
Academy of Magic The First Term

a 4M Gamebook by Marty Runyon

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Introduction

Welcome to the Academy of Magic. In this book, you take the role of a new student at the academy. It is the end of your first term and you are about to present your final project. Of course, things are not ever that easy.

Over the course of the book, you will make a number of decisions about how you want to proceed. At some points, you will be asked to test your abilities. Your success in these decisions and tests will determine your course through the story.

Creating Your Character

Although you will make all of the decisions for your character, not every action you take will be successful. Your character is defined by a number of ability scores: Might, Move, Mind, and Mien. Each of your abilities starts with a base score of 4. Note this on the character sheet following these instructions. Now answer the following questions about your character and note the letter for your answer.

Question One: Your mother often tells a story about when you were young. She had some errands to run and brought you along to the village to help with the shopping. But at some point you ran off, giving her quite a fright. When she eventually tracked you down, where did she find you?

- A. You were climbing a tree.
- B. You were trying to read a book.
- C. You were playing with other children.

Question Two: One of the traditions of your village is that each person must perform in the local festival the year they come of age. What did you decide to perform?

- D. You put on a wrestling exhibition.
- E. You perform a dance.
- F. You arranged and acted in a play.

Question Three: Although coming to the academy was one of your lifelong goals, you soon discover that it was not exactly as you dreamed. The students are quite cliquish and not above picking on you for your poor upbringing. In fact, on the day of your induction, someone spitefully locks you out of your room. How did you get back into your room so that you could get to the ceremony on time?

- G. You kicked the door off of its hinges.
- H. You found a bit of wire and picked the lock.
- I. You discovered a hidden latch that opened your door anyway.
- J. You convince one of the guards to break in for you.

When you have answered all three questions, turn to the last page of the book and look up your answers on the table found there. Each letter will list the bonuses to your ability scores. Add each of the chosen bonuses to the base score of 4 to determine your totals. When you are done, no score should be lower than 4 or greater than 7.

For each ability, you also have a number of ability points equal to that ability score. For instance, if you have a Mind of 6, you will have 6 Mind ability points. You will spend these points over the course of the adventure as you test your abilities.

In addition to your abilities, you will also have a number of skill points. Choose two skills from the following list. Each is a field of magic that you have been studying. One skill will be your Major and will be worth 3 skill points. One skill will be your Minor and is worth 2 points. The other three skills have 1 point each.

Your skill choices are:

Animation – the ability to give life to inanimate objects

Destruction – the ability to wield magical forces for destructive purposes

Conjuration – the ability to summon spirits and otherworldly creatures

Phantasm – the ability to create visual, auditory, and other sensory illusions

Enchantment – the ability to bind magic into someone or something to modify its nature

Testing An Ability

To make an ability test, you will roll two six-sided dice. Add the two numbers together with your ability score. If the result is greater than or equal to 12, you pass the test. However, if you roll less than 12, you have a decision to make. If you have sufficient ability points, you can spend points to increase your roll. If you have enough points to increase your roll to 12, you will pass the test. If you do not have enough points or if you decide not to spend them, you will fail.

Example: Your Might Score is 5. When making a Might test, your result totals 10. Normally this would be a failure. However since you still have 7 Might points, you can spend 2 points to increase your result to 12 to pass the test.

Testing A Skill

Testing a skill is just like testing an ability. You will roll two dice and add the ability score that skill is based on. In this book, all of the skills are based on your Mind ability. The major difference with testing a skill is that you can also spend your skill points in addition to your ability points to pass a test.

Example: When testing your Destruction skill, you get a result of 9. Because you have two Destruction points, you can spend those two points and one Mind point to pass the test.

The Tolling Of The Bells

Time in the academy is marked by the tolling of the tower bells. When the story begins, there will be three bells until midday. There are three bells marked on your adventure sheet to keep track of the time. At certain times during the story, you will be told to cross off one bell. When it does, just strike off one of the bell symbols. When all three bells have been crossed off, it is midday. The story will tell you what to do when this happens.

Starting Your Adventure

When your character is completed, and you have read all the rules, turn to section 1 and begin reading. When you see an item listed in bold print, you can write it in your inventory. You can only have one of any specific item, even if you find more than one while you are adventuring.

When you come to the end of a section, there will be instructions written in italics. Some will ask you to make a decision. Depending on which option you choose, turn to the section listed for that choice and continue reading from there. In addition, when you are asked to make an Ability or a Skill test, roll for the test as instructed above, then turn to the section listed for that result.

Now you are ready. *Turn to section 1 and begin your adventure.*

Character Sheet

<i>Abilities</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Points</i>
Might	_____	_____
Move	_____	_____
Mind	_____	_____
Mien	_____	_____

<i>Skills</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>Minor</i>	<i>Points</i>
Animation	—	—	_____
Destruction	—	—	_____
Conjuration	—	—	_____
Phantasm	—	—	_____
Enchantment	—	—	_____

Inventory

Bells ○ ○ ○

Cracks _____

Starting Score _____

Test Score _____

Final Score _____

1

You wake up early on the day of your Animation final. With as tired as you are, you could sleep in until after noon. But you know that you can't leave anything to chance. So you get out of bed, dress, and make your way down to the laboratory to check on your final project, a clay homunculus.

When you enter the first year laboratory, the only other student present is your friend, Alisaed. The normally easy going boy is hunched over his desk finishing up his Animation project. His panic is apparent in every muscle of his body. You understand exactly how he feels. You were up until almost midnight completing your own project. With the evaluation scheduled for the first bell after midday, there is not much time left.

"Good morning," you say, afraid to disturb him.

"Oh, good morning," he responds. "I've almost got this finished. I might even get a nap in before the exam. How about you?"

"I'm just making sure everything still works. I'm a little nervous."

"Don't be," Alisaed tells you. "Knowing you, you'll pass with top marks."

You let him get back to his work and move toward your own lab table. You only get halfway across the room before you see what has happened.

There on the table, where your homunculus should be standing, sits a pile of rubble.

Every bit of your project has been smashed beyond all recognition. The clay is so badly crushed that you cannot make out any of the features you carved. And there is no sign of the mystical components that would give the homunculus life: the goblin's skull, the feather from a phoenix, or the blossom of a blood rose. Whoever did this wanted you to fail completely. You might reform the body. That part is simple. But without the proper components, the spells of Animation will never hold.

You must have said something or gasped because Alisaed is suddenly at your side. "By the Source."

"Did you see anyone else here?" you ask.

"Not a soul. I came a little after midnight because I couldn't sleep. I came down to finish up, but I was the only one."

"And I was here until just before midnight." Your mind races. "It had to be around then. But who?"

Alisaed shakes his head. "I don't know. But you don't have much time to worry on it. You have a homunculus to rebuild."

"There's no way. I don't have time to track down all the reagents I need."

Your friend reaches out and puts his hand on your shoulder. "Of course you can. This is an Academy of Magic, after all. There are reagents everywhere you look."

And then the bells start tolling. Only three bells until midday. You'll need the time from midday until the exam to complete your project. So you have three bells to track down the components, maybe figure out who is the culprit, and keep from failing the class.

If you chose Animation as your major or minor skill, turn to 17. If not, turn to 10.

2

"Oh, sorry!" You apologize as you back away. "Dianorah forgot one of her books and I told her I would fetch it for her. She didn't mention that her door was locked. You don't think you could help me out and let me in real quick, do you?"

"If she needs her book, she can get it herself. Now move along." Crombe stands guard over the door as you walk down the corridor to the stairwell. You count to three hundred before stepping back into the hall. The prefect is nowhere to be seen.

Pondering the situation a moment, your mind falls on the window ledges outside your rooms. The windows don't lock, so you just have to climb from one to the next by the ledge. Lucky for you, the room next to Dianorah's is unlocked.

You quickly step into the room and move to the window. The ledge is not very big, but it should be big enough. The question is whether you trust your climbing skill enough. You could cast an

enchantment on the ledge to hold you fast and prevent you from falling. But is your magic good enough?

Make either a Move test of an Enchantment test. If you pass, turn to 55. If you fail, turn to 63.

3

You hold your breath, hoping to ignore the stench as you search the accumulated garbage. Some truly disgusting things have found their way down here. And very little of it is worth anything. The only thing that catches your attention is a detention report from the night before. Only a few names are familiar to you. Evidently Clarina earned two hours for talking back to the instructors. And Kethem was remanded to the detention hall overnight for vandalism.

Although the report is interesting, that is all you find. Giving up the search, you climb out of the pit and return to the surface. As your eyes acclimate to the sunlight, your ears catch the distance tone of the tower bells. *Turn to 70.*

4

The lock is no problem for you and the door opens easily. Inside, you see that the cabin is lightly furnished. A bed, a bureau with mismatched drawer, a roughly built table with a pair of uneven chairs. The only thing that looks fresh in the cabin is the bowl of flowers sitting in the middle of the table. Somehow, there is a **blood rose** floating along with the other flowers. A sound outside reminds you that you are in someone else's home and need to move on. You take the blossom and hurry down the path.

Before long, the path forks again. This time, though, you can see the prints of some animal trailing down the left-hand path. Which way with you go now?

If you take the path to the left, turn to 31. If you travel right instead, turn to 65.

5

You look down at the homunculus. It is staring back at you. It begins to move. A bit slowly, not like when it was under the curse, but you have control over it. You give it a command and the homunculus bows to the class and breaks into a dance. You spot Dianorah in the crowd rolling her eyes. The animation worked!

The professor nods as he walks around your project, examining it.

You starting score is 3. Note this on your character sheet and then turn to 96.

6

One would not think there would be so many audible plants in the world. But all around you the rhythms of nature are made real. You find humming ferns droning a sad tune. A pair of trees ring as the breeze blows through their branches as though they were festooned with wind chimes. A small patch of flowers seems out of place here until a bee approaches one of the blooms. As its feet brush the petals, the flowers erupt in percussive cacophony.

From here you can see the great fountain plaza at the center of the garden. Off to the east leads to the stinking plants. To the south are the hanging plants. And the gates leading out of the garden are nearby. Which way now?

If you step into the fountain plaza, turn to 85. If you check the stinking plants, turn to 44. If you look through the hanging plants, turn to 66. If you give up the search and leave the garden, turn to 70.

7

The librarian eyes you coldly. You almost think she is going to send you away again. But finally she stands up and walks back into the stacks. When she returns, she holds a large tome in her arms. “I believe this is the one you are looking for.”

“Thank you,” you say, taking the book from her.

You take the book to a desk in the corner and start reading. It is a very thick book, so there is a lot of reading to do. Deep within the pages, you read about a strange trick for building homunculi. You discover that you can replace any one of the standard components with a fully charged **sun crystal**. The homunculus will animate properly. But the crystal will drain over time, causing the construct to fail within one lunar cycle. Of course, you don't need it to last that long. And you know just where to obtain a sun crystal. *Add the sun crystal to your inventory and turn to 61.*

8

Your mind races as you consider the possibilities. Of course, someone has placed a curse on the thing. But how?

The homunculus does not give you time to think. It leaps off the table. You grab for it, slowing its fall. But then it breaks free and is running for the door leading out of the lab. A door which is now open for some reason. You rush toward the portal, trying to cut off its escape.

Make a Move test. If you pass, turn to 37. If you fail, turn to 52.

9

You open several boxes, but find nothing interesting. As you replace one of the lids, you hear something in the corridor outside. And it seems to be coming this direction. There is a drain that you can hide in. Or there was the hole you spotted earlier. Or maybe you can hide behind the crates and spy on whatever is coming your way.

If you hide behind the crates, turn to 53.

If you crawl through the hole, turn to 73.

If you climb down the drain, turn to 64.

10

There is still much to do. Too much maybe. Several things that you can think of off the top of your head. It was enough of a challenge to find the goblin's skull, phoenix feather, and blood rose the first time. How are you going to do so within three bells?

If you decide to research alternatives in the Library, turn to 20.

If you want to search the dorms for stashed components, turn to 30.

If you dare to delve into the dungeons under the school, turn to 45.

If you are brave enough to sneak into the Headmaster's garden, turn to 60.

If you venture into the forest surrounding the school, go to 75.

If you give up and start working on the homunculus now, go to 90.

11

After much effort, you work your way free from the rubble. You almost do not recognize the dungeon. Rocks have fallen everywhere. Luckily, the giant lizard is nowhere to be seen. Less lucky, the corridor is completely blocked. The shaft you saw earlier is still clear, and it seems like the only way out.

The walls of the shaft are rough and there are plentiful handholds to ease your climb. Eventually though, your feet touch nothing but air below you. You look down and see the floor several feet away. Carefully, you lower yourself as far as you can before letting go. You land not with a thud, but with a disgusting squish. The smell is nauseating, but you are alive. At least, for the time being.

As you look around the pit, you see piles of refuse discarded by the academy. Rotten food, crushed glass, scraps of paper. All of it collected here under the earth. Along one wall you see a tunnel leading away. Maybe you can find a way out through there. But there is so much random trash here. Maybe something valuable found its way down here with the garbage.

If you search the refuse, turn to 3. If you climb out the pit, turn to 77.

12

The next day, you wake up to an insistent knock at your door. You hurry over to the door only to find yourself face to face with a pair of prefects. "Your presence is required by the headmaster. Dress and then come with us."

You close the door and go back to your bed. You are finding it hard to breath. It takes a moment to calm yourself. You knew this was how it would play out. No matter what you did, no matter how hard you fought, this was always going to be your destination. If only you had known, you would not have tried so hard. You could have taken a nice nap instead. The thought gives you enough of a lift so that you are able to dress and face your fate.

The headmaster sits behind a huge desk. Beside him stands the animation master. They are both wearing grim expressions when you enter. It is all a blur after that. You can hear them talking but you are no longer listening. Only one word reaches your mind: expelled.

Afterward, under the watchful eyes of the prefects, you pack your meager belongings and leave the school. You look back one time as you walk and see Alisaed standing in one of the tower windows. He lifts a hand to you to say goodbye.

You turn away and start your journey. There will be plenty to do on the farm. Sure, there will be looks and muttering, but your family will be there for you. You put the Academy of Magic behind you and never think of it again.

The End.

13

Dianorah's desk is, as you expected, covered in books and loose pages. You look through it all, but there is little to help you. Instead, you discover that she has been keeping a diary. Although you should be looking for components, you find yourself flipping through the pages.

Many of the entries talk about her schoolwork, about how she gets along with or fails to get along with your classmates, and even some morbid poetry. But then, in the last few pages, the tone of her entries change. Evidently, she has fallen madly in love with Ollinor. You can't think of two different people, stranger things have happened.

Since you aren't getting anything done, you force yourself to put the diary down and focus on the task at hand. Where to next?

If you sift through the things on her bookcase, turn to 68.

If you look under her bed, turn to 89.

If you have searched enough, turn to 32.

14

The professor shakes his head sadly. “This is unacceptable work. I cannot give you passing marks for this test.”

Your heart sinks. After all the hard work you did, it was not enough. You should be mad, but you are not. Your opponent, whoever he or she is, has won. *Turn to 16.*

15

As you scramble over the bars, the bone-eater turns the corner and charges. Its heavy frame crashes into the gate with a satisfying ring. You stare at one another through the bars before it gives up and scrambles off.

Looking around you, a horrifying realization comes over you. The ground is littered with bones. You are in the beast's lair! It is only a matter of time before it finds the correct way to its home.

In the corner of the lair, you find a shaft that leads farther down into the dungeon. It's too small for the lizard, but you should be able to sneak through. On the other hand, there might be something to help you found among all of these bones. You do not have long.

If you decide to search the bone-eater's lair, turn to 67. If you climb down the shaft, turn to 93.

16

“Now, I have heard some rumors about your project,” the professor says. “Is there anything you care to share with me?”

How much does he know, you wonder. “It was destroyed,” you admit finally. “I had to reconstruct it from scratch this morning.”

“Ah,” is all he says. But you can tell he is looking for more. If you are going to accuse one of your classmates, now is the time.

If you accuse Alisaed, turn to 27.

If you accuse Dianorah, turn to 69.

If you accuse Clarina, turn to 58.

If you accuse Kethem, turn to 81.

If you accuse Ollinor, turn to 43.

If you keep quiet, turn to 39.

17

Having chosen to focus on Animation as one of your primary magical disciplines, you have spent a lot of time in the professor's personal laboratory, studying and assisting him with his research. One off the cuff remark that he made weeks ago springs to mind.

“When constructing multiple forms, some Animists fall prey to the temptation to use substandard reagents to reduce their costs. For instance, a mountain heart gem can be procured rather inexpensively and in great quantities and substituted for many components. But the magic of these gems is weak and will not hold a proper animation for long. Always follow what the formula prescribes and you will never go wrong.”

But everything has gone wrong. If you don't find all of the right components, it would be better to have something rather than nothing. You hurry to the professor's lab and find a **mountain heart gem** which you quickly drop in your pocket.

“Only as a last resort,” you tell yourself. Now it's time to begin your search.

Turn to 10.

18

You move deeper into the cavern as the howls echo around you. You travel as far as you dare, but the light is fleeting. When you feel the threat has passed, you turn back toward the entrance. But the return seems to be taking longer than you remember. You recall the steps you took, the texture of the walls, the feel of the ground beneath your feet. You try to back track again, afraid that you missed a turn somehow. It does not take long for you to realize that you are lost.

You take a deep breath and consider your position. If you think it through and stay calm, you should be able to find your way out. Or you might just conjure a homing sprite and ask it to lead you to your room, letting it find its own way out.

Make either a Mind test or a Conjuraton test. If you pass, turn to 49. If you fail, turn to 80.

19

You stand dumbfounded as the homunculus continues to survey the room. The before you can act, the construct leaps off the table and crashes to the floor. *Mark one crack on you character sheet.*

You wince when you see the thing climb back to its feet. Then without hesitation, it runs toward the door leading out of the lab. A door which is now open for some reason. You rush toward the portal, trying to cut off its escape.

Make a Move test. If you pass, turn to 37. If you fail, turn to 52.

20

The academy's library is, to your untrained eye, one of the greatest wonders in the world. Shelves upon shelves of books stretch out farther than you can see. Farther than you can even comprehend. If there is an answer to your question, it is likely to be found here. All you need is to know which book to look in.

Unfortunately, you are not so familiar with the library. As a first year student, there is little need for you to do research. And there is little time for you to do so anyway, even if you had the desire. You have spent so much of this first term just learning the basics of magic that you have had little time for exploring the library. And now you have little choice but to learn how.

As you step into the lobby, you see students all around. It is completely silent except for the rustle of turning pages. Opposite the door, a long desk dominates the lobby. The librarian stands vigil before the shelves, the ultimate gatekeeper of knowledge.

If you ask the librarian for help, turn to 98. If you want to browse the shelves yourself, turn to 82.

21

After the class is dismissed, you return to your room. The day has been very trying, but now it is over. All you have left to do is get some sleep and wait for your final grade for the year.

Find your final score on your score sheet and turn to the appropriate section.

If your final score is, -11 to -8, turn to 12.

If your final score is -7 to 0, turn to 33.

If your final score is 1 to 6, turn to 54.

If your final score is 7 to 11, turn to 78.

If your final score is 12 to 15, turn to 100.

22

The underside of Dianorah's bed quite the mess. She seeming stuffed everything that did not know what to do with under there. Books, assignments, notes, clothing, everything. What you don't find is anything that will help you. What a waste of time! You don't have much time left, so you hope you have better luck elsewhere.

If you start by searching her desk, turn to 79.

If you sift through the things on her bookcase, turn to 68.

If you have searched enough, turn to 32.

23

Whatever has control of your project is too strong for you. The homunculus crashes into a rack of glass bottles which smash down all around it. The clay begins to melt and warp before your eyes. *Mark one crack on your character sheet.*

When the chemicals have dripped away, you pick up the homunculus and carry it back to the lab. With your project back at your side, you breathe a sigh of relief. The homunculus is now just a clay statue again. Horribly scarred, but it is safe.

From outside the room, you hear the bells ringing again. One bell after midday. It is time for your exam. *Turn to 25.*

24

The librarian stares at you coldly. "Don't waste my time. You can find the book yourself if you need it."

If you try to search for the book yourself, turn to 82.

If you abandon the search, turn to 61.

25

Every eye in the room turns toward you as you enter the exam chamber. Alisaed smiles and raises a hand to greet you. You hurry over the table to set your project down before finding a seat. But the professor's voice resounds through the hall. "Well, since you are already up, why don't you present your homunculus first?"

Kethem struggles to cover up a laugh as you drag your project over to the examination table. When everyone is quiet, you begin the incantation.

The chant begins slow and builds in speed and intensity with each repetition. By the time you are in the fifth cycle, you are shouting the words of command. You can feel the power flowing around and through you. The hair on your body rises and each stands away from the others. Blood is rushing in your head and you can feel the intense beating of your heart.

Make an Animation test. If you pass, turn to 5. If you fail, turn to 62.

26

With everything you have, dodge through the plants and find that the hounds have left you behind. You find yourself in a strange clearing. It is as if none of the other plants dare grow any closer. Before you stands a magnificent sight: a towering **blood rose** bush in full blossom. The crimson petals almost

shine in the sunlight. You step closer and, careful to avoid the thorns that would drain the blood from your body within minutes, you pluck a rose from the bush and tuck it away.

From behind you, you can hear the sound of the hounds trying to find another way to you. And beyond them, the tower bells ring. You find a point where you can scramble over the nearby fence and escape the garden. *Turn to 70.*

27

“It was Alisaed,” you tell the professor in a quiet voice, almost as if you can't believe you are saying the words yourself. “He was there in the lab. He is the only one who could do it.”

Alisaed stands up from his bench, the look of hurt plain on his face. “I can't believe you would say that. I told you I was asleep until one bell after midnight.”

“And I must concur,” the professor says with a hint of disappointment in his voice. “I had errands of my own last night. Your friend did not enter the lab until well after the deed was done.” He looks at you with a crooked smile. “How sad for you both. Take your seat, please.”

Subtract 3 points from your test score and note the total as your final score on your character sheet. Turn to 21.

28

With the storeroom door behind you, you back away as carefully as possible. When you are almost to the exit, the lizard comes around the crates and spots you. It only needs a moment to charge at you. Without a thought, you turn and run.

You barely remember the route you took to enter the dungeon, but you are running on instinct. The lizard runs faster than you would expect. But each time you turn a corner, it loses traction and slides into the walls. But it does not slow and it does not give up.

It is not until you return to the surface, that the lizard relents. You stand breathless on the lawn, trying to comprehend what you have been through. The tolling of the tower bells remind you that you do not have time to stand around in thought. It is time to move on. *Turn to 70.*

29

As you follow the trail, you notice that the ground in this part of the forest becomes more and more uneven. The trail snakes over and around these small hills. But as you go, the hills become larger and higher. Atop one of these rises, you spot a cabin.

You wander around the cabin, curious if anyone is inside. There are signs all around that someone lives here still, but no one answers your call. You test the door only to find that it has been locked. Even in the middle of the woods, someone does not trust passersby like yourself. The thought only makes you more curious about what is locked away. You just have to get past the lock, either with a pick or with magic.

Make either a Mind test or an Enchantment test. If you pass, turn to 4. If you fail, turn to 87.

30

The dorms are oddly quiet this morning. Where normally there are free chatter and laughter in the halls, all is silent as students prepare for their exams. You walk down the hallway to your room, looking at all the closed doors. No one stirs.

As you look at the different doors, your eyes fall on one in particular. Dianorah's room is four doors down from your own. If any had squirreled away spare alchemical reagents, it would be her.

Glancing around you, you step up to her room and try the handle. It says firmly locked. You step back to ponder your next move when you hear a voice from behind you.

"What is that you're up to?" You turn to find the prefect standing over you. Crombe is a full head taller than you and very imposing. "Well?" You have to think fast.

Make a Mien test. If you pass, turn to 2. If you fail, turn to 46.

31

You follow the tracks down the path curious as to what you might find ahead. You wish you knew more about tracking, but have never had the opportunity to learn.

You round a bend in the path and find yourself staring at an enormous basilisk eating its latest kill. It raises its head as you approach, its scaly snout is covered in blood. Before it can face you and mesmerize you with its stare, you turn and run as fast as your legs will carry you.

Off in the distance, you hear the academy bells calling you back home. *Turn to 70.*

32

You peek out the door to see if anyone is around. The prefect has disappeared from the hallway, leaving you alone at last. As you sneak out of the dorms, you hear the bells tolling in the distance. *Turn to 70.*

33

The next day, you wake up, dress, and go about your day as if the prior one did not happen. In fact, you wish you could put it out of your mind. But you cannot.

At the appointed time, you head to the animation master's office to receive your final marks. The professor smiles weakly as you enter. "Please have a seat," he says. He looks over his notes before continuing. "You were one of my more promising students. It is sad that things have come to this point. But we can't change time. No magician can." He sighs. "Nevertheless, your coursework was not satisfactory. You will need to repeat this course if you hope to graduate from this academy. I have faith that you would comport yourself better next term."

You have nothing to say so he dismisses you. You stop in the hall and let out a sign of relief. It could be worse, you tell yourself. At least you are still a magician. At least, you will be someday. You will not let this fiasco happen again. No matter what, you will not let your dream of becoming a magician die. Next year, you will redeem yourself. Next year.

The End. You can continue your adventures in the next book, Academy of Magic: The Second Term.

34

No matter what you try, you cannot free yourself. Mercifully, you pass out.

When you wake up again, it is to the sound of the school's bells. The school's apothecary stands over you, speaking with another professor. "Ah, you're lucky to be alive," he says as he spots you awaking. "They dug you out just in time. Well, you look no worse for wear. Off you go. Back to your studies." And without a further care, he and his companion leave you lying in the grass.

You stand up uneasily. The animation master won't accept being buried alive as an excuse for missing your final project. *Turn to 70.*

35

After several minutes searching and getting turned around a couple times, you stumble upon the Animation section. The section takes up several shelves, and so finding the right book does not happen fast. Eventually, you find one volume that seems pertinent.

You take the book to a desk in the corner and start reading. It is a very thick book, so there is a lot of reading to do. Deep within the pages, you read about a strange trick for building homunculi. You discover that you can replace any one of the standard components with a fully charged **sun crystal**. The homunculus will animate properly. But the crystal will drain over time, causing the construct to fail within one lunar cycle. Of course, you don't need it to last that long. And you know just where to obtain a sun crystal. *Add the sun crystal to your inventory and turn to 61.*

36

You do your best to fight off the grouch. Its claws swipe at you again and again, rending your clothes and your flesh. Finally, as you almost succumb to the beast, a squawk from your right shocks both of you. The phoenix charges in and assails the grouch with its beak and talons. Between you and the phoenix, the grouch is overmatched and flees into the woods.

You breath heavily as you recover from the fight. Had it not been for the phoenix's intervention, you might not have survived. The bird eyes you carefully. But then it bows its head and back away from you. As it disappears into the forest, you notice at it has left behind one of its feathers. You pick up the **phoenix feather** and head back to the school, just as the bells sound again. *Turn to 70.*

37

You sprint ahead and push the door closed before the homunculus can escape. It bounces harmlessly off the wooden door.

It only takes a moment, though, before it tries another option. Now it is heading toward an open window. It's already climbing onto the ledge before you can react. You lunge for it, hoping to prevent it from falling to the cobblestones below.

Make a Might test. If you pass, turn to 74. If you fail, turn to 86.

38

As you scramble at the bars, the bone-eater rounds the final corner and charges at you. You duck away, but it hits you squarely in the back with its broad snout and knocks you through the air. You land heavily on the stone floor. You feel dizzy and sick, but you try to stand anyway. The lizard charges again and knocks you into a corner.

But instead of landing again, you feel yourself falling. The bone-eater threw you into a hole and now you are sliding down a shaft deeper in to the earth. You finally land not with a thud, but with a disgusting squish. The smell is disgusting, but you are alive. At least, for the time being.

As you look around the pit, you see refuse discarded by the academy. Rotten food, crushed glass, scraps of paper. All of it collected here under the earth. Along one wall you see a tunnel leading away. Maybe you can find a way out there. But there is so much random trash here. Maybe something valuable found its way down here with the garbage.

If you search the refuse, turn to 3. If you climb out the pit, turn to 77.

39

The professor stares at you expectantly. You don't know what to say. Without proof, how can you accuse someone. "I don't know what happened," you mutter. "It must have been an accident."

"An accident," the professor repeats, not quite believing you. "Well these things do happen. Please take your seat."

Take your test score and note it as your final score on your character sheet. Turn to 21.

40

The bookshelf is quite impressive. It is much larger than the one in your room, making you think she bought her own. She needs it with all the books and other things filling the shelves. The books are all interesting, but none pertain to your current needs. You find all sorts of magical implements and other oddities, but nothing that you can use for a homunculus.

However, the top of the bookcase is covered in many items that you cannot see from the floor. You take a deep breath and you start climbing the shelves. Thankfully, they hold your weight fine. Even better, behind jars of rat eyes and the giant ant exoskeleton, you find a hidden **phoenix feather**. You carefully pull it down and place it in your pocket.

With that firmly in your possession, you look around the room to see what else you might find.

If you look under her bed, turn to 89.

If you start by searching her desk, turn to 79.

If you have searched enough, turn to 32.

41

As you run, your foot slips and you stumble into a mass of vines. The nasty things latch onto you and hold you to the ground. No matter how much you struggle, you cannot break free. But as you try, the hounds are upon you. Strangely, they work the vines off of your arms and legs, barking at the vines to scare them away. Then as you are freed, the beasts circle you and start nudging you back toward the path.

They follow you all the way back to the gates and watch with dark eyes as you exit. Once the gates fall closed behind you, they disappear back into the garden. You watch them go as the bells begin their song. *Turn to 70.*

42

You pick up the nest and look through the materials carefully. Whatever it is that built this thing, it must be stealing materials from the academy because you can identify a number of plants that are only grown locally in the headmaster's garden. Among them, you find the intact blossom of a **blood rose**. You pluck it out of the nest and hide it away before moving on through the forest.

Before long, the path forks again. This time, though, you can see the prints of some animal trailing down the right-hand path. Which way with you go now?

If you take the path to the right, turn to 31. If you travel left instead, turn to 65.

43

"Ollinor did it," you announce. "Everyone knows he was out last night. He could have done it."

Dianorah begins giggling from her bench. "Do you have something to say?" the professor asks.

"I, um, Ollinor was out last night because he was with me," she says between laughs. "He didn't

have time for any shenanigans.”

“Except for the ones we were up to together,” Ollinor adds with a knowing smile.

The professor turns to you. “It seems you are incorrect. You had better take a seat.”

Subtract 3 points from your test score and note the total as your final score on your character sheet. Turn to 21.

44

You can smell the plants long before you are among them. The stinking plants are a melange of flowers, herbs, vines, and bushes that exude the oddest assortment of odors imaginable. A vicious looking thorn bush smells of sunshine and gaiety and entwined lovers. A gnarled grapevine gives off the unpalatable stench of dirty undergarments. A clutch of beautiful blossoms stinks of death.

From your vantage point, the fountain at the center of the garden towers over the plants. To the south, you can see the entrance to the mushroom grotto. Back to the west would be the singing plants. You can also see the gates of the garden nearby. Where will you search next?

If you step into the fountain plaza, turn to 85. If you check the singing plants, turn to 6. If you enter the mushroom grotto, turn to 71. If you give up the search and leave the garden, turn to 70.

45

The academy's cellars have long been known as the dungeon. The upperclassmen like to scare new students with stories about the rogue magicians and failed experiments imprisoned deep within the stone halls. But for all the myths and legends you have heard about the dungeon, you also know that there are things that dwell under the school. And there are treasures to be found. Considering your situation, you decide it might as well be you who finds them.

As you enter the catacombs, you are faced with innumerable twists and turns. Eventually, you find yourself in a long forgotten storeroom. The crates are all covered in dust and cobwebs. But oddly, the floor seems to have been sweep clean. Even odder, a hole has been knocked into the left hand wall of the room.

If you decide to investigate the storeroom, turn to 9. If you climb through the hole, turn to 73.

46

“I, well, I was just, um....” You fumble for an excuse, but Crombe cuts you off.

“That's what I thought. Back to your room with you.” He grips you by the arm and leads you to your dorm room. You sit down on your bed and think. You do not have time to waste laying around. But what should you do about the prefect?

After several moments, you open the door a hair and peek outside. Crombe is still standing there. You have to get out another way. Pondering the situation a moment, your mind falls on the window ledges outside your rooms. The windows don't lock, so you just have to climb from one to the next by the ledge.

You quickly step over to the window. The ledge is not very big, but it should be big enough. And it is a long way down to her room. The question is whether you trust your climbing skill enough. You could cast an enchantment on the ledge to hold you fast and prevent you from falling. But is your magic good enough?

If you decide to try it, make either a Move test of an Enchantment test. If you pass, turn to 63. If you fail, turn to 94.

If you decide to wait until the prefect leaves, turn to 32.

47

You wander through the shelves, up and down the aisle. You stare at the books, but they do not say anything to you. After several minutes, you end up back at the lobby. Confused, you set out again, only to end up back at the lobby. The library has defeated you, never giving up its secrets. *Turn to 61.*

48

Maybe it cannot hear you, but then again homunculus does not need ears. It must be ignoring you. And ignore you it does right up until it topples into the conflagration in the middle of the commons. *Mark one crack on your character sheet.*

You run out to where your project lays still within the everflame. You use a metal rod to poke it out of the flames and onto the stone path around it. While the homunculus cools down, you breathe a sigh of relief. The homunculus is now just a clay statue again. Terribly burned, but it is safe.

From the tower above, you hear the bells ringing again. One bell after midday. It is time for your exam. *Turn to 25.*

49

With just a little work, you find light glowing ahead of you. But strangely, you are not in the mushroom grotto. As you stumble from the cave, you find before you a pile of half digested corpses. You are among the necrotic plants, standing on their food. It takes all your willpower to avoid vomiting.

You take several breaths through clenched teeth and calm your nerves. As you look around you, you find that the headmaster has fed several goblins to his garden. It suddenly dawns upon you why the school can supply so many goblin skulls to their animation students. You spot an excellent **goblin's skull** and tuck it away. Before you can regret your decision, you push through the plants and return to the path. *Turn to 57.*

50

The professor examines your homunculus quite closely. You can see every flaw, every shortcut you took, and you know they are obvious under his scrutiny. You feel more tense now, doing nothing, than you did over the prior four bells.

Finally, the professor looks up and gives you curt nod. "Nicely done," is all he says. You passed! *Turn to 16.*

51

You settle in behind the tree and watch the phoenix as it struts around the clearing. After a while it flutters its wings and leaps onto a very low branch of a tree on the far side. Something about its mannerisms seem very uneasy now and you can't quite determine why. You scan everything around you, trying to discover has the phoenix so nervous.

Crawling through the brush behind the phoenix, you see a form crawling low to the ground. Its fur is dusky and sleek. Its built like a cat, but its muzzle resembles a canine with a powerful jaw and oddly dangling jowls. A groulich, you realize. A deadly, silent predator, groulichs are know to hunter relentlessly for days or weeks. And now it is sneaking up on the phoenix. If you don't do something, the phoenix will be killed. You take a deep breath, stand up, and charge into the clearing.

Make either a Might test or a Destruction test. If you pass, turn to 36. If you fail, turn to 91.

52

You dash toward the door and start pushing it closed, but not before the homunculus runs past you and straight into the wall opposite the door. *Mark one crack on your character sheet.*

You grit your teeth angrily as you walk over to pick it up. But the homunculus leaps up again and runs down the corridor. And it's headed straight toward an open window. You chase after it, catching up just as it scales the ledge and is ready to jump.

Make a Might check. If you pass, turn to 74. If you fail, turn to 86.

53

You duck behind the crates and wait. The scraping comes closer and closer. Whatever it is, it is in the storeroom now. You peek between the crates and see a large lizard passing by. It is circling around the room and will eventually find you if you do not move.

If you climb on the crates to get above the lizard, go to 84.

If you try to sneak away from the lizard, turn to 95.

54

You awaken the next morning as usual. The day before was a horror, but you came through the other side fine. Not fine, you recall, but you were not beaten.

At the appointed time, you head to the animation master's office to receive your final marks. The professor smiles kindly as you enter. "Please have a seat," he says. "Not your best work yesterday, I'm afraid." Your heart sinks at his words. "But not the worst either. I had higher hopes for you. And considering the situation, you did better than most. You will be passing the course, but just barely. I expect you to put greater effort into your coursework next term. Is that understood?"

"Yes, master," you answer.

"Good. You are dismissed." You leave the office and head back to your room. You passed. It is the best you could have expected under the circumstances. Better than you expected, truthfully. But you will be back next term and you will have a chance to show them all that you are not one to be trifled with.

The End. You can continue your adventures in the next book, Academy of Magic: The Second Term.

55

You skillfully navigate the ledge and find yourself in Dianorah's room. You still have plenty of time before the bells toll again. There are several options about how to proceed next. But where should you start?

If you start by searching her desk, turn to 13.

If you look under her bed, turn to 22.

If you sift through the things on her bookcase, turn to 40.

56

At your command, the homunculus stops running and slides to a halt. You have finally broken whatever hold the curse had over it. With another command, the construct turns and walks back to you.

With your project back at your side, you breathe a sigh of relief. The homunculus is now just a clay statue again and it is safe.

From outside the room, you hear the bells ringing again. One bell after midday. It is time for your exam. *Turn to 25.*

57

While you might have thought the stinking plants smells awful, you discover a new appreciation for the terrible evil that odors can do to your nose. But where the stinking plants produced those smells on their own, these plants stink because of their diet. All around the plants, with tendrils and leaves wrapped around them, are the corpses of various animals and other beasts. The sight of the plants devouring the dead flesh turns your stomach. As you walk through the display, you carefully stay to the middle of the path and avoid any contact with the plants.

The path loops around and you find you can go no further. There are two way out: northwest toward the hanging plant pavilion or west into the carnivorous plants.

If you look through the hanging plants, turn to 66. If you brave the carnivorous plants, turn to 92.

58

“My project was destroyed by Clarina,” you tell the professor loud enough for everyone to hear. “She has always been jealous of my work and she did not want a lowborn peasant like myself to take the top marks in the class.”

Clarina jumps to her feet. “This is absurd. You have no proof.”

The professor looks between the two of you. “This is a serious accusation. Clarina is one of my best students.”

“She was the only one with opportunity to do the deed,” you explain. “Everyone else has an alibi.”

“Well,” the professor says, the question to Clarina implicit in the word.

“I was in detention last night. I couldn’t have done it,” she complains.

Kethem speaks up. “You were in detention until one bell to midnight. I was there too, remember?”

Clarina is clearly flustered. “Fine, fine, but I went right back to my room.”

“Ha!” says Lanadiel from the back of the class. “You told everyone that you saw Dianorah and Ollinor under the stairs after midnight.”

“Dianorah? Ollinor?” the professor asks. The pair shift uncomfortably in their seats.

“Well, I didn’t see her,” Ollinor says. “But we were certainly where they say we were at that time.”

“I see,” the professor says with a bit of a smile. “Clarina, do you care to try again?”

She is furious now. If her eyes were weapons, you would be dead now. “Peasant is right. I wasn’t about to let you take all the glory that was clearly meant for me.”

Everyone is quiet for a moment while her words sink in. Then the professor speaks up. “Clarina, you are dismissed. We will speak more on this later.”

Clarina does not move for several seconds, almost as if she has not heard him. But eventually she turns and stalks out of the hall.

The professor turns back to you. “Very well,” he says with a wink. “You may take you seat.”

Add 3 points to your test score and note the total as your final score on your character sheet. Turn to 21.

59

Your attempts to dislodge the nest come to nothing. Even worse, as you try you hear the flapping of wings above you. A massive gryphon screeches at you as it dives with its talons forward. You dive out of the way before it can get you. The beast climbs into the air again, ready to make a second pass, but

you run off down the path and leave the gryphon and its nest far behind you.

Before long, the path forks again. This time, though, you can see the prints of some animal trailing down the right-hand path. Which way with you go now?

If you take the path to the right, turn to 31. If you travel left instead, turn to 65.

60

You stand before the gates of the headmaster's garden. Legend has it that in years past, the garden was open to all. But after several students were injured by the plants, the headmaster at the time walled it away from the incautious. It has remained the head of the school's private charge ever since.

As you peer through the gate, you see that it is not solely bars that keep the students out. Wandering the paths in a tight pack are the headmaster's hounds. Their patrol takes them all around the garden, ready to pounce on anyone foolish enough to venture inside. You will not have long to search before the hounds run you down. But you trust that you can find what you need fast enough.

When the hounds have disappeared into the garden, you slip through the gate. From the path to your right you hear an oddly, discordant melody. That way would lead to the singing plants. From the left hand path comes the stench of decay and death. The stinking plants, you decide. Which way to go?

If you investigate the singing plants, turn to 6. If you search the stinking plants, turn to 44.

61

As you prepare to leave the library, you notice two students coming in. One of them, Lanadiel, is one of the biggest gossips in the school. If anyone knows what happened last night, it would be her. You follow the two girls until they shut themselves in a study room. The door blocks any sound at all. If you want to hear what they are talking about, you will have to be creative. An echo sprite would be able to sneak in and listen to the girls without them ever realizing.

If you decide to leave the girls alone, turn to 70.

If you want to conjure an echo sprite, make a Conjunction test. If you pass, turn to 76. If you fail, turn to 88.

62

When the incantation ends, the homunculus lays lifelessly on the table. You give it a command but it does not respond. Eventually you coax it to stand up, but it is through force of will alone that it is moving at all. Ollinor stretches and hides a yawn behind his hand.

The professor examines your project carefully. "Not very promising," he mutters.

Your starting score is 0. Note this on your character sheet and then turn to 96.

63

When you finally arrive in Dianorah's room, you sigh in relief. That climb took a lot longer than it should have and you do not have much time to search. There are several options, so you had better choose right.

If you look under her bed, turn to 89.

If you sift through the things on her bookcase, turn to 68.

If you start by searching her desk, turn to 79.

64

As quickly as possible, you run for the drain. But just as you lower yourself into the hole, the lizard spots you and charges. In a moment of panic, your hands slip and you find yourself falling. No matter what you do, you cannot stop your descent. You finally land not with a thud, but with a disgusting squish. The smell is disgusting, but you are alive. At least, for the time being.

As you look around the pit, you see refuse discarded by the academy. Rotten food, crushed glass, scraps of paper. All of it collected here under the earth. Along one wall you see an opening and a tunnel leading away. Maybe you can find a way out there. But there is so much random trash here. Maybe something valuable found its way down here with the garbage.

If you search the refuse, turn to 3. If you climb out the pit, turn to 77.

65

The trees start to thin as you follow the path down a gentle slope. At the bottom of the hollow, you see a sunny clearing. The grass is sparse and dying. It looks as though no rain has fallen here for years even though the forest is lush and green all around you.

Across the clearing, you can see a strange bird sitting on a low branch. With all of its ornate plumage, it resembles a peacock. But its coloring is all wrong. Instead of the deep blues and greens, its feathers are all warm reds and oranges. It must be a phoenix! You wonder at how such a rare and special bird can be running loose here in the woods.

Suddenly the bird pokes his head up and it looks around the clearing. You duck behind the tree, trying not to scare it away. You peek around the trunk and see that the phoenix is still there. You need to get one of its feathers, but how are you going to do that?

If you stay put and observe the phoenix, turn to 51.

If you sneak around the clearing and approach the phoenix, turn to 99.

If you throw a rock at the phoenix, hoping it shakes a feather loose, turn to 83.

66

You pass under a trestle and find that the world has turned upside down. Although some of the famed hanging plants are merely potted plants with long dangling stems, you also find plants that grow entirely inverted. There are flowers that turn their blossom not toward the sun, but toward the earth instead. Massive bushes have wrapped their roots through the lattice overhead and grow toward the ground. Only careful pruning keeps them from returning to the earth. And at the highest point of the lattice, an entire tree dangles from the sky. Birds sit and sing among the inverted branches. Above you, you can see the huge roots snaking toward the sky.

As you wander through this topsy-turvy world, you find other parts of the garden. To the north is the singing plants. To the east you can spot the fountain plaza. To the south is the imposing carnivorous plants. And to the southeast are the necrotic plants. Where will you go from here?

If you check the singing plants, turn to 6. If you brave the carnivorous plants, turn to 92. If you investigate the necrotic plants, turn to 57. If you step into the fountain plaza, turn to 85.

67

You sift through the bones, well aware of what is coming for you. There are bones of many different species. Birds, cattle, rodents, and something that looks awfully human. How all these bones got here, you don't know, but the lizard has more than enough stored to last for a few years. There even seems

to be a goblin in the mess. You pick up the **goblin's skull** and examine it. The skull is in excellent condition and will work well in your homunculus.

As you slip the skull into your pockets, you hear something crashing into the gate. The lizard has given up going the long way around to its lair and is trying to come through the bars at you. You stare in horror as the bars bend more and more with each charge. Again and again it batters the gate with its scaly head. It backs away and charges a final time.

Then the ceiling caved in.

You awake to find yourself buried under stone and earth. The beast collapsed its own lair on you and now you are trapped here below the school. You can still move somewhat so you might be able to dig your way out. Or this might be the perfect opportunity to try out the destructive arts. Anything to get out of the rubble.

Make either a Might test or a Destruction test. If you pass, turn to 11. If you fail, turn to 34.

68

The bookshelf is quite impressive. It is much larger than the one in your room, making you think she bought her own. She needs it with all the books and other things filling the shelves. The books are all interesting, but none pertain to your current needs. You find all sorts of magical implements and other oddities, but nothing that you can use for a homunculus.

However, the top of the bookcase is covered in many items that you cannot see from the floor. You take a deep breath and you start climbing the shelves. Thankfully, they hold your weight fine. Even better, behind jars of rat eyes and the giant ant exoskeleton, you find a hidden **phoenix feather**. You carefully pull it down and place it in your pocket.

As you climb back down, you hear the bells ringing their familiar tune. You sneak out of the dorms, ready to take on whatever is next. *Turn to 70.*

69

"There is only one person who could have done it. Dianorah. Everyone knows she was out after midnight," you announce to the class. She had the opportunity. And something about her quiet, bookish manner never rang true for you.

Dianorah is startled by the accusation. "I never had anything against you before. But that is liable to change now."

The professor turns to her. "And the accusation? Is that true as well?"

She smiles shyly. "I was with Ollinor last night. We were studying."

"Studying each other," someone comments from the back of the class. Dianorah blushes.

"Ollinor?" the professor asks.

"It's true, sir. She, um," Ollinor hesitates. "She was in no position to be doing any skulduggery last night."

The professor turns back to you. "A pity. Please take your seat."

Subtract 3 points from your test score and note the total as your final score on your character sheet. Turn to 21.

70

With each tolling of the bells, time slips away from you. Faster and faster, it seems to pass, until you are breathless with the speed of it.

Cross off one of the bells now. Once all of the bells have been crossed off, it is Midday and you must start work on your homunculus.

If it is Midday now, turn to 90 immediately. If you still have bells remaining, turn to 10.

71

You duck your head as you enter the mushroom grotto. It takes a moment for your eyes to adjust, but you find that you can see just fine. All throughout the caves are patches of luminescent fungus. And between the patches are every mushroom that you might imagine. Tall, skinny stalks with tiny nubs atop them. Fat, imposing towers that could be hollowed out and used to house a small dog. Perfectly matched little caps on squat stubs that could not be reproduced by the most talented sculptors. Some of the eerie things stand taller than yourself. And some hang from the ceiling, disguising themselves as stalactites.

As you look are the cavern, you hear the baying of the headmaster's hounds nearby. This would not be an ideal place to evade them. You need to escape now. But as you try to decide how to proceed, you notice that the cavern goes even deeper. You might be able to hide there until the hounds pass.

If you decide to delve farther into the caves, turn to 18. If you make a break for the stinking plants, turn to 44. If you run for the fountain plaza, turn to 85.

72

"My goodness," the professor remarks. "Quite an accomplishment." He turns to the class and points out examples of particular things he likes about your work. "This is what I am expecting from each and everyone one of you. Good job. You will receive high marks for this one."

High marks! You almost forget to breathe. All of your hard work has paid off. Your opponent, whoever he or she is, cannot be happy about this turn of events. *Turn to 16.*

73

Getting down on your hands and knees, you scramble through the hole. There is a short crawl until you reach another corridor. But as you survey your new surroundings, you hear a shuffling, scraping sound from the hole. The massive form of a bone-eater lizard emerges from the tunnel.

Its cold eyes find you quickly. If its reptile lips could smile, the beast would be grinning now. It opens its mouth and lunges at you. You dodge quickly out of the way, but the lizard is not going to stop until you are dead. With a short and miserable death behind you, you run as fast as your legs can carry you.

You dodge down one corridor, turn down another, and yet another. But still the lizard comes. Its claws scratch noisily on the rough stone floor as it runs. It runs so fast that you hear its body slam into the walls as it careens around each corner.

You make one last turn before you come to a dead end. A metal gate blocks the corridor here. You might be able to climb it and escape certain death. Or maybe you can enchant the bars to bend away and let you pass through.

Make either a Move test or an Enchantment test. If you pass, turn to 15. If you fail, turn to 38.

74

You reach out and grab the thing by the leg just as it topples over the edge. You drag it back into the lab and set it down on your workbench. It continues to flail its limbs and will not calm down no matter how much you fight it.

It seems you might finally have control over it when the homunculus squirms out of your grasp, this time running for the storage room. With all of the caustic chemicals in there, it can do real damage to itself.

You finally remember that you should be fighting this thing with your mind and not your muscles. You shout the command for the homunculus to halt.

Make a Mien test. If you pass, turn to 56. If you fail, turn to 23.

75

All around the academy, a dense forest guards against prying eyes. A well patrolled road runs through the wood for anyone who values their life. But there are other things out there. If you are lucky enough, the forest will provide something you need for your project.

You set out to the east. Within minutes, the forest has you within its grasp. The sounds of the school have faded away and only the forest remains. You wander quietly, your eyes scanning for any clue as to what you are searching for.

You are almost upon them before you are aware of their presence. Two faint trails snake off into the distance. Neither trail gives any hint as to where they lead. So which one should you follow?

If you take the trail to the left, turn to 29. If you take the trail to the right, turn to 97.

76

Trying to remember all you have learned this term about conjuration, you fumble for the spell for what feels like forever. Finally, the words form on your lips and the sprite glows to life in your hand. You encourage it to slip through the lock into the room and wait patiently.

Before long, the door opens again and the girls rush out, giggling together. You stay out of their way as they pass before collecting the sprite. The little puff of light eagerly flies into your hand. Holding it up to your ear, the voices it has heard echo to you.

“You’ll never believe what I heard!” That’s Lanadiel’s voice, you hear. “I heard from someone who overheard Clarina telling her clique that she saw Dianorah under the Grand Stairs last night. And she was kissing a boy! I didn’t even know she liked boys. Her nose is always stuck in a book.” The echoes become fainter after that until they die away and the sprite disappears.

Beyond the walls of the library, you can hear the bells begin tolling. *Turn to 70.*

77

Holding your nose, you climb out of the pit and return to the surface. As your eyes acclimate to the sunlight, your ears catch the distance tone of the tower bells. *Turn to 70.*

78

You awaken the next morning as usual. The day before was a horror, but you came through the other side fine. Better than fine, maybe, but you never want to go through that again.

At the appointed time, you head to the animation master’s office to receive your final marks. The professor smiles kindly as you enter. “Please have a seat,” he says. “Considering the situation, you did better than I would expect from many a student. Congratulations, you have passed my course. I expect to see great things from you next term. Is that understood?”

“Absolutely, master,” you answer.

“Good. It was a pleasure teaching you this year. Now get out of here before some other calamity befalls us,” he dismisses you with a smile.

Next term, you think as you leave the office. Another year. More to learn, more to experience. You will be back. There is nothing anyone you can do to keep you from becoming a magician now.

The End. You can continue your adventures in the next book, Academy of Magic: The Second Term.

79

Dianorah's desk is, as you expected, covered in book and loose pages. You look through it all, but there is little to help you. Instead, you discover that she has been keeping a diary. Although you should be looking for components, you find yourself flipping through the pages.

Many of the entries talk about her schoolwork, about how she gets along with or fails to get along with your classmates, and even some morbid poetry. But then, in the last few pages, the tone of her entries change. Evidently, she has fallen madly in love with Ollinor. You can't think of two different people, stranger things have happened.

It is not until you hear the bells ringing in the distance that you force yourself to put the diary down and focus on the task at hand. You shake your head about all that you read as sneak out of the dorms. *Turn to 70.*

80

No matter what you try, you cannot find your way out of the caves. You sit down on the damp earth and contemplate your dilemma.

You sit and think maybe doze off, only to be rouse when you feel another presence in the cave. Something is breathing on you, a hot, flesh eating breath. It must be one of the headmaster's hounds. It grabs you by the forearm with its teeth and pulls you upright. And then, like a stern father, it leads you out of the cave and out of the garden. As the hound shoulders the gate closed behind you, you can hear the bells tolling in the distance. *Turn to 70.*

81

"Kethem destroyed my homunculus," you announce to the class. "He was out last night and he would have had the perfect opportunity to do the deed."

"I wasn't out all night," he cries as he leaps to his feet. "I was in detention. You can check the logs."

"No need to check the logs, Kethem. I am quite aware of your authority problems." The professor turns back to you. "Do you have a better guess? No? Well then you had better take a seat before you make a fool of yourself again.

Subtract 3 points from your test score and note the total as your final score on your character sheet. Turn to 21.

82

You step into the stacks, looking up and down the aisles. You have no idea how you are ever going to find the right book. It will just take a lot of time. With a deep breath, you start reading labels and book spines.

Make a Mind test. If you pass, turn to 35. If you fail, turn to 47.

83

You search for a moment until you find a stone of the right size and shape. The phoenix has not moved a bit. It is standing perfectly still in the burned out clearing, looking off into the distance.

You draw back, take aim, and throw the rock with all of your ability. The stone flies high, clearing the phoenix by several feet, landing in the woods beyond the clearing. Both you and the phoenix are startled as something yells in pain in the distance.

Suddenly from the woods behind the phoenix, a dark, panther-like shape leaps out of the brush, yelling and snarling in a rage. It is the deadly grouch and its coming for you. You turn and run as fast

as you can. With the groulich at your heels, there is no stopping and no slacking.

You are almost to the school walls before you feel safe at all. The tolling of the bells is almost welcome and you step through the gates and into the safety of the academy. *Turn to 70.*

84

You scramble up onto the crates, trying to get out of its path. It walks around the room, finally coming to your prior hiding spot. Its tongue flicks out as it glances left and right. You cannot help but hold your breath as you wait.

The lizard walks a few feet away. But then it turns and smashing its huge body into the crates you are crouched on. The world turns upside down for a moment, but then all goes black.

When you wake again, one of the groundskeepers is dragging you up the stairs back up to the academy. "Oh, you're awake. Don't know what you bloody students find so fascinating about them dungeons. Like to get yourselves killed down there where you don't belong." He leaves you on your own just as the bells begin to ring again. *Turn to 70.*

85

At the center of the garden, a circular plaza of fitted stones holds the dense flora at a distance. And at the center of the plaza, an immense fountain stands watch over everything around it. The fountain was carved of entirely of stone. From the size of it, you cannot image how it would be moved here. From the way it sits in the ground, you come to the realization that it was carved on this spot, likely from a massive stone jutting from the earth.

You do not have time to wonder at its construction though. The hounds might come through the plaza at any time. You must move on.

If you check the stinking plants, turn to 44. If you look through the hanging plants, turn to 66. If you check the singing plants, turn to 6. If you enter the mushroom grotto, turn to 71.

86

You grip with all your might, but the homunculus slips through your fingers. You close your eyes because you can't watch as it crashes into stone walkway below. *Mark one crack on your character sheet.*

When you open your eyes again, you see that the homunculus is still somehow intact. But now it is rushing off across the commons, heading directly for the everflame burning at the center of the quad.

You finally remember that you should be fighting this thing with your mind and not your muscles. You shout the command for the homunculus to halt.

Make a Mien test. If you pass, turn to 56. If you fail, turn to 48.

87

You try and try, but the lock fails to do your bidding. As you work at it, a noise reminds you that you are trying to break into someone's home. You leave the cabin behind and hurry down the path.

Before long, the path forks again. This time, though, you can see the prints of some animal trailing down the left-hand path. Which way with you go now?

If you take the path to the left, turn to 31. If you travel right instead, turn to 65.

88

You struggle and struggle to recall the words to the spell. Whatever studies you did in conjuration class fail you.

You are still standing in front of the study room when the door swings open. Lanadiel and her companion are surprised for a moment, but quickly brush by you. "Excuse us," she says and the girls giggle at you as they leave.

If that were not bad enough, the tower bells begin their tolling again. It is time to move on. *Turn to 70.*

89

The underside of Dianorah's bed is quite the mess. She seemingly stuffed everything that she did not know what to do with under there. Books, assignments, notes, clothing, everything. What you don't find is anything that will help you. What a waste of time! And now you hear the bells tolling. You mutter a curse about the futility of it all as she sneak away from the dorms. *Turn to 70.*

90

You are out of time now. If you don't start on the homunculus, you will never finish it before your exam. You quickly climb up to the stairs of the main building and head to the animation lab. You are the only one there, everyone else having finished long before. Even Alisaed has finished and taken his project away. At least there won't be any distractions, you tell yourself.

The clay first, you remember. You draw enough from the supply room to form a small figure two feet high. Short arms with the hint of a hand on each. Stubby legs with slabs for feet. You don't even build a separate head. Instead, you carve a face into the lump between its shoulders. It's an ugly thing and an animist with any pride would take much greater care with their constructs. But as your professor said, this test is about magic, not sculpture.

Next comes the components. You carve out the skull, heart, and spine, and set the magical catalysts in place. Then you carefully fill the niches and smooth them over.

As you finished patching up your project, you see a flicker of movement. From the hollows of its eyes, it looks back at you. But that shouldn't be. You have not cast the animation. Then, before you know what is going on, the homunculus leaps to its feet and looks quickly around the room. You have not given it a command and yet it is moving on its own. What is going on?

Make a Mind test. If you pass, turn to 8. If you fail, turn to 19.

91

The groulich backs away at the ferocity of your assault. Backs away at first. But then it seems as though all you have done is enrage it. The beast tears into you with teeth and claws, battering you like you were nothing more than a mouse. You try to get away, but the groulich leaps on your back and tackles you to the ground.

But before it can go for the kill, the phoenix charges in and knocks the groulich away. The beast turns all its rage on the bird. You crawl away, hurt but still able to move.

When you finally look back, you see the phoenix explode in a torrent of flames. The groulich is thrown back, burned all along its right side. The majestic bird disintegrates into ashes and is gone.

You and the groulich, both wounded and unable to fight anymore, turn away from the clearing and go your own ways. By the time you see the academy walls, you are almost feeling like yourself. At least, up until you hear the bells ringing again. *Turn to 70.*

92

You almost cannot believe you are doing it, but your feet are carrying you along the path into the carnivorous plants. Everywhere you look, horror is heaped upon horror. Some of the plants look as though they might latch onto your arm and tear it away. Vines and tendrils snake through the brush, ready to pull you down and drink your blood. Even the blossoms are frightening. They might not attack you, but you know their touch is poison.

You reach the end of the path and find you have reached a dead end. Unsure what to do next, you turn and walk back. But after only a few dozen steps, you hear the howls. Rounding the bend ahead of you, the hounds spot you and start to run. Without thinking, you turn and run away. The dead end is ahead and beyond it, the deadly plants. But behind you are the hounds and whatever they might do to you.

You will have to trust to your agility to carry you through. Or maybe you can trust the raw destructive power of magic. Whatever way you go, you must act quickly.

Make either a Move test or a Destruction test. If you pass, turn to 26. If you fail, turn to 41.

93

As you hear the bone-eater running through the dungeon, you slip down the hole. The walls are rough and there are plentiful handholds to climb down. Eventually though, your feet touch nothing but air below you. You look down and see the floor several feet below. Carefully, you lower yourself as far as you can before letting go. You land not with a thud, but with a disgusting squish. The smell is disgusting, but you are alive. At least, for the time being.

As you look around the pit, you see refuse discarded by the academy. Rotten food, crushed glass, scraps of paper. All of it collected here under the earth. Along one wall you see a tunnel leading away. Maybe you can find a way out there. But there is so much random trash here. Maybe something valuable found its way down here with the garbage.

If you search the refuse, turn to 3. If you climb out the pit, turn to 77.

94

You step carefully onto the ledge and work your way toward Dianorah's room. The first several feet go okay. But once you are past the first window, you feel a lot less confident. You miss a step, you accidentally look down at the ground below, your fingers scramble for a hold that you can't find. Each error builds on the last until, finally, it is that last, inevitable stumble occurs and you are falling.

When you wake again, you find yourself at the bottom of the tower. Luckily, you did not break anything. You are left with only a splitting headache and a pulled muscle in your leg. But it was not the pain that woke you. It was the tolling of the bells. You curse time itself as you limp off. *Turn to 70.*

95

As quiet as you can, you circle the room away from the lizard. But every step you make is countered by the beast. It is hunting you, you realize. You won't be able to face it here. But where can you go?

If you try to escape the storeroom, turn to 28.

If you climb through the hole in the wall, turn to 73.

If you run for the drain, turn to 64.

96

While the professor takes a look at your homunculus, let's go ahead and tally your test score. Take your starting score and add in the following bonuses and penalties. Keep in mind that you can only score three of the components. You can only score each type of component once, even if you found multiples of the same type. Also if you marked any cracks while creating your homunculus, each crack causes a minus two penalty.

Once you have your total, note it as your test score on your character sheet.

Components (score three only)

Phoenix feather	+3
Goblin's skull	+3
Blood rose	+3
Sun crystal	+2
Mountain heart gem	+1

Cracks	-2 each
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If your test score is -8 to 1, turn to 14

If your test score is 2 to 10, turn to 50

If your test score is 11 to 12, turn to 72

97

The forest grows thicker as you follow the winding path as it leads you down a gentle slope. Before long, you can barely see more the ten paces in any direction. But the path goes on and you follow it.

Out of the corner of your eye, you spot something that seems strangely out of place. Up in the bows of a nearby tree, a bird's nest sits quietly. But instead of the usual stick and grass nest you are used to, this nest is a bright and bold construction. You have never seen anything like it and you marvel what kind of bird might build it. Since it does seem to be abandoned, you could take it down to see what it is made of. You might be able to knock it down with a stone. Or you might animate the thing and let the nest find its own way to you.

Make either a Move test or an Animation test. If you pass, turn to 42. If you fail, turn to 59.

98

You walk up to the librarian and ask if she can help you. She turns her iron gaze upon you and simply says, "No. Now go away."

That wasn't exactly what you were expecting. You step away from the desk and reevaluate your options. Should you try to convince her to help? Or maybe you can cast an illusion to disguise yourself as the Animation Master.

Make a Mien test or a Phantasm test. If you pass, turn to 7. If you fail, turn to 24.

99

You sneak very carefully around the clearing, doing your best not to spook the phoenix. It seems to go about its business without a care in the world. Closer and closer, you stalk the bird with all of your ability. Somehow, it never turns to look at you, even now that you are almost on top of it.

You are about to reach out the pluck one of its feathers when you hear a twig snap. You look down

but see nothing beneath your feet. The phoenix turns around and you stare at one another for a moment. Then as the phoenix's eyes grow large, you turn and look behind.

Standing just feet away, a black coated grouch has sneaked up behind you both. You almost make out a grin as it leaped toward you, razor sharp claws bared. There is no time for magic. You will have fight for your life.

Make a Might test. If you pass, turn to 36. If you fail, turn to 91

100

An excited knock rouses you from a deep slumber. Who can that be this early in the morn, you wonder as you slip on your robe.

On the other side of the door is Alisaed. There is a big grin on his face. "The animation master sent me to fetch you."

"But, but," you stammer. Your appointment is not for several bells now. What could your professor want?

"No buts. Now brush your hair and let's get out of here. You don't want to leave the master waiting do you?" You do as he suggests, brushing your hair, straightening your student's robe.

Together you head to the animations master's office. As you walk, Alisaed asks, "Did you here what happened to Clarina?"

You say, "No, I was too exhausted to do anything but sleep yesterday."

"The headmaster expelled her. After what she did to you, they had to. No matter what her parents were paying for tuition." He smiles widely. "Serves her right. Should make this place a little more bearable."

The professor stands when you enter and he mentions for you to have a seat. "That was quite a day yesterday, was it not?" he asks and you are forced to agree. "I have been watching your work carefully this year. You are one of my most exceptional students and you comported yourself excellently. To construct not just one, but two homunculi within a single day is astonishing for a first term student. You are receiving the top marks in Animation."

"Thank you," you tell him. "I certainly tried."

"I can tell. Now if you would indulge me, I have a proposal. After Clarina's unfortunate actions, I find myself without an appropriate research assistant for the next term. What do you say?"

When you leave the office, Alisaed throws a friendly punch at your arm. "Congratulations!" he says. Congratulations, indeed!

The End. You can continue your adventures in the next book, Academy of Magic: The Second Term. If you decide to accept the assistant position, you will start your adventure on section 10 instead of section 1.

Ability Bonuses

- A. +1 Might and Move
- B. +1 Mind and Mien
- C. +1 Mien and Move
- D. +1 Might and Move
- E. +1 Move and Mien
- F. +1 Mien and Mind
- G. +1 Might
- H. +1 Move
- I. +1 Mind
- J. +1 Mien

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