...?’ Gently, you lay him down, aware that the warrior is no longer breathing. ‘So, you finally got your wish,’ you mutter sadly.

Your attention is caught by the silver crucifix resting against the grime-stained jerkin. You go to take it, when suddenly there is a flash of

movement; Arthurian’s hand snaps around your wrist, gripping it tightly.

As you wrestle to free yourself, you realise that the man’s body is alive once again... the chest is rising and falling with deep, ragged breaths; the lips part to give a low moan.

Then the eyes flick open.

Instead of Arthurian’s steely gaze, you are met by dark pits of hatred.

‘No!’ You break the man’s powerful grip, stumbling back into a clinking mound of gold and silver.

The stranger springs agilely to his feet, his right arm bursting into purple flames. ‘What is this?’ He stares at you intently, his brow creasing with a sudden confusion. ‘Nevarin? ‘Are you the one who brought me back here?’ He draws the jewelled dagger from his belt. ‘What foolishness is this?’

You realise that this must be the shadowstalker who tricked Arthurian; the one who stole his body and led his faithful knights to their deaths against the shadow legion.

‘Yes,’ you growl, your own shadow mark flaring with anger. ‘Though I intend to send you back to the demon pit that spawned you!’:

| | Speed | Brawn | Armour | Health |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Keldred | 13 | 10 | 8 | 90 |

Special abilities

✧ Mark of fury: At the end of every combat round, your hero takes 3 health damage from the flames that surround the Nevarin. This ability ignores *armour*.

✧ Heightened senses: You cannot use *evade*, *sidestep* or *vanish* in this combat.

If you defeat this sinister foe, turn to 59. If you are defeated, turn to 61.

At the foot of the stairs is a small square room. The floors, walls and ceiling are all fashioned from slabs of grey stone, inscribed with neat flowing script. You can feel the air around you pulsing with magic. The mark beneath your skin burns, as if on fire.

‘What is this place?’ you ask hoarsely, the air thick and suffocating.

‘There is some residue of holy magic here,’ says Lansbury, her eyes scanning the walls of engraved lettering. ‘This inscriber knew their art.’

‘Magic for what purpose?’ enquires Nyms, nervously glancing from side to side. ‘Hasn’t done much to stop Zul and his mages.’

Lansbury furrows her brow, leaning closer to a section of the writing. ‘Don’t be so quick to judge, rogue. These were designed to absorb negative energy, to cleanse this place of taint.’

‘Why?’ asks Caeleb sceptically.

‘This tomb was fashioned from magic, cut from the earth using geomancy.’

‘But that is good, right?’ Caeleb traces a line of script with a gloved finger.

‘Not all magic comes from the One God, Caeleb,’ replies the medic.

‘Dwarf magic.’ Nyms raises his twin swords and turns their blades to display their runes. ‘Like these. Thought you holy people frowned on the old magic.’

‘It has its uses, from time to time. These inscriptions are a cleansing rite... to repel the demons that are drawn to such things.’ She turns and stares at your arm, which is releasing a thick, dark smoke into the air. You look down at it in bewilderment, feeling suddenly dizzy and nauseous.

‘Is this dwarf magic?’ you croak. Your voice sounds distant... detached.

Nyms moves to your side. ‘You don’t look so good.’

Lansbury takes your arm, studying your mark with a mixture of interest and unease. ‘We should move on.’

There are two exits from the room, one to the north – leading onwards into a torch lit passageway – and a narrower side corridor to the east.

Will you:

Take the passage north **36**

Take the passage east **47**

At the end of the corridor, another passageway branches to the left, ending in a statue of a knight, his head bowed. In the wall facing you is an open doorway, leading through into a small high-ceilinged room.

‘Arthurian’s treasure vault,’ you state dourly, stepping through into the cobwebbed space. All of its treasures are now gone, stolen by thieves or by Zul’s minions.

‘This is a dead end,’ growls Caeleb, gesturing to the statue at the end of the passageway. ‘We’ll have to go back.’

‘Hmm...’ Lansbury raises her staff and walks forwards towards the knight. Her white light picks out its detailed features – a young man, with a fringe of hair curling out from beneath a chainmail coif. His eyes are closed, his hands resting on the pommel of his sword. Lansbury leans closer, then reaches forward with a finger, pushing the stone at the centre of the sword’s guard. There is a click followed by a deep rumbling, as the statue slides back into a hidden recess, revealing a secret archway in the wall.

‘Good find,’ grins Nyms, nodding with approval.

Caeleb shoulders through the group. ‘Let’s finish this,’ he murmurs. Turn to 77.

57

With the help of your allies, you are able to bring down the gigantic bone angel. While Lansbury administers healing to a wounded Caeleb, you search the rotted pile of flesh and bone. You may now help yourself to one of the following rewards:

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Broken wings (cloak) | Bone halo (head) | Skull plate (chest) |
| +2 speed +2 brawn Ability: fearless | +2 speed +3 magic Ability: focus | +2 speed +3 armour Ability: dominate (requirement: warrior) |

When you have made your decision, turn to 70



58

The robber rushes forward, looking to stab you in the chest. You lean to the side, shouldering into him as he oversteps his lunge. The man stumbles away, his wildly-tilting lantern casting whirling ribbons of light around the chamber.

'You can't kill me,' he snarls, righting his balance. 'I can't die.'

'Me neither,' you add dryly. You turn your arm, to allow him a glimpse of your shadow mark.

The man gasps, drawing back. 'No, no it can't be. You mock me! You mock me!'

With a shriek he charges once again, his jewelled dagger flashing in the lantern light. You must now fight:

| | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Speed | Brawn | Armour | Health |
| Tomb robber | 12 | 11 | 8 | 70 |

Special abilities

✧ Keen edge: If the robber rolls a [5] or [6] for their damage score, they can add 4 to the result.

If you defeat the tomb robber, turn to 5. If you are defeated, turn to 61.

59

Your final blow hurls the Nevarin back against the wall, where he explodes into a swirling mass of shadow magic. Eagerly, you raise your mark and absorb his dark essence, revelling in the fiendish power that is now yours.

If you wish, you may change the ability of any *one* of your items to:

Usurper (mo): (only usable in hero vs. hero combat). Use anytime during a combat to steal a speed or modifier ability that your opponent has already used. You may then play this same ability against them during the combat, based on the ability's description. *Usurper* can only be used once per combat.

Searching the treasure vault, you may also help yourself to one of the following items:

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Justice (left hand: hammer) | Cloak of ceremonies (cloak) | Lion's tabard (chest) |
| +2 speed +3 brawn Ability: knockdown (requirement: warrior) | +2 speed +2 magic Ability: radiance | +1 speed +2 brawn Ability: fearless |

You also fill your pockets with gold, before leaving the vault (you have gained 150 gold crowns). Turn to 65.

60

Warily you step through the archway, to find yourself in a circular chamber with a high-domed ceiling. At the centre of the room is a stepped dais leading up to a stone tomb. The lid has been smashed to pieces, its shattered stonework lying in jagged pieces around the base of the dais.

‘Oh, this doesn’t look good,’ mutters Nym, his swords spinning nervously in his hands.

Hovering above the open tomb is a man in rune-plate armour. He hangs suspended in the air, his head tilted back and his arms outstretched to either side, palms turned upwards.

Stood around him are four black-robed necromancers. They are chanting arcane words as streams of magic arc from their fingers, pouring into the warrior who basks in its purple glow.

‘More... give me more!’ he snarls, his head snapping forwards.

One of the necromancers falls to his knees, clearly with exhaustion. The dark warrior turns to face him, his scowl deepening.

‘Is this the best that Zul could send me?’ He raises his left hand, tightening it into a fist. The mage begins to choke, gripping his throat.

‘Something wrong with this picture?’ asks Nym worriedly, shooting Caeleb a hurried glance. ‘Thought Arthurian was on our side?’

Caeleb looks equally confused. He starts forward into the room, his hand resting on the pommel of his sword. ‘Great Arthurian, we seek your aid.’ He drops to one knee, his head bowed. ‘My lord. My protector – these are dark times. We ask that you help us to conquer this evil.’

The dark warrior looks down with derision, as the lifeless body of the necromancer slumps forward.

‘Fools! Arthurian is *not* here.’ The man’s voice booms in the chamber, shaking its very foundations.

‘But this... this is his tomb,’ implores Caeleb, stumbling to his feet.

The warrior shakes his head, his long mane of dark hair shifting across his purple-glowing eyes. ‘This is his *body*,’ snarls the knight. ‘But I’m afraid Arthurian is no longer home.’ He throws back his head, a cold and chilling laughter echoing back from the high stone walls.

Caeleb draws his sword with a flourish. ‘Demon! I will send you back to the shroud!’ As he charges forward, the dark warrior drops to the floor of the tomb, splintering the stone beneath his plated feet.

‘Ah yes, I have waited a long time for this!’ Purple magic blazes from the warrior’s runed gauntlets, forming two mighty axes – sparking with magic:

| | Speed | Magic | Armour | Health |
|----------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Dark Arthurian | 13 | 12 | 13 | 80 |
| Necromancer | - | - | 6 | 20 |
| Necromancer | - | - | 6 | 20 |
| Necromancer | - | - | 6 | 20 |

Special abilities

✧ Dark mending: At the end of every combat round, Dark Arthurian is able to restore 2 *health* from each necromancer that is still alive. This ability cannot take him above his starting *health* of 80.

✧ ‘Heal me!’: Lansbury can heal you for 15 *health* anytime during this combat. This ability can only be used once per combat.

✧ Team effort: Nym sweeping strikes add 2 to your damage score.

Caeleb uses his shield to defend you from harm. Your *armour* is raised by 2 for this battle.

If you manage to overcome this sinister imposter, turn to 66. If you are defeated, then turn to 10.

61

Your eyes flutter open, the rain-drenched hills of the bone fields swaying before your blurred vision. Ahead of you, an indistinct shape moves quickly across the uneven terrain. As colours and detail swim into focus, you discern flowing robes and a bright staff of light.

You try and speak but the words clog at the back of your throat, producing little more than a guttural croak. The ground sways once again.

'They're awake,' mutters a voice close to your ear.

You are dropped to the earth, landing in the sodden ash. As you struggle for breath, you look up to see Caeleb standing over you, sweat and dirt staining his face. 'You aren't so light to carry, now get up.'

Nyms paces into view, looking around warily. 'We need to keep moving. Can you walk?' He glances your way, a grimace etched deep into his pale, narrow face.

'Get up!' snaps Caeleb, kicking ash in your direction. 'You have already slowed us down!'

In the distance you hear the shriek of some infernal creature.

'What happened?' you rasp, aware of a throbbing pain coming from your arm.

'Good question,' says Nyms, nervously tapping the pommels of his swords. 'You vanished into thin air, right in front of us, and then... then you were back again. There was all this shimmering magic...' He shrugs his shoulders. 'It didn't look good.'

'Demon magic!' Caeleb scowls, turning away.

'But the tomb... our mission.' You push yourself back onto your feet, swaying slightly as you try and regain your balance.

'We ran into more of Zul's mages,' states Lansbury, looking back to survey the dark skies. 'We were lucky to escape – but now they have scouts looking for us. We must hurry.'

Another deafening shriek dashes the uneasy silence. You take a tentative step forward, relieved to find that your strength is slowly starting to return. 'I'll be fine. Lead the way.'

Lansbury nods, before starting down into a narrow ravine. You follow, slipping on the loose stones and bones that litter the ground. As you catch sight of a skull, grinning back at you from a mound of ash, you find yourself pondering your strange gift for immortality. (Return to the Act 3 map to continue your adventure.)

62

With the golem defeated, your attention turns to Fetch, who is struggling to unlock a wooden door at the end of the room. He is cursing and muttering to himself, casting desperate glances over his shoulder. With a grim smile, you advance on the assassin.

'Going somewhere, Fetch?'

There is the click of a lock. But it is too late...

You rush forward, slamming into the black-robed man and pinning him against the door.

'Don't try any of that magic business,' you growl in his ear. 'I'm done with the little excursions.'

'I couldn't if I wanted to,' spits the assassin. 'My magic is spent...'
'Good.'

You spin him around to face you, peering intently into the shadows of his black hood. 'Now, I want some answers, Fetch'.

If you have the words *black book* written on your hero sheet, turn to 74. Otherwise turn to 53.



63

While Caeleb battles with the tutor, it is up to you to defeat the young mage and his ghoulish companion:

| | Speed | Magic | Armour | Health |
|------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Apprentice | 12 | 9 | 8 | 85 |

Special abilities

✧ Giblets: The zombie causes 3 health damage at the end of every combat round. This ability ignores *armour*. Once the acolyte is defeated, the zombie will no longer attack.

✧ Dark master: If you are a necromancer you can attempt to wrest control of the zombie. Roll a dice at the start of each combat round. On a roll of a [6] you have won control. For the remainder of the combat, Giblets will inflict his damage on the apprentice instead.

If you defeat the apprentice, turn to 9. If you are defeated, turn to 10.

64

With a grimace, Fetch pulls back his hood – to reveal a face that is burnt and scarred. Veins stand out like cords across his pulpy, ruined flesh, branching past dark bruises and jagged scar tissue. You instinctively draw back, unable to speak.

‘Not a pretty sight is it,’ he hisses. ‘Avian found me in the dungeons of the inquisition. I was there for... questioning.’ He tugs his hood back over his head, hiding it once again in shadow.

‘What happened?’ you ask hoarsely, still shaken by what you have seen.

‘I have a unique gift,’ states Fetch with a hint of bitterness. ‘You have seen it. The ability to move between places,’ he clicks his fingers,

‘...instantly. And like all unique gifts, the inquisition want it – they want to study it, learn about it, punish it...’

‘And Avian rescued you?’

Fetch snivels with amusement. ‘I would hardly call him a knight in shining armour, but yes – he has connections. He is very powerful – and he always gets what he wants, eventually.’

Return to 71 to ask another question.

65

You find yourself back in the magic-lit passageway. Eager to return to your companions, you retrace your steps back through the tomb, to the room where you met Arthurian.

To your relief, the magic anomaly is still lurking in a corner of the rough-hewn chamber, its shimmering body reflected in the muddy water. The storm still vents its fury in the lightning-flecked skies above. Pulling your hood down low over your face, you step through the curtain of drumming rainwater and approach the anomaly.

You are uncertain what will happen. Somehow this anomaly was able to bring you back in time; will it return you to the present day, or will it take you to another time and place? You grit your teeth as you take a step closer...

Sure enough, as soon as you move within range of the magical creature, its silken threads snap around you, pulling you at speed towards a brightening white light. Turn to 41.



The dark warrior is a powerful opponent, bolstered by the healing of his necromantic minions. The deadly black axes slice through the dusty air, leaving streaks of crackling magic in their wake. But you are a Nevarin, fast and agile, your own powers heightened by the shadow mark that burns bright against your skin. While your allies are forced back by the warrior's unstoppable fury, you see an opening and spring forward, catching the flat of one of his sweeping blades and leaping again, to somersault behind him. Before the warrior has a chance to turn and defend himself, you strike with the full power of your strength and magic.

The warrior falls to his knees, his axes sparking and then winking out of existence. With a final pained gasp, the dark warrior vanishes... the armour clattering to the floor, empty.

Caeleb walks over and prods the runed armour with his foot, pushing the breastplate over to reveal an engraved insignia – a chalice, surrounded by a circle of seven stars.

'Arthurian's coat of arms...' He shakes his head grimly. 'We were too late.'

Lansbury wrinkles her nose as she examines the armour. 'I don't think what we fought today was Arthurian. It was something else... something that was using his body.'

Caeleb's expression hardens, his eyes coming to rest on the shattered remains of Arthurian's tomb. 'Zul will pay for this sacrilege.'

Lowering your weapons, you step over the rubble to search the bodies of Zul's followers. You find 50 gold crowns and may help yourself to one of the following rewards:

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Twilight claw (left hand: fist weapon) | Black widow (head) | Stolen hope (necklace) |
| +2 speed +3 brawn Ability: rake | +2 speed +2 brawn Ability: webbed | +1 brawn +1 magic Ability: deceive |

With little else of interest in the chamber, you leave Arthurian's tomb and head back into the bone fields. (Return to the Act 3 quest map.)

67

You absorb the tomb robber's essence, delighting in the wave of ecstasy that washes over you. (You may raise your *brawn* or *magic* score by 2 in your next combat.) Kneeling beside the robber's empty clothes, you search through his meagre belongings. You find 50 gold crowns and the following items, which you may take:

| | |
|---|---|
| Shallow grave (left hand: dagger) +2 speed +3 brawn Ability: savagery | Oil flask (2 uses) (backpack) Set alight and throw at your opponent causing 2 dice of damage ignoring <i>armour</i> . Use instead of rolling for a damage score |
|---|---|

As you straighten, your eyes catch on the magic anomaly lurking across the other side of the room. Somehow, the creature must have brought you back in time. Looking over to the room's exit, you see the mould-covered anomaly covering the other side of the doorway, exactly as it had before. The robber had obviously been trapped here, unable to escape – his skeleton was the one that you found in the room.

Up above, the storm vents its fury, the rainwater bouncing and spraying from the walls of the rough-hewn shaft. Pulling your hood down low over your face, you step through the curtain of water and approach the time-shifting anomaly.

As before, the magical creature suddenly springs to life, its silken threads snapping around you. You cry out in pain, as the air is crushed from your lungs, the powerful tendrils gripping you tightly as they drag you forwards, towards a brightening white light. Turn to 78.

68

Fetch brushes the dust from his robes. 'I am the only one of my kind, as far as I know. My gift is unique – I was born with it.'

'You can travel wherever you want?' you ask in wonder.

'Not exactly,' he says, looking up and meeting your gaze. 'I must have a connection with the place.'

'But if you travel through the shroud, then aren't you...'

Fetch nods, offering you a knowing smile. 'Yes, I am more demon now than man. Each time I travel I lose a little more of my humanity. But it is a small price to pay. I think you will agree?' His eyes flick to your shadow mark, a cruel sneer visible beneath the shadows of his hood.

Turn to 71 to ask another question.

69

The air quickly becomes hot and stifling; the tingling from your arm intensifying as you descend into the musty tomb. At the foot of the stairs, you find yourself in a large stone chamber. Most of the ceiling is a crumbling ruin, the dark rock split by thick snaking roots and vines. Dust motes drift lazily through the twilight space, forming a hazy white veil as they swirl before Lansbury's pale light.

Nyms starts into the room, but Lansbury puts out her staff to stop him. 'Wait...' Her attention is focused on the far side of the chamber, where something is moving.

You squint, trying to discern what it is. It appears to be a growth of some description, a mould or lichen, covering an entire side of the room. Parts of its rotted form are rising and falling, as if beating with some form of sentient life.

'Now, let's assume that isn't friendly,' says Nyms, grimacing with revulsion.

'It's a magic anomaly,' whispers Lansbury, glancing at her staff as its light begins to flicker. 'We should stay well away from it. Learn from those who were less fortunate...' She nods to the paved floor of the chamber, where you notice several fleshy mounds smeared across the stone, punctuated by splintered shards of bone.

'We don't have to go near it,' says Caeleb firmly, pointing his sword in the direction of an archway in the west wall. 'I suggest we move on from here.'

Will you:

Investigate the magic anomaly 76

Leave the room through the archway 11



70

You join Nyms at the foot of the stairs, leading up to the building. The swordsman has skilfully despatched the necromancers – but is now confronted by a new obstacle. The pillars either side of the entranceway are glowing with a purple light, casting a flickering barrier across the doorway.

'Perhaps the front door wasn't the best choice after all,' says Nyms, warily approaching the magic wall. 'The necros did it. Any ideas?'

Lansbury shoulders past you, her staff raised. 'They have tried to reweave the magic that once protected this place. It is weak...'. The tip of her staff glows briefly as she utters a simple arcane command. A second later and the barrier has disappeared, the light of the runes dimming and then winking out entirely. 'Amateurs,' sniffs the medic.

'Nice work, Lans.' Nyms nudges you and gestures towards the open doorway. 'After you...'

With a grin, you ready your weapons and enter the building: the tomb of the great hero, Arthurian. Turn to 52.

71

Fetch leans back, folding his arms across his chest. 'Are you going to ask me any more foolish questions?'

Will you:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Ask how Fetch came to meet Avian Dale? | 64 |
| Ask about his magical ability? | 68 |
| Ask him what he was doing in the tomb? | 44 |
| Ask him to return you to the others? | 23 |
| Ask what is in all the crates and boxes? | 6 |

72

Your weapons clash together, scraping and sparking. It isn't long before both of you are sapped of strength; exhausted, the fight becomes more of an uncoordinated brawl. Amidst the flailing punches and desperate strikes, you knock the shadowstalker's mask away, revealing a porcelain white face framed by curls of dark hair. The woman's eyes are a brilliant blue – both beautiful and cold.

At last, pinning your enemy to one of the sword-clipped pillars, you drive home a fatal blow. In those final moments you look deep into the woman's crystal blue eyes, looking for some regret, some hint of humanity. But there is only a bitter hatred, festering like a poisoned wound...

Then the face and body begin to change.

You jerk away in shock, watching with a mix of revulsion and fascination as the shadowstalker's physique broadens out, the skin reforming itself over shifting bones. Within seconds, you are looking upon your own face – staring back you with those same hard blue eyes.

The shadowstalker spits blood in your face.

'You are one of us,' your own voice growls with gusto. Then the eyes lose their fierce glimmer, the face becomes slack and the stalker's body slumps to the floor at your feet.

With shaking hands, you feel at your cheeks, tracing the familiar contours of your face. When you remove your hand, there is blood coating your fingers.

The air crackles with magic, as the stalker's body becomes a swirling mass of shadow. Feeling tired and numb, you can barely raise your arm – watching with a hollow detachment as the magic pours into your mark, healing your wounds and relieving you of the dull ache in your muscles.

All that remains of the stalker is their few paltry belongings. You find 30 gold crowns and can help yourself to one of the following rewards:

| Scorn | Tainted wraps | Twisted treads |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| (main hand: sword) | (gloves) | (feet) |
| +2 speed +3 brawn | +1 speed +3 magic | +2 speed +2 brawn |
| Ability: immobilise | Ability: curse | Ability: trickster |

When you have made your decision, turn to 79.

73

Arthurian nods, his gaze falling on the magic anomaly that blocks the exit. 'A wizard gave me the plans for this tomb. He was one of those responsible for building it.' He steps warily towards the mould-encrusted growth. 'The rope I used was severed. I've been trapped in this room for days, weeks...'

He stops a short distance from the creature. 'I cannot defeat this thing. It keeps me prisoner. I have died many times...' His body shudders,

as if reliving painful memories. 'I cannot die. Not by my own hand, not by this creature... not by starvation...'

You pull back your sleeve, aware that your shadow mark is pulsing with a purple glow, filling you with its familiar craving. Confidently, you stride up to the anomaly.

With a snarl, you lunge forward, driving your arm into its saggy flesh. The anomaly gives a shriek of pain, its body blistering as it begins to unravel, forming thin shreds of green magic. You throw back your head, breathing in the power of the magic as it pours into your mark.

You stumble back, gasping – aware that your whole body is now glowing with a soft purple radiance.

'What *are* you?' scowls Arthurian, shrinking away. 'You are not the work of the One God.'

A flicker of amusement turns the corners of your mouth. 'My companions and I are here to save *you*. Trust me, the world is not safe from the Legion of Shadow. They are not defeated!'

You step through the entranceway, the glow from your body illuminating the chamber beyond. There is the scuff of boots as Arthurian moves to join you. 'What are we here for?' you demand, warily scanning the chamber. In the wall opposite, a set of stairs lead back to the surface. To your right is an archway – the one that Caeleb had originally suggested you take.

'There is a talisman here,' states Arthurian, his fingers tracing the silver crucifix that rests against his chest. 'If I destroy it then the curse will be lifted.'

'And you will die,' you add, looking intently into his eyes. 'Why would you trade your life for that?'

Arthurian glowers with anger. 'I am a warrior, the first knight of the realm. I have led thousands in battle. I found the golden chalice, I fought in the crusades against the heathen lords of Mordland. I am the king's son, heir to the throne of Valeron! I have proven myself – I was not born to this!' He beats a fist against his chest. 'This is a lie!'

You take a step back, startled by the vehemence of his words. Despite the man's ragged appearance, you see a fierce strength in his steel-grey eyes... Arthurian's spirit, trapped in the body of a Nevarin.

'I know something of what it is like,' you state grimly, 'to find yourself in a body that does not feel your own.'

Arthurian turns away, heading for the side passage. 'You know nothing of what it is like, shadow spawn.'

For a moment, you remain behind, lost in your own troubled thoughts. It is only when you see a flash of light down the passageway, and hear a raised cry of alarm, that you draw your weapons and hurry after your companion. Turn to 27.

74

Your shadow mark flares bright as your grip on the assassin tightens. 'Tell me about the book. The Grimoire of Naraghost. Why was it so important?'

Fetch gives a wheezing cough. 'It does not concern you. Now release...'

'TELL ME!' you growl, shaking him angrily. 'I deserve to know. I risked my life to find it.'

'Very well,' hisses the assassin. 'It belonged to a navigator – one of the elves. My master had been searching for it for a very long time. Little did he know it had been right under his nose all along.'

'And your master? Who do you serve Fetch?'

The man's pale lips curve into a smile. 'Avian Dale. I think you know him.'

You shake your head, scowling with contempt. 'Lies, that can't be true. Avian is a good man.'

'Know him so well do you? Let me tell you something about Avian. He has a special talent – a talent for finding people like us. Those who are broken and need fixing; those he can breathe new life into... give them fresh purpose.'

You release the assassin and back away, no longer certain if what he says is the truth or just more poison. 'And the book,' you ask, your voice little more than a whisper. 'Why did he need it? I thought it was evil.'

Fetch's glittering eyes fix on your own. 'It is evil, Nevarin. And that is why I lost it. To a demon.'

Your confused expression urges Fetch to say more.

'The book is a set of charts, to navigate through the shroud. It is how the elves used to travel between worlds, before they built the gates.'

'The shroud.' The word is familiar. You sift through your memories, trying to remember... 'Lansbury. It has something to do with old magic.'

Fetch snorts. 'It is the birthplace of magic. It *is* magic. Anything that touches or passes through that place is changed... and not always for the better.'

'And that's what happened to the book?' you ask intently. 'It was corrupted by this magic?'

Fetch gives a rasping laugh. 'You are learning fast, Nevarin. Yes, and before I could get the book to safety, something else – a demon changeling – took it from me.'

'And there was me thinking you had a gift for speedy getaways,' you add with a smirk. 'So, what happened?'

Fetch sneers, as if the explanation is beneath him. 'When I travel, I pass through the shroud, if only for an instant. The demon was waiting for me... and on this occasion, I was not able to battle such a foe.'

You glance down at your shadow mark, burning hot beneath your skin. 'Is this... part of that same magic?' you ask grimly, studying the glowing runes. 'Am I a demon, like that... changeling?'

Fetch leans in close, his bright eyes narrowing. 'Yes, Nevarin. We are both demons.' Turn to 71.

You enter a vast pillared hall, bathed in a pale white light. Squinting up, you see that the light is coming from a cluster of crystals suspended from the ceiling. Below them, the paved floor is smashed and broken, as if something heavy has repeatedly pounded against the stonework. Amongst the jagged rubble, a few tiles remain unbroken, their surface covered in a spidery script. Had the stones been left undamaged, these decorative runes would have formed a perfect circle.

'Holy inscriptions,' says Lansbury. 'Much of their magic is broken, but you still feel it don't you?' Her eyes remain forward, but it is obvious who she is speaking to.

'Yes,' you grimace. The pain from your shadow mark has intensified, forcing you to stagger. Caeleb puts out an arm to stop you.

'What is it?' he asks worriedly.

You shake your head, confused.

'I mean that...' Caeleb nods towards the curtain of light, where a dark shape is moving at the far side of the shattered flagstones. A guttural growl echoes in the hall.

'Why is nothing ever easy,' sighs Nym, casting a wary glance towards the pillars either side of the room. 'Watch for an ambush, Nevarin.'

'I don't think we need worry about subtlety,' says Lansbury grimly.

The dark shape shuffles forward into the light. The radiance picks out its huge hunched shoulders and thick arms. Even from a distance you can see that the creature is a giant, at least seven metres tall. Its pale, almost translucent skin, is covered in purple runes – sharing a stark similarity to those that now burn bright along your arm.

'Well, that's a new one,' mutters Nym, spinning his blades. 'Something from your world, Nevarin?'

You take an uncertain step back as the creature lurches forward on bowed legs, its wide gash of a mouth drooling spit onto the shattered floor.

Suddenly, with a speed that belies its ungainly form, the creature snatches up a broken tile and sends it hurtling towards the group. Caeleb raises his shield just in time – the stone breaking against its surface sending fragments showering in all directions.

Then the ground trembles as the giant beast charges forward. Quickly, your party breaks for cover, moving aside as the beast thunders past. Skidding to a halt, the giant spins round with startling quickness, its enormous fists swinging through the air.

Caeleb rushes to meet it, blocking its powerful blows against his shield. Nyms and Lansbury circle the creature's flanks, preparing to deliver their own offensive. As you move to aide them, something leaps out from the darkness and slams into your side. Startled, you are flung against one of the pillars, as an agile shadowstalker, clad in night-black leathers, swings twin swords in your direction. You duck beneath the attack, the swords slashing through the stone as if it was paper.

Rolling to the side, you spring to your feet, as the shadowstalker advances.

'You are the one who has turned away from shadow,' hisses a woman's voice from behind the black, polished mask. 'You are not worthy to bare the shadow mark.'

'Then try and take it from me,' you growl. Turn to 50.

76

As you approach the anomaly, your shadow mark starts to burn. You tug back your clothing to expose the branded serpents. Their purple runes are pulsing with their own dark life, mirroring the rhythmic beating coming from the strange growth.

'Do not go near it!' cries Lansbury. 'It will kill you!'

You glance over your shoulder. 'It doesn't look that dangerous...'

Suddenly, you hear a sickening series of squelches. The growth has started to move, its long tendrils of rotted fungus ripping themselves free from the crumbling stone.

'Oh, that's not good,' cries Nyms. 'That's really not good.'

From the creature's mould-encrusted centre, a noxious steam escapes into the air, reeking of death and decay.

You raise your arm, covering your face from the eye-watering stench. As you do so, an agonising wail fills the room. In horror, you realise it is coming from the anomaly. It is trying to draw away from you, its bloated fungal body seeking to drag itself across the stonewall.

You glance over at your arm and the shadow mark that is burning with an intense heat, sending dark smoke curling up into the earthen chamber. Your eyes flick back to the anomaly. A sudden hunger, a longing for its power, overwhelms your senses. You take a step forward, arm outstretched, to try and absorb the magic.

The air ripples as some invisible force grips the anomaly and attempts to drag it towards your mark. In a desperate effort to defend itself, the anomaly sends thrashing tentacles whipping out through the air, seeking to knock you away:

| | Speed | Magic | Armour | Health |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Sentient anomaly | 12 | 16 | - | - |

Special abilities

✧ Absorption: You cannot harm this magical foe. If you win a combat round, roll one dice. If you roll a [3] or greater then the anomaly's *magic* is reduced by 4. Once the anomaly's magic is reduced to zero then it has been successfully absorbed into the shadow mark.

✧ Concentration: You cannot use potions or special abilities in this combat.

If you defeat the magic anomaly, turn to 29. If you are defeated, turn to 10.

You enter a vast high-domed chamber. At the centre of the room is a stepped dais, leading up to a stone tomb. The lid has been smashed open, its shattered stonework lying in jagged pieces around the base of the dais.

'Oh, this doesn't look good,' mutters Nyms, his swords spinning nervously in his hands.

Hovering above the open tomb is a man in rune-plate armour. He hangs suspended in the air, teeth gritted with determination as he struggles against a magical assault.

'Arthurian!' you gasp.

Stood around the dead warrior are four black-robed necromancers. They are chanting arcane words as black streams of magic arc from their fingers, slamming against Arthurian and surrounding him in a whirling frenzy of dark light.

Suddenly, you feel a sharp tingling from your shadow mark. Something is wrong... Quickly you throw yourself aside, as spears of ice rip through the air, shattering against the wall behind you.

'Interlopers!'

You turn to see a female mage striding towards you, her blue gown coated with rime frost.

'Well, well... a Nevarin and a cavalier. How quaint.'

'Witch!' Caeleb springs forward, sword raised to strike. The mage makes no move to dodge his attack. Instead she narrows her wintry-blue eyes, watching as the air shimmers and crackles before her. There is a bright flash followed by a rush of cold air. When you are able to focus again, you see that Caeleb is now encased in ice – frozen in mid-step.

'No!' Lansbury summons white flames to her hand and hurls them at the icelock. The blast of magic breaks against an unseen shield, fizzing and sparking as it disperses in the chill air.

'Is that all you've got?' she hoots with delight.

You look to Nyms, who nods – then the two of you rush forwards, throwing your weapons and magic against the icelock's shield:

| | Speed | Magic | Armour | Health |
|----------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Sammain | 13 | 10 | 20 | 90 |

Special abilities

✧ Wrath of winter: Your hero automatically loses 2 *health* at the end of the first combat round. As the combat continues, this cold damage increases by 1 each round. (Your hero takes 3 damage at the end of the second round, 4 damage at the end of the third and so on.) This ability ignores *armour*.

✧ Shatter shield: If you win a combat round, instead of rolling for damage you can choose to lower Sammain's *armour* by 4. You can do this as many times as you wish, lowering her *armour* by 4 each time.

If you defeat Sammain, turn to 25. (Special achievement: If you defeat Sammain without lowering her *armour*, then turn to 19.) If you are defeated, turn to 10.

You are thrown against a stone wall, hitting it with force. There is the taste of blood and something wet against your face, as you crumple to the ground, moaning with pain.

'Look!'

You hear a cry from your left and the sound of booted feet.

Dizzily, you open your eyes, feeling nauseous as the stone chamber spins around you in a blur of colour.

'They're bleeding. It looks bad.'

The voice belongs to Nyms. You feel strong arms about your shoulders, helping to support you as you mumble groggily. 'Where am I?'

You feel a cold palm against your forehead. Struggling to focus, you can make out a white shape. Then there is a flash of white light. You

flinch away from it, fearful that you are being transported once again. But instead, you feel a comforting warmth flow through your body, taking away the pain and restoring your vision.

Lansbury straightens, looking down at you with a petulant expression. 'What happened?' she asks briskly. 'One minute you were there and then...' The medic snaps her fingers.

With Nym's help you struggle back to your feet. Caeleb is watching you from the other side of his room, his helm removed and held under his arm. His eyes are narrowed, his expression one of distrust.

'We deserve an explanation,' he adds sternly. 'We were about to leave you here.'

You glance over, to see that the anomaly has drifted away to the other side of the room, its sparkling sheen barely visible in the pale light from Lansbury's staff.

'I think I moved back in time... to the past... Wait!' Your attention immediately shifts to the skeleton of the tomb robber, still lying sprawled amongst the dust and cobwebs.

'I don't understand,' you frown, walking over and kneeling beside the skeleton. 'Why hasn't this changed?' You look up at Lansbury, begging for an explanation. 'I absorbed the magic. He was a Nevarin.'

The medic shrugs her shoulders. 'Time is a complex weave – it is not a single thread but many. If your story is true, your meddling may have changed one aspect, altered a single thread, maybe others, but the weave will still follow its course.'

Nym blows out his cheeks. 'I think I preferred it when I was just hitting things. Can we do that again, please?' Spinning his blades, he follows Caeleb out of the chamber.

You get back to your feet, still frowning. 'I wonder why he was here – what he was looking for.'

'We rarely get the answers we seek,' sighs the medic, prodding the skeleton with the end of her staff. 'Even less so from the dead.'

Nodding, you give the skeleton a final cursory glance before leaving the room. Turn to 20.

79

You step out from behind the pillars, your body glowing with your newly-absorbed shadow magic. The hulking creature is pounding its massive fists against a shield of light that Lansbury has projected around herself and Caeleb. The warrior is lying on his back, injured. His shield rests several metres away, now a battered and twisted piece of metal.

Nym is slashing at the monster's back with his swords, but as soon as each wound is delivered, they are healing. The swordsman already looks exhausted and desperate.

'What happened?' he calls over his shoulder.

You stride past him, towards the brute. 'Just grabbing a little pick-me-up.' With a savage cry, you charge into the fray, your shadow mark burning with demonic energy:

| | Speed | Brawn | Armour | Health |
|----------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Branded brute | 13 | 14 | 8 | 110 |

Special abilities

✧ Power of shadow: Your *brawn* and *magic* is raised by 5 for the duration of this combat.

✧ Dark runes: The creature's branded flesh helps it to heal. At the end of each combat round, the brute heals 3 *health*. This cannot take him above his starting *health* of 110.

If you defeat this mighty foe, turn to 38. Otherwise turn to 10.

80

'I am Arthurian, the king's son,' he says brokenly, gazing down at the glowing shadow mark. 'I was tricked by a Nevarin. He had some... some kind of talisman.' He looks up, his eyes cold with anger. 'It was witch

magic. It took my soul... I became... *this*.' He scowls, raising his branded arm. 'I became a shadow spawn!'

You frown, considering the man's words. 'You mean, you swapped bodies somehow?'

'These are matters for priests, not warriors. I am no scholar.' The man retrieves his jewelled dagger from the mud. 'I know what I saw. He became me... Arthurian.' He gives a bitter laugh. 'And he led my men to their deaths.'

You blink, startled. 'You mean, when your men rode against the legion... that wasn't you?'

'Why would I risk my men's lives?' he flares angrily. 'They were butchered! I tried to stop them but they only saw this...' He hits the pommel of his dagger against the shadow mark. 'I was chased out of the camp like a common beggar. They thought me the enemy. I could convince no one...'

You look around at the dark chamber, echoing with the storm. 'What date is this?' you ask nervously. You approach the entranceway to the chamber, surprised to see that the mould-covered anomaly is still alive, its rotted body covering the exit.

'It has been seven months since the shadow war,' says Arthurian quietly. 'People have their freedom. They are rebuilding. But I... I have nothing.'

You turn back, eyeing the chamber once again. As you suspected, in the corner of the room, you see the web-like anomaly that brought you here. Its silken strands ripple gently back and forth, glistening with droplets of light. 'I have travelled back in time,' you gasp, glancing up at the dark storm raging high above. 'Magic makes all things possible...'

Your attention shifts back to Arthurian. 'And you were dead... in my time. We thought you were a tomb robber. This is *your* tomb.'

The warrior pulls his coat back on, tugging the collars up around his chin. 'I am here to put right this wrong; to take what is mine.' He stoops down to retrieve his lantern. 'I have to believe that the One God

sent you here.' He looks up, a sudden weariness apparent on his face. 'I will not have my faith tested again. Are you with me?'

Fascinated by the man's story, you agree to help him with his task. Turn to 73.

