

PATH OF HERESY

**An Entry in the 2014 Windhammer Prize for
Short Gamebook Fiction**

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Dear reader,

This is a gamebook just like the ones you may have played in the past. If you haven't, know that this is a story in which you are the hero and your actions can change the course of events by taking the decision you like the most at the end of each section and continuing with the section whose number is in brackets.

You play the role of Brother Jacob, a priest of the Light. Like most of the clerics you may have met in fantasy settings, he can use prayers to heal, smite creatures of the Darkness, etc.

There are a few variables that will play an important role in the adventure:

Favour is the equivalent to mana of casters. Each prayer will decrease your Favour and if it reaches 0, the journey will be over since the prayer will have consumed the piece of Light you carry by birth – your soul.

Experience will increase every time you make a very good decision. It doesn't necessarily improve your chances of getting to the one true happy end, however, counts towards your result.

Relations refer to Brother Jacob's friendship with Sister Ulmia (whom you'll meet shortly). My advice would be to treat her right. Having a high Relations score improves your chances of getting to the one true happy end and counts towards your result.

Damage shows how wounded the final boss is.

You start with 10 points of Favour and 0 points of Experience, Relations and Damage.

Occasionally, you will gain or lose codewords, which you will need to keep a track on.

Now, please, take a look at the adventure sheet, then, continue to 1 as the adventure is about to begin.

Favour	10
Experience	0
Relations	0
Damage	0

1

"Do you think we are heading in the right direction?" You turn your head and smell the sweet odour of Sister Ulmia. Her emerald almond-shaped eyes sparkle in the light of the street lamp. She looks stunning even in twilight.

"Yes... it must be over there," she answers.

Neither of you mouth it, but you know how dangerous the streets of the big city can be at this time. You planned to arrive much earlier but your mount lost a horseshoe and had to move really slowly for the last few hours. Then, the stables master spent what seemed like eternity inspecting it before deciding to actually buy it.

As the priestess reaches next corner, a dirty hand grabs and pulls her. You dash, your hand on your sword, ready to take it out. Ulmia is in a narrow alley. The attacker is right behind her, trying to strangle her with a rope. It is too dark to see well, but it seems that there is another rogue with them.

Would you take out your sword?

Yes (2)

No, fight with bare hands (3)

2

Favour decreased by 1.

As soon as the sword leaves your sheath, you realize your mistake. The weapon is much too long to use properly here.

Unfortunately, you are right about the second bandit. He steps in front, waits for your clumsy swing, then simply kicks the blade out of your hand, leaving you defenseless against his dagger. You feel sharp pain in your shoulder and your vision blurs. Your knees suddenly feel so meek.

By the time you get over the shock, Sister Ulmia manages to deal with both of the bandits, sending them whelping around the corner.

"Are you all right, Brother?" Her voice is coarse. You see the concern on her face. There is an ugly scar on her throat, marring her immaculate milk white skin.

"I will survive," you say with a smile. Your attempt to stand up causes a big wave of pain and you are forced to say a healing prayer.

Continue (4)

3

Unfortunately, you are right about the second bandit. He steps in front, and tries to attack you with a dagger. However, he is no much for the speed and strength you acquired during your priest training. You grab the wrist of his armed hand and sprain it making him drop his weapon. Then, you give him a few kicks in his stomach without releasing your grip. When you let him go, he has no intention of continuing the fight.

Meanwhile, Sister Ulmia managed to deal with her attacker and they both disappear around the corner, whelping.

"Are you all right, Brother?" Her voice is coarse. You see the concern on her face. There is an ugly scar on her throat, marring her immaculate milk white skin.

"Yes, dear. I am more concerned about you, though," you reply.

Continue (4)

4

"Oh, it is nothing dangerous." She tries to hide her bruise under the collar of the cassock without much success. "There is no need to waste favour."

Basically, she is right. It is a vital resource. On the other hand, you know how much she loves looking beautiful. Vanity is her soft point, making her put red on her lips or dark powder around her eyes so that they stand out. She would really appreciate it if you cast a healing prayer since the priests from her order can't do that.

Heal her (5)

Don't (6)

5

Favour decreased by 1. Relations increase by 1.

You can see her wide smile as you begin the prayer. It is a beautiful smile. She puts her hand where the scar was.

"Thank you so much, Jacob!" She gives you a brief hug and a kiss on the cheek. "Now, let's move."

The priestess grabs you by the hand and you continue towards the inn.

Continue (7)

6

You have a few remorseful thoughts but decide to chase them away.

“Now, let’s move.”

The priestess grabs you by the hand and you continue towards the inn.

Continue (7)

7

“I don’t like that cassock!” Sister Ulmia looks with disgust at the bloodstains as soon as you arrive at the well-lit square in front of the inn. You understand her. She is used to the jet black members of the Order of the Cleansed wear. However, you both decided that it would be wiser if she chooses the white all other Orders within the Church of Light use for their uniforms.

It is just that the Order of the Cleansed is associated with devilry. Not many understand that even a devil can give its contribution to the cause of the Light.

The inn is a massive building. It is quite overcrowded at this hour, which doesn’t surprise you at all. You manage to find a nice table in the corner and order roast eggs and cherry juice.

“Did you expect to be given a mission just after graduating from the Seminary?” The priestess plays with her infernally red hair, trying to sort the beautiful mess.

“Well, not with someone as... pleasant as you.” You enjoy her smile.

“I am also happy to be able to spend time with you while serving the Light. Do you think there is really a ghoul in the suburbs? It sounds to me like a superstition. But, I need to feel the energies there.”

You nod. It is common for the Church to receive requests for help, claiming that some monster has appeared in the area and ask for priests to come and sort the matter. Most often, it is just someone’s imagination.

“I feel like drinking a jug of wine,” the priestess says.

The Canon doesn’t allow priests to drink. Maybe it is a good idea to talk her out of it. On the other hand, few clerics are that pedantic when it comes to following it. The wine could help her relax... and get more comfortable.

Argue against it (9)

Say nothing (8)

8

Relations increase by 1. Codeword Wine gained.

You just watch as she orders a big jug of wine. When it arrives, she pours some into her glass, filling it to the brim, then finishes it at one go.

“Care to try?” She asks, her cheek already obtaining a rosy hue.

“No, thank you,” you reply.

Obviously, the wine brightens her mood and you can only feel happy for her.

Continue (10)

9

“Sister, you know we are not supposed to have spirit drinks,” you say with a solemn voice.

“Yeah, I know that. But I thought that here with you I needn’t stick to every order of the Canon. Anyway, you are right.” She shrugs.

You are surprised at her lack of opposition. She tends to be very dominant at times. Nevertheless, you feel a bit uneasy for having to remind her of the rules of the Church.

Continue (10)

10

A couple of knights enter the inn and heads towards your corner. They have shiny plate armours with tabards. As they come closer, you spot silvery candelabra on them. They look like regular warrior priests, however, you fail to recognize the emblem.

"I smell a devil here," roars one of them and turns to Sister Ulmia. Your blood runs cold.

What you know about the beauty is that she used to be a devil who went through a series of transformation prayers so that she could look human and serve the Light.

The knight murmurs a prayer you recognize. It is designed to show the true image of a creature and is excellent for spotting creatures of the Darkness under cover.

The skin of the priestess gets bright red and spotted. You have never seen her initial form, but you guess the prayer should have had a greater effect. Probably the faith of the knight is not that strong. However, this is the least of your concerns at the moment.

"Spawn of darkness, by the power of the Light, I am taking you to prison!" he roars.

Moving unexpectedly quickly, he puts his hand on Ulmia's nose. You see a piece of cloth hanging from it. Could it be soaked with a sedative? What kind of a member of the Church would use such methods? The Sister coughs and takes out her daggers. Meanwhile, the second knight gets to a position between you and Ulmia. What do you do?

The most natural action would be to fight your way through the one next to you and try to defend your friend. She would definitely expect that. On the other hand, your chances of prevailing over such heavily armoured foes are not that great. They seem to be fellow priests. Maybe it would be better to let them take her and sort the matters with the high clergy later.

Would you attack?

Yes (12)

No (11)

11

Your heart bleeds as you watch her fight like a cornered cat. After she takes a couple of blows, the two knights tie her arms and feet together and take her out.

Continue (17)

12

Relations increase by 2.

You put your hand on the hilt of your sword and take it out. The knight is too close for you to use your blade, but your goal is to hit him with what is sticking out from it. Where would you punch him? The stomach is closer but you wonder whether to attempt to connect with his head.

The stomach (14)

The head (13)

13

Experience increased by 1. Codeword Dagger gained.

Your punch lands perfectly just above his ear and knocks him out with a cry. The other knight turns back and with just as well aimed kick disarms you. This gives Sister Ulmia a couple of valuable seconds to try to stab him. However, her weapon is in no way suitable for dealing with such heavy armour.

Meanwhile, your first opponent recovers and joins the fight, throwing a heavy keg over you. You are not seriously injured, but the knights use the opportunity to tie her arms and feet together

and take her out.

You roll the keg, struggling for your breath. Something sparkling attracts your attention. You bend over in amazement. It is one of Sister Ulmia's daggers. She would rather die than part with it. She must have deliberately dropped it for you to take her, hoping that it would help you find (or free) her somehow.

Continue (17)

14

Favour decreased by 1.

Your hand connects with his armour, and you almost cry with pain. The knight retaliates instantly, hitting you in your face (your nose is badly hurt so you need to say a prayer of healing as soon as you have the opportunity).

Do you have codeword Wine?

Yes (15)

No (16)

15

Before you recover, the two knights tie the arms and feet of Sister Ulmia together and take her out.

Continue (17)

16

Codeword Dagger gained.

It takes time for you to recover, but judging from the sounds, Sister Ulmia is fighting like a hellcat. Unfortunately, before you can step on your feet the two knights manage tie her arms and feet together and take her out.

Something sparkling attracts your attention. You bend over in amazement. It is one of Sister Ulmia's daggers. She would rather die than part with it. She must have deliberately dropped it for you to take her, hoping that it would help you find (or free) her somehow.

Continue (17)

17

You get out of the inn as quickly as you can but you could only watch as a carriage heads off.

"The Light shall burn you!" you swear.

You immediately go to the church nearby. The local priest doesn't know anything about an Order with a candelabrum emblem. You are physically and emotionally exhausted, so you accept his invitation to come in and sleep in the church, even though you desperately want to start searching for your friend. A soothing tea helps you release some of the tension and you manage to get some uneasy sleep on a pew, murmuring a prayer for the Light to watch over Ulmia.

When you wake up, it is slightly after sunrise. You thank the priest for his hospitality and go out.

Just in front of you, there is a fortuneteller's. You wouldn't normally use such services, but the issue is urgent and maybe the aim justifies the means. A more common option would be to meet your instructor in Basic Prayers, Bishop John, hoping that he could help you.

Who would you visit first?

The fortuneteller (19)

The Bishop (18)

18

Codeword Instructor gained.

As you make your way into the cathedral, you feel nostalgia about the time you were an initiate. As you walk the corridors, a part of you wants to come back to the harmony that reigned your soul back then. However, the memory of what happened last night is stronger and haunts you.

The Bishop is very happy to see you, even though your pale complexion worries him. You describe why Sister Ulmia and you came to the city and how you were attacked by the knights.

“Is there anything more you want to tell me about her? I know there are rumours about her Order that seem to be exaggerated. I remember teaching her at the time you were here, but I couldn’t get to know her very well.”

You perfectly understand his question. He wants to know if she is a devil. You are certain that you could trust him. On the other hand, you don’t feel it is moral to share her secret. What would you do?

Tell him (26)

Don’t (27)

19

Codeword Clairvoyant gained.

The building is quite small, without much furniture. It is dark inside, which makes you even more depressed. You are surprised to find another priest inside. Maybe visiting the clairvoyant is not that unusual for the members of the Church after all.

“Oh, one more,” sighs the fortuneteller. She is quite beautiful, with long hair dyed in blue. Her attire is all in jet black and it seems that she also puts dark dust around her eyes. “I am sorry, I can’t pay to you as well,” she says to you.

Now it makes sense. The other priest is here not because of what the lady can tell him. He is here for some of her money. Suddenly, anger fills you.

Would you confront him?

Yes (29)

No (30)

20

Experience increased by 1. Favour decreased by 1.

The vision overwhelms your senses and you need to take a seat lest fall on the floor. Your heart races as you see your beloved priestess. She is alive, even though she is struggling against something you can’t fathom. It is hard to understand where exactly she is, but something tells you she is in the suburbs.

This is all you could find out. Unfortunately, it is not much but you probably need more practice with it in order to achieve better results.

Continue (22)

21

I hope that you have codeword Clairvoyant and you have a basic idea where Sister Ulmia is.

Continue (22)

22

You return to the Bishop's study.

"I hope I was able to help you a little bit. May the Light guide your footsteps," he says. "Is there anything else that happened to you since you came to the city?"

Do you have codeword Clairvoyant?

Yes (23)

No (24)

23

Codeword Retribution gained.

You tell him about the priest who you met at the fortuneteller's. The Bishop seems concerned.

"Maybe the Church is swarmed with filthy maggots, even though the Order of the Cleansed is not the cause. Maybe it is the time for the prayer of retribution."

He hands you a parchment.

"This prayer was scribed by me. I hoped that there would be little use for it but it seems I was wrong. It is designed to punish anyone who is or used to be a priest of the Light but succumbed to the Darkness."

You study it carefully, then you bid him farewell.

Continue (25)

24

"Not really." You shrug.

You thank him for his help and bid him farewell.

Continue (25)

25

If you have visited the fortuneteller's now it is the time to continue on your way. Otherwise, you should check her out.

Do you have codeword Clairvoyant?

Yes (36)

No (19)

26

Experience increased by 1.

"Honesty is one of the greatest virtues of the Light. You tell me something I was almost sure myself." He gives you a warm smile.

Continue (28)

27

"I really don't want to talk about it," you say uneasily and look down.

"That is a good answer, Brother. However, if you want me to help, valuable information like this could be useful."

Continue (28)

28

"When the order of the Cleansed was officially recognized by the Church, there was a lot of opposition," the Bishop explains. "After all, those so called priests can't heal and their confessions tend to be violent, not to mention the infernal origin of at least some of the members. What the High Priest wanted was their knowledge of the forces of the Darkness in order to better fight it. The message didn't reach some priests. Many of them were good ones, however, they couldn't get over the fear that the Church is changing for the worse. A few renegades formed the Order of the Purifying Fire aimed at destroying the Order of the Cleansed. The former was condemned by the Church but nevertheless continued to exist. The candelabrum is their emblem. I fear that Sister Ulmia might be in great danger. Follow me, please."

The Bishop takes you to a library. Even though it is clean inside, the air smells of dust as the books there seem to be very old. He takes a tome with a leather cover and gives it to you."

"Here you can find the prayer of vision. It will help you locate your friend. If you want, you can say it now. I will be waiting for you in my study."

Would you like to say the prayer or would you save the favour for more urgent times?

Mouth it (20)

Don't (21)

29

How would you confront him?

Threaten to inform the high clergy (32)

Threaten him physically (31)

30

You really don't want to interfere with what is going on inside. If you haven't visited the Bishop, you should do so. Otherwise, it is time to continue on your way.

Do you have codeword Instructor?

Yes (36)

No (18)

31

Favour decreased by 1.

You take him by the collar and pull him closer. His response catches you unprepared as he hits your nose with his forehead. You feel a gush of blood coming out of it and the pain makes you fall on your knees.

It seems that the other priest is as surprised by the damage he caused and leaves the building without saying anything.

A prayer of healing later you feel much better.

Continue (33)

32

"I believe the Bishop will be interested to hear about it? What do you say, Brother? Or maybe you want to tell him before that?"

The other priest becomes pale as a ghost.

"It... it is not what it seems. That pagan is lying!"

"I am not a judge. Just leave her alone and let's forget about it. Right?" you propose.

He just nods and leaves.

Continue (33)

33

Experience increased by 1.

"Thank you for your help!" The fortuneteller says.

"I need your help. My best friend was kidnapped last night. I need to find her," you explain.

"Let me see what I can do." She invites you to sit at a table while she puts her hands on a glass ball, her eyes closed. After a couple of minutes, she opens them again.

"Sadly, I couldn't see much. She is alive, this is what I can say for sure, but she is around someone... or something powerful and evil."

"How do I find her?"

"You are on a mission, right?"

"Yes, we came here to hunt a ghoul that was reported to be haunting the suburbs."

"Find it... and you will find her as well," she says slowly. "I am sorry that I can't tell you more, but with a supernatural being so close to her, it is very hard."

"I am thankful for what you told me," you say and reach for your sash.

"There is no need to pay. Your help in getting rid of that dog of a priest was enough. What is your name?" she asks.

"Brother Jacob."

"I am Crystal and I think our paths will cross again."

Meanwhile, the ball starts glowing.

"My little friend wants to show me more," she smiles.

Do you have codeword Instructor?

Yes (34)

No (35)

34

Codeword Animal gained.

"You already requested the help of the clergy and got basically nothing. What a pity... I see you fighting a giant dog. I think I have something that can help you."

She gives you a small pendant.

"Show it to them and the beast will be your friend as long as its heart is beating."

You hide it in your stash, thanking.

"One last thing. A woman will help you all the way to the priestess. Just make sure you meet her." She sighs. That is all.

You thank her and get to the door.

"You will always be in my prayers, champion." She smiles at you as you leave.

Continue (35)

35

"I see you fighting a giant dog. Be careful, Jacob, it looks ferocious! Oh, and one last thing. A woman will help you all the way to the priestess. Just make sure you meet her." She sighs. That is all.

You thank her and get to the door.

"You will always be in my prayers, champion." She smiles at you as you leave.

If you haven't met the Bishop yet, you should do so. Otherwise, continue to the suburbs.

Do you have codeword Instructor?

Yes (36)

No (18)

36

The suburbs look very different from the central part. The streets are dirty and filled with trash. In such a surrounding, a ghoul could easily hide even during the day. Actually, for a moment you believe you have seen him, then it turns out it is just an old trump.

A friend of yours runs an inn in this area and so you drop in. The building is in a desolate state, very little of the cozy place it used to be a few years ago. Sven is happy to see you.

“How are you doing, old pal?” you ask him.

“Well, I am all right. The bad thing is I don’t have many customers. This old barrack has a high maintenance. What are you doing here?”

“I am on a mission. Someone reported seeing a ghoul in this area. Have you heard anything about it?”

“Not really.” He shrugs. “But nothing amazes me these days. After Amelia, the leader of the Twisted Blade band disappeared, all kinds of bad things happen. Before that, her band kept everything in order.”

That sounds strange.

“Any idea about a band of armoured knights with candelabra?”

“Yes, I’ve seen them in the area. There are rumours that they are behind Amelia’s disappearance. Their headquarters are probably nearby.”

You thank him for the information and bid him farewell, promising to come back soon.

Where do you do now? To the East, the poorest area in the city, or to the West, near the small market?

East (37)

West (38)

37

After half of an hour of wandering around the area, you feel completely disgusted with the surrounding. Anxiety arises within you as there is no progress towards finding Ulmia... or at least the ghoul.

Just as you are about to leave, you spot a scruffy looking man and decide to ask him a few questions.

“Not here, follow me,” he says and heads into a dark street.

Would you follow him?

Yes (45)

No (46)

38

The market area is crowded. Various goods are sold there but without Ulmia by your side... you feel that you need nothing.

Suddenly, your intuition tells you to say a prayer of meditation. It is not as powerful as the prayer of visions you may have learned (or even tried) but it sometimes helps you pay attention to important details.

Would you do it?

Yes (39)

No (40)

39

Favour decreased by 1.

You close your eyes and say the words. Suddenly, the way you perceive the world changes. You feel the odours of the spices, you hear the song of birds and... a metallic clutter. Concentrating harder, you could even overhear a muffled cry coming from the building in front.

The entrance is on the other side, in a quiet street. The door is locked but a strong kick makes it open. What you see really stuns you.

In front of you, there is a woman that must have been quite beautiful but now is covered in crust of dirt and blood. Her arms and legs are still in chains, you see a ring around her throat as well. When she sees you she prepares to attack. You raise your hands, trying to calm her.

"You aren't one of them, are you?" she asks and puts her hand under her ribs. Blood is dripping from under her rags.

"The ones with the candelabra? No. They took my girl too."

"I haven't seen her. I was alone here. I managed to pull the chains out of the wall. I poisoned two of the guards and strangled the third after being stabbed... please, help me remove these chains so that I could escape."

"You are Amelia, right?"

"Yes," she whispers and closes her eyes. Maybe she lost too much blood.

Would you do as she asks?

Yes (41)

No (42)

40

You realize you are wasting your time here. If you haven't been to the East maybe you should check there.

Go to the Eastern parts of the suburbs (37)

No, I have been there (49)

41

Codeword Freedom gained.

The chains are old and rusty and you have no problem breaking them with your sword. Of course, you don't even think of trying to do so with the ring around her neck.

"Thank you very much, priest," she says and heads for the door. Keeping herself on her feet seems to be hard for her. Would you like to heal her?

Yes (43)

No (44)

42

"I can't. I really shouldn't be helping a criminal." You say and turn your back on her, leaving. What you just did gets you out of your skin as you are not used to refusing help to someone in such a destitute state.

If you haven't been to the East maybe you should check there.

Go to the Eastern parts of the suburbs (37)

No, I have been there (49)

43

Favour decreased by 1. Codeword Salvation gained.

Amelia seems startled by what is happening to her but when the prayer does its work she can't hide her smile.

"Thank you, Brother. I really thought I would pass out before I reach my hideout."

"I am always glad to help," you assure her.

"I will find a way to help you with your quest, I just need to sort a few matters up. See you later," she says and moves out with feline grace.

If you haven't been to the East? If not, you should check out the area.

You were to the East (49)

Not yet (37)

44

You watch her leave the house, each step tormenting her and you feel remorseful. You are not used to being able to help a wounded person and do nothing.

If you haven't been to the West? If not, you should check out the area.

You were to the East (49)

Not yet (37)

45

You start asking questions as you follow him into the darks street. His answers come in the form of a pair of daggers threatening to pierce into your torso.

Do you have codeword Freedom?

Yes (47)

No (48)

46

You have the feeling this could be a trap. There is really no reason for him to ask you into the street unless he has prepared some sort of an ambush.

Wandering around the area, you find nothing. If you haven't been to the Western part of the suburbs, you should go there.

You were there (49)

Not yet (38)

47

Codeword Key gained.

Just as you believe you are going to be stabbed, the cutthroat suddenly stops and stares at something behind you. You have no idea where she appeared from, but there is Amelia, her hand raised above your shoulder.

"Hold down, Sparky! This one is a friend," she says in a low voice.

"I am sorry, Mistress," he mutters and bows.

"That is okay. Is the key for the cottage ready?" she asks him.

"Yes, Mistress, here it is." He produces a lead key out of his pocket.

"Give it to him. Farewell."

You take the key and turn back to ask her what it is supposed to unlock but she is gone.

Continue (49)

48

Favour decreased by 1. Codeword Key gained.

You are slow to react. You feel one of the daggers sink between your ribs. Luckily, the wound is not deep and you manage to grab the other hand of the assassin, then punch him in the face so hard you knock him out.

While you say the prayer of healing, he manages to regain consciousness but his will to fight is over. As soon as he gets on his feet, he runs.

Something dings as he does so. You bend and pick up a key and decide to take just in case you can use it.

If you haven't been to the West, you should check there.

Do so (38)

You were there (49)

49

You continue wandering the area, feeling all hope slowly vanish. Has the Light abandoned you? All your life you have been taught to trust it, but now desperation is taking over.

Just as you are about to sit in a corner and cry, you spot a knight with the candelabrum tabard. He is far from you and with the fast stride of his you simply can't catch him. However, you see where he came from. It is a one-end street with a few houses. However, only one has a door leading to it.

You thank the Light and grab the handle. The door is locked. It is made of massive wood and reinforced with metal, so shattering it is out of the question.

You...

... have codeword Salvation (51)

...don't have codeword Salvation but you have Key (50)

... have neither of those codewords (52)

50

You take the key and put it into the lock, knowing that the chances of it being the right one are very slim. You rotate it and the door unlocks with a thud!

Continue (53)

51

"Need some help, Brother?" You hear a familiar voice from behind. You turn and see Amelia. She definitely looks better, her hair still wet from the shower she must have had. You smell the aroma of roses.

"Wouldn't the odour let you out?" you ask with a smile.

"Not, really. It will wear out in a few minutes. Besides, I am here to make a good impression, not to hide. I guess you want that door opened?"

You nod.

"Would you to come with me?" you propose.

Amelia produces a skeleton key out of her cloak and unlocks the door.

"I surely want, but this is not the way I do it." She looks you in the eye. "I will follow you in the shadows and I will help you any way I can."

"Thank you in advance, then."

You enter.

Continue (53)

52

Favour decrease by 1.

Not having the means to deal with the door, you decide to resort to a prayer of meditation. Your senses instantly become overloaded with smells and sounds and you are able to notice details you would ignore otherwise.

For example, you notice that one of the bricks about two feet over the ground sticks out. Could it be a cache? You climb, using a few holes in the wall and remove the brick. Behind it you find a key!

Back on the ground, you put it into the key hole. It works!

Continue (53)

53

You enter the building. There is virtually nothing on the ground floor, only a winding stairway leading down. You descent, trying to be as quiet as possible.

When you get to the first underground level, a terrible stink almost makes you cough. There are two cages and in each of them there is a grotesque reminiscent of a human with enormous claws and teeth. Ghouls! So, they are not a superstition after all!

A young boy wearing the candelabrum emblem, oblivious to your presence, opens one of the cages and casts a spell. The ghoul slowly comes out, presumably under his control... then swipes with its claw. The boy manages to put its forearm in front of his face just before it shreds it to pieces. The dangerous nails miss, but the blow nevertheless knocks the boy down.

You have only a few second to do something, otherwise, the ghoul will finish him.

What would you do?

Cast a prayer of protection on the boy (54)

Smite the ghoul (55)

Do nothing (56)

54

Favour decreased by 1.

The prayer gives the boy a few seconds during which the ghoul can't attack him, however, he is mortified with fear. Very soon, the protection will be over.

What is your choice?

Smite the ghoul (55)

Do nothing (56)

55

Favour decreased by 1. Codeword Stash gained.

The ghoul dies in an explosion of light. The boy looks around, trying to find the source of his salvation. You come out and try to calm him. It takes some time before he is able to speak.

"The spell... it didn't work. Why?" he wonders.

"I have no idea. What I know is that you would be dead if I hadn't interfered."

He nods.

"I suggest you go home and forget about those knights."

The boy agrees with you.

"Before you go, can you tell me if there is priestess with red hair somewhere in the building."

"I don't know, I have never been to the lowest levels. But... I guess these people sent me here to die. If you continue to the lower level, to the tomb, the second coffin to the right is empty. Inside,

there is a whistle that stuns ghouls. It works, unlike the spell I just used. Damn it, why did the instructor insist that I leave it there?"

You leave him to sort out his feelings and continue to the second underground level.

Continue (57)

56

Favour decreased by 1.

You watch in horror as the ghoul rips him. Then, the ghoul sniffs the air and catches your scent! You realize it is high time to smite him and end his existence in an explosion of light.

The quick prayer over the remains of the boy does little to help your remorse.

Continue down to the second underground level (57)

57

This level is colder and smells of mold. The light is scant, coming from a couple of torches. You shiver when you realize you are in a sort of a tomb. Daring to remove the cover of one of the coffins, you see a corpse that resembles a ghoul. Oh, is that how they are formed?

Probably, the best action you can take is cast a prayer of consecration, which is likely to stop the process.

Do it (58)

Spare the favour (59)

58

Favour decreased by 1. Experience increased by 1. Codeword Consecration gained.

The prayer leaves you rewarded. You could swear you heard a few moans, probably coming from the dying ghouls... or it could have been your imagination.

Continue (60)

59

You know it is not the right thing to do, but you hope that after you save Sister Ulmia, you will be able to deal with the abominations in the coffins.

Continue (60)

60

Do you have codeword Stash?

Yes (61)

No (62)

61

You remember the boy's words and remove the cover of the second coffin to the left. The whistle is there. You carefully wipe the dust off it and put it in your stash.

Continue (62)

62

With nothing else to do here, you descend to the third level. Just like the first, there are a couple of cages. One of them is empty, but in the other there is a scruffy looking man chained to the wall. A young female knight holds a long whip close to his face.

"I'm not telling," he says and spits.

The girl hits him hard.

"Everyone says so, in the beginning." She prepares to hit him again. As she does so, her hair moves to the other side and you spot a necklace that reminds you of the one you gave to Sister Ulmia. Could it be it?

Do you have codeword Salvation?

Yes (63)

No (64)

63

A gentle tap on the shoulder startles you.

"The man is from my gang. I think I should kill her. Then you can continue downwards," Amelia whispers in your ear.

What would you do?

Just nod (65)

Ask Amelia not to kill her (66)

Ask her just to stun her and take her necklace (67)

64

What would you choose?

Attack her (69)

Sneak past her and go down the stairway (68)

65

You are not interested in the details of what she is about to do, so as soon as she starts moving silently towards her target, you sneak to the next level. You don't hear a sound as you go further down.

Continue (68)

66

Favour increased by 1.

Amelia could hardly hide her amazement. It takes her half a minute to grasp what you are trying to tell her.

"You are a good priest, Jacob. I haven't met any like you in this dirty city. All right, just continue down the stairs. I will catch up with you later," she whispers.

Continue (68)

67

Codeword Necklace gained.

Amelia is slightly surprised by your request, but decides to fulfill it anyway. She moves silently towards her target as if stepping on a velvet carpet. When she is a foot away from her, she jumps and kicks her head. The knight girl stumbles and her head hits the wall. Amelia removes her necklace and throws it to you, then approaches her fellow gang member and unlocks his chain.

You use the moment and descend further, to the fourth underground level.

Continue (68)

68

Here, it smells strongly of big animals with just a little hint of decay. A silent growl attracts your attention. Three big dogs are fighting a ghoul. There is not much left of the undead creature and the canines are nibbling bones that still move. For a second you wonder why the heretics would care to have dogs down here. Then, you realize they may have wanted to have a means of protecting from the ghouls in case things go wrong.

Fear overwhelms you when the biggest of them sees you and approaches you. There is more curiosity than aggression in his eyes, yet the sheer size of the predator makes you tremble. Even alone, he would be a very difficult foe to overcome.

Do you have codeword Animal?

Yes (72)

If not, you continue downwards undisturbed (73)

69

You doubt that you can move stealthily towards her, so you charge with your sword. Your opponent seems surprised at first but manages to dodge your attack, then raises the whip. Would you like to move close to her or maintain a fair distance from her?

Close (71)

Distant (70)

70

Favour decreased by 1.

The task you set for yourself is very difficult. The whip is very long and the girl seems to have a lot of experience with it. She starts hitting you quickly, leaving sore lines on your skin. One well aimed sweep lands in your eye and you are forced to cast a healing prayer.

Then, you go berserk. The knight can't parry with her weapon and is forced to move back to the wall in her desperation to escape from your blade. You really don't mean to kill her, but one of her moves makes her neck position just in front of your sword and you decapitate her.

You feel sorry for her, but manage to force yourself to bend over the headless corpse, pick the necklace and wipe it with the knight's tabard. It is no doubt Sister Ulmia's necklace.

You set the prisoner free and go down the stairway.

Continue (68)

71

Codeword Necklace gained.

The closer distance make her whip wielding very difficult. She manages to hit you a couple of time but without too much force. In her desperation, she moves even closer, jabbing herself on your sword. A scarlet stream springs from her lips and she breathes out for the last time. You feel sorry for her, but she dies too quickly. You pick the necklace and wipe it with the knight's tabard. It is no doubt Sister Ulmia's necklace.

You set the prisoner free and go down the stairway.

Continue (68)

72

The beast sees the pendant and looks mesmerized. It steps forward and lies in your feet. You get over your fear and pet him, making him turn around so that you can reach his breast. The other

two canines watch from a distance, indifferently.

You decide it is high time to continue down. The big dog follows you from a distance.

Continue (73)

73

A familiar figure awaits you on the next level.

"I knew you'd come, Brother." It is the knight who abducted Sister Ulmia. "I am Brother Simon. Welcome to my domain. Here is the place where the eternal serum is made. It is the secret ingredient for making ghouls."

You look around. The place looks like an alchemist lab, with lots of vials and cauldrons with bubbling substances.

"You are mad. And judging from your acts, you are no Brother of mine. But the most important question is where Ulmia is."

The knight smiles widely.

"Don't be so quick. You are right, I am declared an outcast from the Church, a heretic. As for your last question, I may allow you to meet her... after I test the ghouls with you. What can be a greater challenge for them than a devout priest of the Light?"

He chuckles and you hear heavy footsteps coming down the stairs.

Do you have codeword Consecration?

No (74)

Yes (75)

74

A horde of ghouls appears from above. You count at least half a dozen of them.

Do you have codeword Stash?

Yes (76)

No (77)

75

Only a couple of ghouls appear from above. Simon expresses his disapproval with a loud scream.

Do you have codeword Stash?

Yes (78)

No (79)

76

Favour decreased by 2.

As quickly as you can, you blow the whistle. A couple of monsters freeze at their places, but the others continue their rush towards you. You have time for only one prayer of smiting before the ghouls reach you. You hack and slash as quickly as you can, behead the first one to bite your neck, kick another, making him hit the wall, then slice it as well.

It is one of the best fights of your life despite getting wounded a few times. When the battle is over, you need to catch your breath for a second before saying the healing prayer.

"That was impressive. I think I should work more on these ghouls." Simon claps. "I knew I should have sent the boy to die sooner."

Continue (80)

77

You have time for only one prayer of smiting before the ghouls reach you. You hack and slash as quickly as you can, behead the first one to bite your neck, kick another, making him hit the wall, then slice it as well. Then, the last two ghouls knock you down and bite you to death.

Simon laughs hysterically just before it is all over for you.

Start again (0)

78

As quickly as you can, you blow the whistle. A couple of monsters freeze at their places, and only one continues its rush towards you and quickly falls under your blade.

Simon is furious.

"This is not what I planned for you. And that damned boy, I knew I should have sent it to die sooner."

Continue (80)

79

Favour decreased by 1.

You have time for only one prayer of smiting before the remaining two ghouls reach you. You hack and slash as quickly as you can, behead the first one, kick the other, making him hit the wall, then slice it as well.

Simon applauds you.

"This was not what I planned for you, but it was a nice performance nevertheless."

Continue (80)

80

"Now, prepare for your next meeting. You wanted to see your beloved Sister Ulmia, right? I bet you'll regret it," says Simon with a theatrical tone.

A door opens and a creature comes in. Her gait has nothing to do with Sister Ulmia's, swaying to the sides and dragging her left leg. When she comes closer to the only torch, you see a grotesque reminiscent of your friend, her lips twisted, her eyes filled with contempt.

"Allow me to explain. I needed another mastermind to control my ghouls and that woman seemed like the perfect candidate, having in mind her supernatural background. I've already changed her mind and I know she can lead a whole army of abominations. Now, I want to see her fight... you."

Do you have codeword Necklace?

Yes (81)

No (82)

81

Relations increased by 1.

You throw the necklace at her. She extend her arm to stop it from hitting her face and it entangles her fingers. Then Ulmia sees it and her eyes sparkle. You hope it is a sign of recognition.

Continue (82)

82

She gets closer. You rise your sword, knowing that you'd never hurt her, even if that means your doom.

Check your relations score.

5 (83)

3 or 4 (84)

2 or less (85)

83

As soon as she is a couple of steps from you, her facial expression changes. Sister Ulmia is back! The pair of emerald eyes that watches you is full of love!

Continue (86)

84

Favour decreased by 1.

She is just a couple of meters from you but her face tells only one thing – that she is the predator and you are the prey.

You put your hands on your eyes, unable to watch her any more, whispering a prayer. Then, she touches you... gently. When you look again, her emerald pair of eyes watches you with an avalanche of love. Sister Ulmia is back!

Continue (86)

85

She is just a couple of meters from you but her face tells only one thing – that she is the predator and you are the prey.

You put your hands on your eyes, unable to watch her any more, whispering a prayer. Then, the final blow comes, splitting your skull and putting a quick end to your life.

Start again (0)

86

"Why do I need to do everything myself?" Simon roars and starts transforming. His skin obtains a scarlet colour blemished by black dots and a pair of massive horns appear on his head.

"Are you surprised? I have a reason to hate the Order of the Cleansed. They are traitors to Devilry and should all die... or strengthen the army of ghouls. Since you aren't going to do the second, allow me to help you with the first, Ulmia."

"Only over my dead body." You step forward.

"Gladly." He grins.

You...

...can smite him (only once) (87)

...have codeword Animal (88)

...have codeword Retribution (89)

...have codeword Dagger (98)

...are finished with all of the above (90)

87

Favour decreased by 1. Damage increased by 1.

The prayer has exactly the result you anticipate. A sphere of Light engulfs him and burns him, making him wail and curse.

Return (86)

88

Codeword Animal lost. Damage increased by 1.

You have forgotten about the dog. Strangely enough, he just sat on the floor during your battle with the ghouls and the close shave encounter with Sister Ulmia, but now it comes back to life, attacking the devil. Simon tries to command him to go away but to no avail. The canine bites his leg and only retreats with a big piece of devil meat in his jaws.

Return (86)

89

Codeword Retribution lost. Damage increased by 1.

You remember the prayer Brother John taught you. The effect is similar to the prayer of smiting. The Light forms a vortex around the target, wiping and burning him all over.

Return (86)

90

"I can take care of myself," Sister Ulmia shouts, giving you a determined look, then charges the devil.

Do you have 5 points of Relations?

Yes (91)

No (92)

91

Damage increased by 1.

The priestess fights like a cougar, using only her nails and teeth. It seems that Simon taught her well. However, you know that it is you who make her confident and allow her to give the best she can.

Nevertheless, Simon manages to deliver a couple of strong blows in her ribs, probably breaking a few. The priestess falls to the ground, her face a grimace of pain.

Would you heal her?

Yes (93)

No (94)

92

The priestess fights like a cougar, using only her nails and teeth. It seems that Simon taught her an interesting way to fight. However, she doesn't seem confident in it. Simon manages to deliver a couple of strong blows in her ribs, probably breaking a few. The priestess falls to the ground, her face a grimace of pain.

Would you heal her?

Yes (93)

No (94)

93

Favour decreased by 1. Damage increased by 1.

Sister Ulmia quickly rises on her feet and kick Simon in his mouth, making him spit out a few teeth, just before he punches her again and pins her to the ground.

Continue (95)

94

You watch with pain as Simon grabs her by her hair, pulls it up and delivers a blow in her face.

Continue (95)

95

Do you have codeword Salvation?

Yes (96)

No (97)

96

Damage increased by 1.

Amelia appears from the shadows and stabs Simon at the back. You see her rotate her blade before taking it out and leaving the place.

You find it very hard to understand her ways of doing business, but you are quite happy for what she just did.

Continue (97)

97

You raise your sword and attack the devil. He doesn't move until the last second before you hit him, then kicks your hand, disarming you. You have to fight him with you bare hands. Simon is supernaturally strong but seems to be tiring quickly.

Do you have at least 4 points of Damage?

Yes (100)

No (99)

98

Codeword Dagger lost. Damage increased by 1.

You gently put the dagger in Sister Ulmia's hand. She smiles widely, cherishing the contact with her favourite weapon, then throws it at Simon. The blade cuts into his shoulder with a thud, followed by his scream.

Return (86)

99

You are not very experienced in unarmed combat and your lack of training shows up. After you receive a couple of heavy punches in your face, he quickly moves behind you, grapples you and starts to strangle you. Slowly but surely, the world around you darkens.

Start again (0)

100

The wounds he received earlier are beginning to show up, making him slower and slower. You don't have much experience in unarmed combat, but manage to punch hard in his face, knocking him down. Then, a series of kicks makes his face a bloody mess. After you make sure he is dead you go to Sister Ulmia and carefully help her stand up. You wipe the blood off her face and then kiss her passionately.

Congratulations! You managed to stop those walking on the Path of Heresy! Getting to the happy end is an achievement in itself, however, if you want to receive an evaluation of your performance, sum your Relations and Experience points.

If the result is 5 or less, your rank is Hopeful. There is much hope that you will do better next time.

If the result is 6 or 7, your rank is Novice. You still have a lot to learn about being a good priest of the Light.

If the result is 8 or 9, your rank is Master of Prayers. You are very efficient in directing the Light.

If the result is 10, your rank is Champion of the Light. You are one of the greatest assets of the Church of Light!