
Tipping Point

by Andy Moonowl

An Entry in the 2013 Windhammer Prize for
Short Gamebook Fiction

Introduction:

All I see is grey. The forests, plains, farmlands are gone. In their place is one wide plain of grey. Or not a plain. For blocks of grey rise up into the sky. Tall blocks, small blocks. And not only grey. Now I make out bricks, roofs. This is a town, I realise. Not a town like today, all hustle and bustle and wattle and daub. A grey town. A town of hard surfaces and rectangular blocks. Stone and metal and glass.

I see cages. Many cages. The people are in cages. The animals are in cages. I know cages. We use cages today, in war, as punishment. A prisoner is kept caged before execution, an enemy is kept caged to demand a ransom. Now, almost all are in cages. Many of the people are in small cages with wheels, moving around the spaces between the blocks. Some are sitting at desks, like a chancellor's table, shuffling papers or unrecognisable items, in cages within cages. Some are at home, but the home is now a cage, locked and barred. The cattle, too, are in cages. Cattle, chickens, pigs. I feel stultified, miserable. A terrible world.

Or maybe not a terrible world. People have so much more than they do today. All but the poorest wear elaborate garments, clothes of red and blue and green and yet more grey. Even *shoes* – the townspeople have shoes. Images move on screens, in many colours, apparently at the command of those who view them. There is meat and wine, for all who want it, cornucopias of meat and wine and fruit and bread. For everyone? Perhaps not. But for most. I feel satisfied, the next meal looking more certain. There is no need for travelling adventurers in this world.

So things are better here? Perhaps. But there is a shadow. I feel a lack of magic in this world. The gods, spirits, djinni have left. The world is emptier – all people and objects, objects and people. People moving between objects. More than this. The people's lives are not their own. Not the peasants, not even the lords. Ruled by whom? The objects? I can't tell. Perhaps there is no ruler. Perhaps I cannot see the ruler. Perhaps there is no life.

You awaken, sweat on your brow. A dream – you should have realised sooner. You are no stranger to intense dreams and night terrors. A wandering adventurer, treasure-hunter, sometimes a sword-for-hire, you have more than your share of terrible memories, each returning to haunt your slumber. Even since you returned to village life, tired of the wars and the dangers, they have continued to haunt you. You have learnt to put them aside, to lock them off lest they undermine your waking time. But this is different. Something, here, has shifted. This dream was not a memory. This dream did not belong to your personal past.

And you are not the only one who thinks so. Amara, the village shaman, agrees.

"What you have seen", she says, "is the future".

It is not like you to seek out a shaman. The old religion of the shamans is a matter for peasants, gatherers, tinkerers. You do not belong to this world, having left young to pursue your fortune. Nor do you belong to the great religion of the cities, with its almighty deity and its spires touching the sky. You live a life where the only faith is in strength and wits, and the proven magic of the battle-mages and field-healers. Sure, you have ridden dragons and dromedaries, seen elephants and elementals, wrestled with basilisks and crocodiles. To you, these are mere creatures of the world. But always, memories tickle at you, from the earliest days of childhood, or from things half-seen in the margins of vision. You cannot lose forever the pull of the world now dismissed by so many as fairy-tales.

And so, when this new dream haunted your life, you sought out a shaman. You were seeking to be calmed, to be given a palliative so as to carry on with your life.

Instead, she has only confirmed your fears.

"The future?" you say. "So this must come to pass?"

She sighs. "Do you recall so little? The future is never chiselled into the monolith of the world. It is like an ocean, turning, flowing. You have seen one of the images it will carve in the cliff-face, if its

flow continues in a certain direction. But the flow is always shifting, and each of us is a part of it. It may turn another way, or it may not turn at all."

You are confused. "So my dream is a warning? A promise?"

"No", she says. "This is a calling to your path. The energy lying beneath this visible world is twisting and turning. It comes to a splitting-point. Soon, a path will be laid, the channels will be drawn in one way and not another.

"What you have seen, dear warrior, is an inkling of the stakes. You have seen one of the ways in which reality may bifurcate. And because the dream has come to you, this is a sign that your own life-flow is bound into this bifurcation. It will choose you, or your own rhythm will nudge its course in some way.

"Leave here, my child. Follow your heart, your calling. Yours is the path to remake yourself and the world. But choose wisely, for you have seen the differences a choice can make. And always stay loyal to the light you follow."

Mystical gibberish, a part of you thinks. But another part treats these words with the deepest reverence. And anyway, you have rested enough. It is time for new adventures. And if they serve to lay paths in the ocean or whatever she said – so be it.

Your unconscious gnaws at you that this is where vital changes are most likely to be at foot. Here, perhaps, are hirers for a sellsword, treasures to be looted. Morden is unlikely to hand over his secrets of his own accord, but perhaps you can obtain them by fighting for the King, or under your own volition. And if nothing else, at least you can bring back some gold.

And so you find yourself on course to Caer Linnaroth, the capital of the small kingdom of Arthal. You have heard that the wizards of Arthal are trying new things, harnessing the vitality of the elementals, unleashing new weapons of ferocious power. Their power-hungry lord Morden was once the King of Arthal's court alchemist, but he split with the king over some grievance real or imagined, and retreated to the Tower of Spells in the north of the realm. There, he entrenched himself with a following of loyal mages, and began to send out elementals and undead minions. The land of Arthal is now at war, and the King's forces are suffering setbacks from unknown dark magicks.

Rules and Instructions

This is a gamebook in which your character will decide not only his own destiny, but the fate of a world. There is no one right answer or single path through the gamebook. It is possible to fail, and some paths are more dangerous than others, so choose wisely.

Unlike many gamebooks, this gamebook does not have one “good” ending. Instead, the character's choices can lead to a number of successful endings, each with a different outcome. There are several routes through the narrative, each requiring different choices and items.

At the start of the adventure, you have a minimum of equipment. You carry a backpack and a Dagger. You have brought enough food to last for the duration; you will not need to keep track of how much you eat during this adventure. You also have a few gold pieces. Roll a six-sided die (d6) and add 4 to the result (giving a number between 5 and 10). This is how many gold pieces you have at the start of your adventure.

You may carry as many weapons and items as you wish, but you may only wield one weapon at a time. You are also limited to wearing 1 suit of armour, 1 helmet, and 1 shield (though you may add the bonuses of one of each type of item). Items and weapons will be marked in **bold**.

Combat rules

Sometimes, you might face a monstrous or human adversary in combat. You will need a set of role-playing dice – **d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20** (six, eight, ten, twelve, and twenty-sided dice) – to resolve combat. *If you do not have role-playing dice, a free alternative is available at*

<http://www.charactersheet.net/rpg/dice-roller>

The rules for resolving combat are as follows.

Each character – yourself included – has two numerical scores relevant to combat. Your **ATTACK** score is the amount of damage you can do. Human fighters, like yourself, cause damage based on the weapon they wield. At the start of this adventure, you are wielding a Dagger, which does 1d6 damage to opponents. Over time, you may find other weapons which do greater amounts of damage. Remember to keep a note of your current weapon and its capabilities.

You also have a **HITPOINTS** score, which is the amount of damage you can take before you die. To determine this score, roll a **d6, d8, and d10**, and add 20 to the numbers rolled (giving a score between 23 and 44). If your Hitpoints reach zero, you are dead and your adventure is over! Remember to keep a running total of your Hitpoints. Also keep a record of your **Maximum** Hitpoints score. This is equal to the number of Hitpoints you have at the start of your adventure. Your Hitpoints score may never exceed this Maximum.

Combat is resolved in rounds, with each combatant taking a turn. Unless told otherwise in the text, your character always goes first. Roll the weapon's attack dice (e.g. a d6 for your Dagger) and subtract this number from the opponent's Hitpoints. If the opponent is still alive, she/he/it gets a turn. Roll dice corresponding to the opponent's Attack, and subtract this from your character's Hitpoints. Repeat this process until one character runs out of Hitpoints (is dead).

Example:

Arthur Steelbrow – Dagger (1d6), 30 Hitpoints – fights a Skeleton – Attack 1d10, 10 Hitpoints.

As a player character, Arthur goes first. Arthur rolls a 4. The Skeleton had 10 Hitpoints, so Arthur deducts 4. The Skeleton has 6 Hitpoints.

The Skeleton is still alive, so it gets a roll. You roll a 10-sided die, and roll a 4. Arthur loses 4 Hitpoints. Arthur now has 26 Hitpoints.

Arthur is still alive, so Arthur rolls again. This time, Arthur rolls a 6. The Skeleton only has 6 Hitpoints left, so Arthur's roll kills the Skeleton.

Sometimes this method will be varied. Some items add or subtract points from the damage you inflict or receive. In some cases, you or an opponent may attack more than once before the other side has a chance to hit back. If you fight several opponents, they might attack once *each* before you get a chance to hit back.

This gamebook also features **Mass Battles**. These are resolved the same way as individual combat, though in this case, the Hitpoints score is termed Unit Strength. Your tactics will decide which units will be exposed to damage, or able to inflict blows. If a unit can inflict a blow, then normally each unit will strike one blow each round. Allied units strike first unless otherwise stated. If there are two enemy units attacking one allied unit or vice-versa, then the side with more units will get several dice rolls instead of just one. You may assign many or all units to a single adversary, but you should decide which units they are attacking **before** rolling attack dice. *Ranged units cannot be used in close combat.*

Tipping Point - Action Sheet

Current Attack:

Maximum Hitpoints:

Current Hitpoints:

Gold Pieces:

Items:

COMBAT LOG



Player:

Enemy:

Player:

Enemy:

Player:

Enemy:

Player:

Enemy:

Player:

Enemy:

Player:

Enemy:

Player:

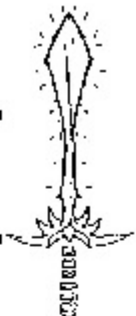
Enemy:

Player:

Enemy:

Army Roster

My units: Marching order

My Unit:	
Enemy Unit:	
My Unit:	
Enemy Unit:	
My Unit:	
Enemy Unit:	
My Unit:	
Enemy Unit:	
My Unit:	
Enemy Unit:	
My Unit:	
Enemy Unit:	
My Unit:	
Enemy Unit:	
My Unit:	
Enemy Unit:	

MAP



1

The castle of Caer Linnaroth sits atop a hill, and dominates the surrounding countryside. Its parapets are brightly painted in garish blue and yellow, and similarly festooned banners hang from its battlements, a visible contrast with the rustic browns and greys of its hinterlands. Visible from miles away, it offers a vantage point from which the King's men can similarly see for miles. Accessible only over a drawbridge across a deep moat, in full view of walls ringed with archers, the castle is an intimidating target for any would-be attacker. It is as if the castle speaks to those around it: we're in charge, and you'd better remember it.

The drawbridge is lowered at your approach, and a knight approaches to ask your business. You tell him of your past exploits, the wars you've fought in, the monsters you've slain. He gives a look suggesting suspicion, and brusquely orders you to stay put while he consults the King.

After this welcome, you are fully expecting to be turned away, and are contemplating your options when the knight returns. His tone has completely changed. "His Majesty observes that we are at war, and the needs of the moment impel him to seek your counsel", he grovels. "Please, be so kind as to follow me to His Majesty's audience chamber".

The King's throne-room is everything you would expect – an ostentatious display of wealth and power. Pennants, weapons and tapestries ring the walls, while most of the furniture seems made of gold or silver. Rows of knights, squires, and footmen stand in rows, feigning attention to the King's every word. You are unimpressed, having seen it all before. A powerful king will in fact have expensive ornamentation and real gold, but lesser pretenders are all too good at faking the appearance with poorly-sewn imitations and fool's gold.

The King expounds at length on his current situation. The kingdom, it seems, is in a bit of fiscal distress. The war against the wizards is going well (not that you trust the King's word on this), but the costs of the war – and of hiring sellswords like yourself – are stretching the King's treasury to breaking point. Reluctantly, the King has sought recourse to his subjects, to whom he has devoted many years of protection and benevolence. But the peasants are being uncooperative. The first squire he sent to collect taxes returned with less than a tenth of what was due, and the second – given sharp instructions to avoid indulgence – disappeared without a trace. Now, hearing of your reputation, the King has little doubt that you would be able to impress the necessity of the situation upon the peasants. Should you do so to his satisfaction, you would of course be well rewarded, both with gold, and a ranking position in the King's army for the duration of the present war.

So, this is what the King wants you for? Not as a warrior, but a tax collector!

The King tells you that, if you accept the task, you must obtain instructions from his Chancellor.

If you proceed straight to the Chancellor's office, turn to **26**.

If you do not like the tax collection idea, and wish to set out at once into the countryside, turn to **51**.

If you wish to approach one of the knights, and ask how they really feel about the peasants and why the tax collections have failed, turn to **54**.

If you wish to ask around about the significance of your dream, turn to **19**.

If you wish to wait until you are unnoticed, then sneak off and try to rob the King's storerooms, turn to **35**.

2

As your units advance, the lead unit comes under a withering hail of fire from enemy archers. The enemy archers get **eight free rolls** against the lead unit. (If the lead unit is wiped out, the archers switch to the second unit, and so on).

Roundhead Archers Attack 1d6 Unit Strength 15

In addition, the swift Gaseous Elementals manage to manoeuvre behind your lines and hit the last unit in your marching order from behind. This unit receives two free rolls against the tail unit, which

is then pinned down (and cannot disengage and attack another unit) until and unless it destroys the elemental unit.

Gaseous Elementals	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 10
--------------------	------------	------------------

Once your army has withstood eight free rolls by the archers, the archer unit disperses and you are free to select targets among the remaining enemy units:

Roundheads	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 100
Roundhead Elite	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 20
Metal Elementals	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
Rock Elementals	Attack 1d12	Unit Strength 20

The tail unit must resolve its combat with the Gaseous Elementals before engaging any other unit. Enemy units which are not targeted by one of your units, or which are facing several opponents, will attack the unit with the highest Attack Dice (if two units are equal, they will attack the one with the highest Unit Strength; if all statistics are equal then you may choose which unit is attacked).

If you win the battle, turn to **58**.

If you lose, turn to **91**.

3

The highwayman is an accomplished fighter, and this will not be an easy fight.

Highwayman	Attack 1d10	Hitpoints 25
------------	-------------	--------------

The Highwayman's Rapier is tipped with poison. Each time he strikes you, in addition to the usual hit dice, roll a d4. **If you roll a 1 on the d4, you have been Poisoned**, and must lose an additional 1 Hitpoint every round of combat.

The highwayman fights to the death. If you win the battle, you search his corpse and find his **Rapier (Attack 1d10)**, **8 Gold Pieces**, a **Highwayman's Mask** and a single **Vial of Poison** (+1 to all damage your opponent takes for 1 combat only).

If your Backpack has been damaged, roll a d6, adding 3 to your roll if you are carrying a Ball of Twine. If the total is 6 or more, continue as usual. If the total is 5 or less, you must abandon your Backpack and most of its contents. You may keep your gold pieces, *Taxes Collected* (if any), any Wards or Pendants (Holy Symbol, Ward against the Undead, etc), up to two Weapons or Shields, and up to three other items (diamonds, potions, rope, etc). Any new items you find must also remain within these limits, so you may have to drop existing items to make room for new ones.

You continue to Ham Duranen.

If you wish to stick to the road, turn to **20**.

If you wish to pass through the forest instead, turn to **39**.

4

As you begin to climb the barricade, one of the militiamen seems to see you out of the corner of his eye. He instantly shouts, "look! Over there!" and points... in completely the opposite direction. His comrades look into the distance and argue loudly about some item on the horizon, while you climb over the obstacles within a few feet of their backs, and sneak into the city.

Turn to **99**.

5

With your Ward equipped, you quickly shake off the Wraith's touch. The creature materialises before you, and you draw your weapon.

Remember to double the damage you cause and halve the damage you receive during this combat.

Wraith Attack 1d20 Hitpoints 15

If you defeat the Wraith, the creature dissolves into fragments of shadow which scatter into the corners of the room. Turn to **98**.

6

A travelling merchant is not an uncommon sight in these parts, and the villagers allow you to enter the village. Some merchants bring useful goods, but many seek to defraud the locals. As a result, the villagers are distant, but not hostile. You will have to pay your way with gold.

If you wish to head for the village store, turn to **84**.

If you wish to approach the inn about food and board, turn to **12**.

7

You climb into a covered wagon and stow yourself among some barrels and crates. Unfortunately, the guards are thoroughly searching carts and wagons, looking for smuggled war booty. The look of shock on the guard's face when he lifts up a crate and finds a stowaway is short-lived, as three of his colleagues rush over to his aid. They have their swords drawn, and you will have to fight your way out.

Turn to **49**.

8

You quickly stifle the flames with a blanket, and call for help from the King's forces. The Marshal, the Mayor of Ham Duranen, and several royal courtiers run into the tower, with an escort of a dozen guards. Quickly, you show them the prize they have won.

Within days, the King has arrived in person, and his priests and alchemists are sorting through the books and scrolls of the wizards. Much is destroyed as heretical or useless, but some are preserved for the use of the royal forces.

You are rewarded handsomely with a fiefdom in Arthal and a permanent rank in the King's Army, complete with an annual stipend. With this patronage, you will never need to work again.

Within a few years, the tiny kingdom of Arthal has become a military superpower. Vast metallic ships belching clouds of dark smoke make short work of the galleons and trading vessels of other realms. Elthen and other neighbouring realms are quickly subsumed into a vast, continental empire. The minerals of the earth are harnessed to build new contraptions and provide a constant source of light and heat. With new machines and chemicals to treat the soil, the Lords and Knights – yourself included – can gather vast harvests without the need to rely on reluctant peasants. Many of the peasants leave their lands, amassing in vast numbers in cities such as Arthal and Lennua. They provide a cheap labour force for the factories the King has commissioned to turn out battleships and machines of war. Gradually, more and more regulations infringe on their lives, as the King finds new ways to make them docile, healthy and productive.

You live well, but you wonder constantly if your vision has perhaps been fulfilled. Gradually, the world becomes increasingly grey. The people, never happy in their serfdom, seem sadder and more

enslaved than they were before. And gradually, the old magic is dying. Often you miss the old world, the ease with which you could avoid being ruled, the danger of adventure. The one thing which has not come true is the enrichment of the people. Yet the machines being created today have this potential, if only the King would turn them from war to the betterment of the masses.

Your adventure is over. For yourself, this is a time of great wealth and power, and perhaps further adventures as the King expands his realm. For others of your ilk, the time of magic and adventure is also over.

9

The night before the battle, you have powerful dreams of victory and transformation. **Restore your Hitpoints to their Maximum.**

Now the sun rises over the field of battle as you survey your army, sunlight glinting off their swords and helmets. They are an impressive force, but will they be enough to battle their way through to the besieged tower?

You survey the enemy formation. Most of the troops are amassed on the south side of the tower, defending against the visible threat posed by the King's army. The tower is less fortified to the west and east, where only a thin strip of wasteland separates the fortifications from the encroaching forest. A line of Roundhead archers cover most of the approaches from a parapet erected on the field of combat. The archers are in range of ground attackers. The wizards will not fight themselves, but use their scarce power to retain control of the elementals.

To plan your battle, make a list of the order in which your units will advance. For some options you will also need to split the units into two groups.

If you have a unit of archers, and wish to exchange fire with the enemy archers, nominate one unit to act as a ground defence unit for the archers, and then turn to **37**.

If you have at least one cavalry unit, and wish to send them in front of your main army to engage the archers, turn to **52**.

If you wish to sneak through the forest and launch a surprise flank attack, turn to **95** if you are leading the King's Army, and **50** if you are leading any other army.

If you wish to lead a direct frontal assault by one of your ground units, turn to **2**.

If you wish to send one or more units on a frontal assault while leading the rest of the army in a flank assault, divide your army into two groups (Group A for the frontal assault and Group B for the flank assault), and turn to **78**.

If you wish to try to lure the enemy army away from the fortress while you personally sneak into the tower, turn into **67**.

10

You follow the road northwards from Bencross for some hours. The road winds between the wooded hills, with tall ash trees casting shadows in your path. Some of the trees seem to have leering faces, portending doom. The darkened road seems like the perfect spot for an ambush.

If you are wearing a **Pendant of Narva**, turn to **22**.

If not, turn to **79**.

11

The guard squints at you, then pulls out a scroll from his belt. Comparing it to your features, he declares: "Apprehend this thief!"

Turn to **60** and prepare to fight.

12

The village inn is a rudimentary set-up, built by villagers onto the side of one of the larger peasant houses, and run by the family onto whose house it was added. The innkeeper's clothes and jewellery show that he is one of the more fortunate among the villagers. He offers a meal and a room for the night at a fair price of **2 Gold Pieces**.

If you wish to stay at the inn, turn to **92**.

If you cannot afford or do not wish to pay the price, you sleep in the fields instead. Turn to **31**.

13

After a long walk, you arrive at last at the village of Bencross, a collection of around a hundred dwellings in the shadows of the forest, at the top of a steep hill. It is late in the evening and you are in need of rest.

If you were expecting a hearty welcome, you are much disappointed. Three villagers, clad in torn garments and wielding rods and scythes, have come to the gate to greet you. They must have seen you from afar, and they ask your purpose in coming to their village.

If you are wearing the **Tax Collector's Outfit**, and wish to demand taxes from the villagers, turn to **63**.

If you say you are a travelling performer and will offer a performance in return for food and lodging, turn to **42**.

If you say you are here to buy or sell goods, turn to **6**.

14

The market traders will **buy** your existing items for the following prices:

Diamonds	20 gold pieces <u>each</u>
Dragon's Tooth Pendant	30 gold pieces
Golden Lamp	20 gold pieces
Enchanted Sword	15 gold pieces
Jewelled Sword	10 gold pieces
Enchanted Mace	10 gold pieces
Royal Sceptre	10 gold pieces
Broadsword	8 gold pieces
Silver Tiara	5 gold pieces
Royal Seal Ring	5 gold pieces
Glass Shield	5 gold pieces
Mace	5 gold pieces
Chainmail	5 gold pieces
Helmet	3 gold pieces
Magician's Robes	5 gold pieces
Onyx Statuette	3 gold pieces
Holy Symbol	3 gold pieces
Amulet	2 gold pieces

They are not interested in any other items than those on this list.

Influenced by the influx of soldiers and mercenaries, most of the market traders now specialise in buying and selling weapons and armour. The following items are available **for sale**:

Club (Weapon, 1d8 damage)	1 gold piece
Mace (Weapon, 1d10 damage)	5 gold pieces
Broadsword (Weapon, 1d12 damage)	8 gold pieces
Bastard Sword (Weapon, 1d20 damage) (two-handed – cannot be wielded with a shield)	30 gold pieces
Shield (-1 to all damage received)	2 gold pieces
Chainmail (-1 to all damage received)	5 gold pieces
Plate mail (-2 to all damage received)	30 gold pieces
Healing Salve (+5 Hitpoints)	4 gold pieces per vial

If you choose to buy and/or sell any items, mark the changes on your Action Sheet, then turn back to **85** and choose again.

15

You have reached the Green Hills, but you have no idea where to find the Tomb of Vairanu. Legend says that it appears to those of good will, but your worldly brain prefers to believe that it has a definite physical location. All afternoon, you scour the hills, looking for a barrow, a cave entrance or a trapdoor which might indicate its whereabouts. Your search proves fruitless. The hours of the day grow short, and you do not wish to risk being caught in this desolate area at night. You contemplate the best course of action.

If you wish to climb the highest hills, and search their peaks for a tomb entrance, turn to **80**.

If you wish instead to search the valleys between the hills, turn to **59**.

16

Between you and the tower stand a number of enemy units and an array of fortifications. Archers watch over the battlefield from atop a parapet. Strange elementals mill around the tower entrance. You feel out of your depth facing such an army alone. Yet you will continue your quest at any cost.

Once you are inside the fortifications, you will have to use stealth and skill in combat to reach the tower. But first, you need to reach the fortifications. This requires travelling across wastelands where the enemy archers have a free shot at you. Fortunately, most of the archers are facing southwards, towards the King's fortifications. There is a chance you can slip by undetected.

Roll a d6 eight times. If on any of these rolls you roll a 6, you have been spotted by an archer and receive 5 Hitpoints of damage. If you roll several sixes, you receive this damage several times.

If you survive to reach the fortifications, you climb over the outer fences at a weak point on the flank.

Turn to **86**.

17

Ignoring the fire, you run from the building. "Get clear!" you shout to the peasants. They are reluctant to obey, and a few even venture inside, but as the flames begin to lick from the lower floor windows, a panic fills the crowd and they flee the tower.

While you were battling Morden, the King had attempted to attack the Army of Narva, but many conscripts and militiamen refused to fight. In the ensuing turmoil, the King's army had been routed, and fled the field of battle. You realise that they will likely be back with reinforcements, and you lack both the strength in numbers and the motivation to defend the now-ruined tower.

The period which follows is difficult. Having once made its stand, the Army of Narva will not give up, expecting with good reason that heads would roll. The King returns with a weakened force, and, finding the tower deserted, takes out his anger on the remaining inhabitants of Ham Duranen.

Meanwhile, the wizards who fled the Tower of Spells regroup, launching surprise attacks on the King's forces from the cover of the forests. Both the King and wizards are merciless, slaughtering villagers and pillaging the farmlands. You continue to act as a leader and advisor to the Army of Narva, shepherding refugees to safety and leading guerilla strikes against the other factions.

Eventually, all sides tire of war, and a fragile peace is reached. The King abdicates in favour of his cousin, and the new King meets with a committee of wizards and peasant representatives – yourself included – to negotiate a new constitution. Under the new arrangement, the King will retain token power, with the three estates of Lords, Wizards and Commoners sharing three-way power in a new Senate. With peace restored, the villagers return to their fields. Their new-found power protects them from exorbitant taxes and land-rents, and the harshness of peasant life is much reduced. The Wizards, meanwhile, slowly rebuild their strength in a new Tower of Spells, now under the watchful eyes of Senate representatives.

Change, it seems, has largely been averted. The sands of time continue to flow, but the world of adventurers and sellswords remains intact. As the Arthal civil war draws to a close, you receive many offers of Senatorial appointments or command positions in the now-integrated army. Yet your soul is restless for adventure, and you are soon on the road once more. Your conviction that you have prevented a catastrophe is tempered by curiosity about what could have been, and the distant pull of what may yet be. For now your adventures are over, and yet, on a wider scale, they are just beginning.

18

The local militia are simply town citizens, conscripted by the King to serve in his war. Their loyalty is questionable to say the least.

If you are wearing a **Narva Pendant**, a **Ward against the Undead**, or a **Holy Symbol**, turn to **4**.

If you are not wearing any of these items, roll a d6.

If your roll is 1-3, turn to **4**.

If it is 4-6, then the local militia call for help from the King's Guard, and you are soon under attack. Turn to **60**.

19

You ask one of the courtiers about dreams and visions, and he directs you to speak to the royal cleric. An elderly man in expensive robes, the cleric is found in the castle chapel, surrounded by expensive golden decorations and stained-glass windows. The setting could hardly be more different from the stony knoll the village shaman uses as her altar.

"Your dream could be a message from God", concedes the cleric. "But it seems so strange and unreal. You say that magic and religion have died, the rulers have lost their sovereignty, the peasants wear shoes. I warn you now, this could be a vision of Hell! All natural order has been lost, and the world we know is no more. Whether the vision came from below or above, it is your duty to prevent that which you saw. Perhaps it shows the future, if the wizards win this war. It is a clarion-call to fight at our side!"

If you now want to take up the tax-collection task, turn to **26**.

If you wish to raid the King's treasure, turn to **35**.

If you leave immediately for the hinterlands, turn to **51**.

20

The normally sleepy town of Ham Duranen is bustling with activity. It has been turned into a barracks town by the king's army, who are besieging the wizards in the Tower of Spells to the north. The town is built atop a small rise. It does not have walls in times of peace, but trenches and

fieldworks have been erected around it, and further siegeworks stretch from its northern limits to the Tower. The Tower itself is an orthogonal stone fortress stretching into the clouds, and is similarly fortified against the King's assault. Beyond the fieldworks are the enemy army – several ranks of round-helmeted soldiers, backed by the strangest collection of elementals you have ever seen. Gaseous creatures of green and violet, metallic monstrosities of silver and gold, a creature made of pencil lead, even something resembling a gigantic tooth are arrayed against the king's forces. This must be the source of the strange magicks which have infested the realm.

The only entrance to Ham Duranen is heavily guarded by a unit of the King's Guard, commanded by a Knight of the Realm atop a barding-clad charger. The guards have crossed their glaives to bar the entrance to the town. Above the fortifications, you see the overcrowded city is anything but dead. Knights and soldiers wearing the King's regalia mix with mercenaries seeking work, traders and vendors of all kinds, and local residents haggling or arguing with the welter of troops and mercenaries who have ruptured their ordinarily quiet lives.

By now, you have seen enough strange things to realise your portent of great change was likely a true vision. To get to the root of the problem, you will need to enter the Tower of Spells and confront those within.

If you are wearing the **Tax Collector's Outfit**, it is now considerably battered and dirty. Decide whether to continue wearing this item or whether to discard it.

If you wish to try to enter Ham Duranen, either to hire mercenaries or sign into the King's Army, turn to **94**.

If you have a Pendant of Narva, and you wish to use it, turn to **47**.

If you want to try to sneak into Ham Duranen without the guards noticing, turn to **65**.

If you wish to try to enter the Tower on your own, turn to **16**

21

The potassium elemental falls to the floor, collapsing into a sparking heap of silver and white dust. You may now use any Potions you have, if you wish to.

Morden is hardly disconcerted at the defeat of his first monster, however, letting out another of his spine-chilling laughs.

"Face now my greatest creation. A source of infinite energy. Alas that I discovered this creature too late, for the energy he gave could have obliterated the King and all his sorry grovellers. I have created but one of his kind before you stole my deserts from me. But I am sure he is enough to dispose of one puny adventurer!"

This creature, silvery like the first, glows with an eerie green light. It advances on you, spewing beams of energy in your direction.

If you have a Glass Shield, turn to **61**.

If you do not have this item, turn to **53**.

22

You keep yourself alert, on the lookout for attackers. However, your journey to Ham Duranen passes without incident.

With one exception. You find a pouch of gold by the side of the path. The pouch contains 20 gold pieces. You may keep these if you wish.

You arrive at the city before nightfall.

Turn to **20**.

23

The remainder of the enemy army consists of the following units:

Roundheads	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 100
Metal Elementals	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
Gaseous Elementals	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 10
Rock Elementals	Attack 1d12	Unit Strength 20

Deploy all your remaining ground units against these enemy units. Enemy units will engage whichever of your units is attacking them. If they are not under attack, or facing multiple attackers, they will choose the adversary with the highest Unit Strength.

If you win the battle, turn to **58**.

If you lose, turn to **91**.

24

The village store is run from the ground floor of the home of one of the wealthier peasant families. At your knock, the storekeeper reluctantly opens up the door, and shows a collection of poor-quality items, which you deduce are made by locals in the agricultural off-season.

Choose if you would like to buy any of the following:

Mace (Weapon, 1d10 damage)	20 Gold Pieces
Club (Weapon, 1d8 damage)	10 Gold Pieces
Lucky Amulet	10 Gold Pieces
Rope	6 Gold Pieces
Corn Dolly	4 Gold Pieces
Ball of Twine	3 Gold Pieces
Clay Pot	2 Gold Pieces

The shopkeeper claims that the **Lucky Amulet** has been blessed by the local guardian spirits, and will give protection against undead, spirit attack, and malicious magic.

If you are carrying a **Golden Lamp**, **Jewelled Sword** and/or **Enchanted Sword**, the storekeeper will exchange each of these for up to 20 Gold Pieces' worth of items.

If you buy any of these items, remember to mark them on your Action Sheet, and deduct the amount paid from your Gold.

On the way back from the store, you are walking down a street when you feel a heavy blow to your head. Spinning around, you are confronted by a masked robber wielding a cudgel. He has you pinned to a wall, and you will have to fight.

Robber Attack: Cudgel - 1d8 Hitpoints 15

If you reduce the Robber to **5 or fewer Hitpoints**, he will try to flee.

If you wish to chase him down, turn to **62**.

If you let him go and head for the inn, turn to **81**.

25

The road bends eastward, passing through farmland and forest. Somewhere, imperceptibly, you cross over the invisible border between Arthal and the neighbouring realm of Elthen. The two

kingdoms are in a state of peace, and traffic passes freely between them. You would be hard-pressed to tell if the local villagers paid tribute to Caer Linnaroth, or to the merchant lords of Linnua.

It is not until you reach the city walls of the bustling port city of Linnua that you encounter guards. Wary of the state of war in neighbouring Arthal, they are stopping travellers and inspecting their wagons.

If you are wearing the **Tax Collector's Outfit**, turn to **97**.

If you are not wearing this outfit, but are carrying a **Royal Sceptre**, turn to **71**.

If you have neither of these items, but are carrying one or more **Diamonds**, turn to **56**.

If you do not have of these items marked on your Action Sheet, turn to **48**.

26

The Chancellor explains that the peasants normally owe a tithe, or third, of their crops or income to the royal treasury. In the current crisis, however, each family has been made liable for a special tax of one gold coin per family. So far, the peasants have avoided paying. You are to travel to the village of Bencross and demand the taxes from the peasants.

The Chancellor gives you robes of Royal Livery, an official seal, and a pronouncement signed by the King. Note the item **Tax Collector's Outfit** on your Action Sheet.

If you now wish to leave for the countryside, turn to **51**.

If you would rather try to raid the King's treasury first, turn to **35**.

27

"Hrmph. No taxes?"

The Marshal is evidently irked at your failure, and orders his guards to search you for money.

If you allow them to search you, then **roll 1d6**.

If you roll 1-2, they take all your money, Diamonds, Jewelled Sword, Enchanted Sword, Enchanted Mace, and any Potions, Poison, or Holy Water you are carrying.

If you roll 3-4, they take all your money, but leave your items untouched.

If you roll 5-6, their search is not thorough, and they only find 10 Gold Pieces (or however many you carry, whichever is fewer).

Then turn to **99**.

If you try to fight your way out, turn to **43**.

28

Hastily you stamp out the fires, and call for mercenaries to help you plunder the tower. If you do not have mercenaries in your hire already, you recruit former members of the wizards' army with the promise of financial gain.

Your troops commandeer a horse-drawn battle-wagon abandoned by the wizards, and pile it high with tomes, scrolls and parchments, as well as food from the wizards' supplies. You are now in possession of a very valuable hoard, though your mercenaries might not know it. Ordering a group of guards to accompany you, you drive the wagon north and east, hiding in the mountains of northern Elthen where the King will not pursue you.

You seek to read the scrolls and books, but you are an adventurer, not an alchemist, and the jargon and diagrams are too much for you. So you hire scribes and journeyman mages to aid you in deciphering the content of Morden's records. Gradually, with great difficulty, you unpack many of his secrets. It is a race against time to convert this knowledge into power before the King of Arthal, the

Council of Elthen, the surviving wizards, or another rogue adventurer tries to take it from you.

The power you obtain sets you up as a minor warlord, able to carve out your own fiefdom and hold off rivals. Yet it is more useful for you in the area of trade. You harness the energy of the elements to create great ships, self-propelled carriages and even airships to ferry goods across long distances and difficult terrain. Your technological advantage gives you a huge advantage over the merchants plying the established trade routes, and you amass great wealth providing rare goods for Kings and nobles. The advantage will not last. Gradually, your secrets slip out, as rivals capture your vehicles or infiltrate spies into your trading company. Yet the market position you build up is not easily assailed, even as the technology spreads.

You have obtained power and wealth for yourself, fulfilling the dreams of many a wandering adventurer. Yet still you are not at rest. Your dreams are haunted by the battles of the past, by lost comrades, the bloodshed, the fear of pursuit. You should be happy with all you have obtained, yet increasingly you are discontented. And the malaise is not limited to your own life. As the power of Kings and wizards wanes, and the power of merchants waxes, you feel the magic, mystery, excitement and meaning draining from the world.

Your adventures in Arthal are over. Yet new possibilities of adventure are unfolding. The transport technology you have assembled from Morden's work opens up many of the wild and unmapped parts of the world to human exploration. One day, perhaps, you will launch an airship to explore uncharted mountains, or sail your steam-ships to the edge of the world and beyond. With the enchantment of life in decline, the temptation to find virgin land where dreams are still possible will only increase. But will this simply spread the malaise more broadly? Only time will tell.

29

The King's soldiers see you climbing the barricade and push you down using their glaives. **Lose 4 Hitpoints.**

Worse, they leap down from the barricades to engage you in combat.

Turn to **60**.

30

The tunnel is made of hewn stone. While the glowing lichen still peeps from cracks in the ceiling, you are struck with how clean the tunnel is. Cobwebs and weeds peeping through the rocks are notable by their absence. It is as if a strange energy has preserved this place in the past, prolonging it indefinitely into the present.

After about a hundred yards, the corridor ends in a solid iron door. On the door there is a gridwork of squares, similar to a chessboard. Figures of warriors and angels are lodged in some of the squares, held in place like keys in locks. Beneath the board, written in the ancient runic script, is a riddle:

*Two figures we are, stood side to side
Twins in form, yet not inside
Sum us together, we become one
Though beside me, nothing can be done
Yet times us together, one time or three
Once more stood side to side are we.*

The answer to the riddle is a number. If you think you have solved the riddle, turn to the entry equal to this number. **If the entry starts "The door clicks open", you have successfully solved the riddle.**

If you turned to any other entry, the answer is incorrect. Try as you might, you cannot figure out the correct arrangement of the figures on the board. Your heart sinks as you realise that there are

thousands of possible combinations, and only one will open the door. Disheartened, you climb out of the crypt and head northwards out of the Green Hills, eventually arriving at an inn.

Turn to **100**.

31

Your life as an adventurer has prepared you well for sleeping in the wild. Wary of attack by any wandering animals or monsters, you haul yourself into a large oak tree overlooking one of the village fields, ensuring that you cannot be seen from the road. You settle into an uneasy sleep.

You awake with a start some hours before dawn. You are alert at once, your heart pounding. Seconds later, you realise what awoke you. A crash, like hammer on anvil, rings out, and the tree you are in shakes. You look around for the source of danger, but your perch is too precarious and you fall from the tree. **Lose 5 Hitpoints.**

Your precipitous fall has attracted the attention of the source of the noise. It is a ten foot tall, lumbering creature made entirely of iron. Roughly humanoid in shape, its feet are solid blocks the size of a windowframe, and its hands are the balls of morning-stars. Its eyes glow with a malevolent green light. Moving surprisingly quickly for a creature of such bulk, it is upon you before you gather your wits enough to flee.

Swinging clumsily and with little force, this creature does less damage than its imposing form promises, but makes up for this weakness in sheer bulk.

Iron Elemental Attack 1d20 Hitpoints 30

Owing to the creature's slow speed, you are able to get in **three attacks** for every one of your adversary's. Roll for the elemental on every fourth turn.

You dare not pause here for long. The next town on your route to the Tower of Spells is the town of Ham Duranen. If you are going to reach the Tower of Spells, this is where you expect to find allies or reinforcements. But your experience has made you nervous, and you wonder if the road is still the safest route.

If you wish to stick to the road, turn to **10**.

If you prefer to try to cut a course through the forest west of the road, before approaching Ham Duranen from the west, turn to **39**.

32

"Taxes for Bentcross: twenty-five gold pieces." The Marshal marks a ledger with an ink quill. "Barely worth our while, and I'd swear they have four score households at least, not to mention the soldiers we are lacking from the fief. Still, it will buy us some troops and some steel.

"I have received orders from the King that once your loyalty is proven, you shall be given command of our armies on the field. We lack a seasoned warrior like yourself, though I daresay your command experience is lacking. Still, we shall cede you some detachments to lead into battle against the Tower tomorrow."

You are now in command of the **King's Army**. The army has battle statistics as follows:

Knights of the Realm 1	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
Knights of the Realm 2	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
Knights of the Realm 3	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
King's Guard	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 20
Footsoldiers	Attack 1d8	Unit Strength 50
Mercenaries	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 15

You are also equipped with a **Broadsword (1d12)** and **three Healing Potions** (each restores 5 Hitpoints when used).

You receive medical treatment and a night's rest. In the morn, you awake feeling refreshed but anxious. The Battle of the Tower of Spells is about to begin.

Turn to 9.

33

You ignore the spreading fire as you walk out the building. Outside, the King's Marshal and other royal dignitaries have gathered on the erstwhile battlefield. "Get clear, your excellencies", you shout. "This place is going to blow!"

Orders are shouted as the surviving armies retreat from the field, watching from afar as the tower burns from the inside out. Within a few hours, nothing is left of Morden's secrets save their memory.

The Marshal asks what you have learnt, but you are reticent. Some wizard was playing with dark magic, you say, and made pacts with the Devil for great power. He is gone now, and with him his secrets. When the King arrives a few days later, he listens to the tale you have, by then, concocted. A royal ordinance is passed forbidding unlicensed alchemy, and other realms soon follow, with some outlawing alchemical practices outright. The clerics begin harassing alchemists, and those accused of heterodoxy are burnt at the stake. For now, the order of royal power has been restored.

You are rewarded for your service with a fiefdom and a royal pension. In the years which follow, little changes in the realm of Arthal. You grow rich from your lordly possessions, and trading the grain surplus through Lennua, but sometimes miss the times of freedom and adventure. At times, too, you wonder what might have been had Morden's secrets been preserved. You contemplate creating a mercantile empire, gambling on the transport of rare or magical goods across the deserts or seas. Perhaps one day, you or others like you will rediscover some of what was lost at the Tower of Spells. For now, however, the Kingdom of Arthal is safe, and your adventure is over.

34

You follow the villagers into the forest, and soon emerge in a clearing. Here, a number of villagers are gathered under a purple sheet. Each villager wears a wooden pendant into which is carved Narva, the rune of death and rebirth.

You have stumbled upon a secret society, in which the poor articulate their own view of the world, and strategise against the powerful. After three hours of rituals and stories, the subject turns to the present conflict. The peasants tire of the endless war, and cannot pay the taxes demanded by the King. They fear starvation if nothing changes. Many feel the time has come for a world-renewal, the beginning of a new phase in which the world is unmade and remade. You cannot help but think of your vision when they make such claims. Is it this world-renewal which will bring about the new world you saw?

Aware of the risks they are taking, you tell the peasants of your vision, and your journey to the Tower of Spells.

"The power to remake the world lies inside the Tower of Spells. But the tower is guarded by two armies. The wizards' Roundheads, who defend it, and the King's men, who besiege it. You will not reach the tower without an army of your own.

"Luckily, the people for miles around have been readying for months to reject the King and take the Tower. We have no love of the wizards, who trick and charm us for their own gain. But we can no longer bear the loss of the fruits of our land. An army of the people has been raised, and many are already lying in wait. But we have had no strategist until now. Your experience could serve us well. If you wish to lead us into battle – remembering that to lead the people, one must also obey them – then make the Sign of Narva on the field before the Tower."

One of the villagers gives you a **Pendant of Narva** as a mark of your alignment with the second

world they have revealed to you. If you wish to wear this pendant, mark it on your Action Sheet.

It is now late, but the storekeeper, who is at the meeting, offers to re-open his store for you, offering the following items:

Club (Weapon, 1d8 damage)	3 Gold Pieces
Mace (Weapon, 1d10 damage)	10 Gold Pieces
Dragon's Tooth Pendant	10 Gold Pieces
Wooden Shield (-1 from all damage received)	5 Gold Pieces
Healing Potion (restores up to 10 Hit Points at any time outside combat)	5 Gold Pieces
Rope	2 Gold Pieces
Corn Dolly	2 Gold Pieces
Amulet	1 Gold Piece
Ball of Twine	1 Gold Piece
Clay Pot	1 Gold Piece

Afterwards, you retire to the inn, where you are offered free food and board. Turn to **92**.

35

Either you have won the trust of the King and his courtiers, or they are too provincial to bother to guard their treasure well. The inner door to the storeroom storeroom is protected by sentries, but its windows are unguarded. The sentries on the battlements would detect an intruder entering from outside the castle, but cannot see the lower walls of the keep. You are therefore able to access the storeroom by climbing out of a lower floor window and along the walls. It only takes a few minutes of climbing along the outer walls to access the room.

Thanking the spirits for your good fortune, you make a hasty search of the treasure. You find coins totalling **100 Gold Pieces**, which you quickly stuff into your backpack. You also find a **Royal Sceptre** bearing the King's arms, **two Diamonds**, and **Jewelled Sword (1d12)**. If you decide to take any of these items, mark them on your adventure sheet. You may wield the Sword in combat, instead of your Dagger, giving you an Attack of 1d12.

You realise it would be a bad idea to hang around here and risk capture, so you crawl back along the wall, and leave by the main gate.

Turn to **51**.

36

With an epic battle of will, you manage to force your body to raise your weapon. Your eyes will barely focus, but you manage to discern a patch of shadow which you guess is the Wraith. You are barely thinking straight. You strike out at it with all the force you can muster – which is not much.

Wraith Attack 1d20 Hitpoints 15

For this combat only, halve all damage done to the Wraith (rounding fractions up), as your strength is sapped by the enervation curse. Each time it is your turn to strike, before rolling for damage, roll a d6. If you roll a 1 or 2, you are unable to summon enough energy to strike the Wraith, and miss a turn.

Due to lack of energy, you may not use any Potions or items such as Holy Water, as your thinking is too confused to remember to use them.

If you somehow beat the Wraith despite these restrictions, it disperses into fragments of shadow which seem to flow across the room. Still exhausted, you feel the enervation curse gradually lift. Turn to **98**.

37

Your archers adopt a position under the eaves of the forest, where they can benefit from cover. If you have two units of archers, they both deploy alongside one another.

The unit you nominated as the defence unit take a position alongside the archers, waiting to react to any retaliation by ground forces. The rest of your army stays under cover, out of range of bowfire but able to respond to ground attack.

The enemy force deploys two units:

Roundhead Archers	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 15
Roundhead Elite	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 20

At the start of combat, roll 1d6. If you roll 1-3, the Roundhead Archers will target your Archer unit (concentrating fire on one unit if there are more than one). If you roll 4-6, the Roundhead Archers will target your defender unit.

The battle proceeds as follows:

Round 1:

Roll once or twice for your archer unit/s, targeting the Roundhead Archers.

Roll for the Roundhead Archers.

Rounds 2-4:

The Roundhead Elite are deployed and begin advancing towards your army.

Roll for your archers, choosing which of the enemy units to target.

Roll for the Roundhead Archers.

Round 5-7

The Roundhead Elite (unless they are dead by this point) have reached your lines, and are now in close combat with your Defender unit. The order of combat is as follows:

Roundhead Elite roll for damage to defender unit

Defender unit roll for damage to Roundhead Elite

Your archer unit/s roll for damage to the Roundhead Archer unit. If the enemy unit are dead, the archer unit holds fire.

The Roundhead Archer unit fires at your archer unit/s. If you have no archers left, the enemy unit holds fire.

If the defender unit is wiped out, the Elite begin targeting your Archers.

Round 8 onwards

The remainder of your army are able to manoeuvre into position to engage the Roundhead Elite and rapidly rout this unit without further losses. Your archers continue to exchange fire with the Roundhead Archers until one or the other is wiped out.

If any Roundhead Archers have survived this battle, you may now choose whether to launch a frontal assault (turn to 2), a cavalry assault (turn to 52), or attempt to lure the enemy out onto the field so you can sneak into the tower (turn to 67).

If the archers have been wiped out, you may engage the enemy ground units directly. Turn to 23.

38

Word has preceded you about the robbery of the treasury, and the king has a spy among the audience. As the gathering begins to break up for the night, you feel a dagger at your throat. Instinctively you ram your head backwards into the attacker's face. You must fight the attacker.

King's Spy Attack 1d6 (Dagger) Hitpoints 12

The spy is using a **poisoned dagger**. Add 1 to all damage received during this combat.

If you defeat the spy, a quick search reveals **5 Gold Pieces** and a **Vial of Poison** (+1 to all damage done for the duration of one combat only).

The villagers don't know what the fight was about, but they are now wary of associating with you.

If you wish to head for the village store, turn to **84**.

If you wish to approach the inn about food and board, turn to **12**.

39

In the northern part of the kingdom, a long walk from the farmlands, the ash forests get thicker, as the farmers' gathering activities no longer thin out the underbrush. As you stumble for the fourth time, you begin to wonder if you should have stuck to the road. This time, however, the source of your imbalance is not a stray root, but the entrance to an underground tomb, its doorway so overgrown with ivy and foliage as to be almost invisible.

If you wish to cut back the greenery and explore the tomb, turn to **77**.

If you wish to continue your journey, turn to **20**.

40

You tell the story in a way similar to the courtly version. Once upon a time, the kingdom of Arthal was tormented by a dragon. The people lived in fear of the dragon, which burned their crops and stole their treasure, hoarding the treasure in a cave in the mountains. The King sent messengers to seek the trickster Arran, urging him to respond to the plight of the people.

Arran came to the dragon and warned the great beast that thieves could steal its treasure while it slept. Arran tricked the dragon into sealing first the cave entrance, then various tunnels so that the treasure could not be stolen. But Arran had tricked the dragon into sealing itself into its cave, and even dragons cannot live without food, water, and air. After some time, the King sent knights to dig out the cave, and retrieved the treasure – and the dead dragon. The King returned the treasure to those from whom it was stolen, and a great feast was held in his honour.

Your story receives a lukewarm response. You have won the respect of the villagers with your performance. You are offered gifts of food, and may stay free at the village inn. Turn to **92**.

41

The foul creature is dead at last. It must have found its way in here to pillage the coffins, and been drawn out by the noise of your arrival. Its ichor runs into the cracks in the stone floor, glowing green in the eerie underground light.

The only exits to the chamber are to climb out the way you came in, or to explore the passageway which leads deeper into the earth.

If this encounter has put you off exploring the tomb, then you climb out of the chamber, continue North out of the hills, and find an inn in the surrounding fields. Turn to **100**.

If you still wish to explore the tunnel, turn to **30**.

42

The villagers' faces light up at the mention of performance. It is late in the day, and people are returning home from the fields. Gradually, more people filter out of the houses and forest, until you have an audience of several hundred people.

You know the script from here. As a travelling adventurer, you have many stories of your own adventures, along with the usual folk-tales you have picked up on your travels. You settle on the story of Arran the Trickster and the dragon. You have heard many versions of this story, and it is told in different ways. In some versions, Arran is the king's hero. But when told by peasant storytellers, Arran is sometimes cast as a popular hero, leading a peasant rebellion against an unjust ruler.

If you wish to tell the story in a safe way, portraying the hero as an agent of the king, turn to **40**.

If you are prepared to risk casting Arran as a peasant rebel, turn to **70**.

43

It will take you two rounds to push past the guard at the door, after which time you will get out into the city. However, you are vulnerable to attack during this period.

Guard Attack 1d8 Hitpoints 25

If you survive these two rounds of combat, you have escaped the encampment, but the Marshal calls for pursuit.

Roll 1d6. If you have a **Monk's Hood** and/or a **Highwayman's Mask**, add 1 to this number. If you are wearing a **Pendant of Narva**, add an additional 1.

If the total is 4 or more, you are able to evade pursuit and disappear into the busy city. Turn to **99**.

If the total is 3 or less, your pursuers corner you and you will have to fight. Turn to **60**.

44

This area lies on the borders of the cultivated farmlands of northern Arthal. The earth here is dense with bracken, gorse, nettles and creepers. Many times, you are forced to cut a path through vegetation, or turn aside where it proves impenetrable. You pick up many stings and bruises as you battle through the wild fields.

The worst event of your journey occurs while traversing a patch of thick grass. Your eyes on the plant-life ahead, you fail to notice a snare hidden in the undergrowth, left by a hunter or farmer to trap animals. The vice-like trap closes sharply on your leg, causing you to scream in pain. After half an hour of muscle work and levering with your dagger, you manage to free your leg, and you staunch the blood flow with strips torn from your clothes. However, this injury will take time to heal, and it will weaken you for the duration of this adventure. **Deduct 10 points from your current and Maximum Hitpoints.**

Cursing your luck, you arrive at the foothills of the Green Hills, where thankfully the thick vegetation trails off in the rocky terrain.

Turn to **15**.

45

You return by the same road you took to Lennua. This time, however, the journey is more eventful. After an hour on the road, you see a covered wagon, approaching from the opposite direction. You think nothing of it – this road is regularly used by merchants. But as it draws near, you are overcome by a stench of decay. The cart is pulled by a zombie horse, its flesh hanging in threads from its bones. Before you can recover, the wagon cover is ripped asunder, and a horde of zombies jump from the cart to attack you. Behind them, a white-robed Necromancer directs the battle.

Necromancer	Attack 1d8	Hitpoints 20
Zombie 1	Attack 1d4	Hitpoints 6
Zombie 2	Attack 1d6	Hitpoints 2
Zombie 3	Attack 1d4	Hitpoints 3
Zombie 4	Attack 1d4	Hitpoints 5
Zombie 5	Attack 1d4	Hitpoints 2
Zombie 6	Attack 1d6	Hitpoints 1

Each round, choose which opponent you wish to attack, **before** making your roll. Then roll for damage from **all** of the surviving opponents.

If you kill the Necromancer, the will animating the Zombies is dispersed, and they fall to the ground, lifeless corpses once more. If you kill all of the Zombies and **reduce the Necromancer to 10 Hitpoints or fewer**, he flees the battle and vanishes in a puff of smoke.

If you defeat the Zombies, you climb to the top of a nearby hill to survey the road, and are dismayed to find that more groups of Zombies can be seen at intervals along the road, along with more carts drawn by undead horses. Any plans you had to strike out westwards are now in ruins. Instead you cut across the fields to the north, making for the village of Bencross. Turn to **13**.

46

As the creature drops to the floor, its energy coalesces into a silvery-green beam of light, which shoots back towards the glass globe Morden is using to control his creations. Somehow, he has bound the creatures to his will, but this defeat has enraged the soul of the elemental and it has struck back at its creator. The globe explodes, spraying shards of glass over Morden, and he is caught in a firestorm of purple, green and silver light. When the glow expires, all that remains of the alchemist is a blackened skeleton of smoking bone.

Your adventure is nearly over, but your greatest choice is still to come. In the corner of the room, the remains of the potassium elemental have been sizzling and smoking. Now, one of the tables is ablaze, and the creature's sparks threaten to set alight the wooden structure of the building. You realise that if the Tower of Spells is destroyed, Morden's work will be no more. On the one hand, this will put paid to his schemes to split humanity from matter. But on the other, the tremendous powers of the forces he has harnessed – the power to split matter, to harness energy, to use the world of objects to transform the world of humans – will also be lost. You must make a quick decision whether to save the tower, or let it burn to the ground along with its master.

If you are commanding the **King's Army**, and you wish to save the tower, turn to **8**.

If you are commanding the **King's Army**, and you do not wish to save the tower, turn to **33**.

If you are commanding the **Army of Narva**, and you wish to save the tower, turn to **74**.

If you are commanding the **Army of Narva**, and you do not wish to save the tower, turn to **17**.

If you are here alone or commanding a **Mercenary Army**, and you wish to save the tower, turn to **28**.

If you are here alone or commanding a Mercenary Army, and you do not wish to save the tower, turn to **72**.

47

You make the Sign of Narva on the field before the gates of Ham Duranen, making sure to stay out of sight of the guards. At first, nothing happens, and you wonder if the wily villagers deceived you. After some time, however, your faith is rewarded. A hooded and robed scout emerges from the forest and gestures you to follow him. He leads you along invisible paths in the dense undergrowth, until you arrive at a clearing in the forest. Here, the peasant rebels of the Army of Narva are amassed.

Your arrival is welcomed with cheers and song. Tomorrow, they sing, the war will be over. Tomorrow, the land will return to fertility. The King's onerous taxes will be no more. A golden age will begin, as all life is renewed.

You cannot help but be lifted by their hope and courage. Yet, you also wonder if the ragtag army of farmers and craftsmen will be any match for the forces defending the Tower of Spells.

You are now in command of the **Army of Narva**. The army has battle statistics as follows:

Volunteer Veterans	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 10
Peasant Archers	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 10
Footsoldiers 1	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 50
Footsoldiers 2	Attack 1d8	Unit Strength 25

If you wish to camp here overnight, then lead your army into battle in the morning, turn to **9**.

If you wish to hire reinforcements in Ham Duranen, and wish to approach the front gate, turn to **94**.

If you wish to hire reinforcements but would prefer to sneak into the town, turn to **65**.

48

As you approach the queue for the gate, there is a stirring in one of the wagons. From beneath a pile of hay, a creature resembling an Earth Elemental lumbers, casting straw and wooden crates into the road. The creature is the colour of pencil lead, weighty and cumbersome, but fragile. You guess that it is in the service of the wizards of the Tower of Spells, sent to stop your quest.

Carbon Elemental Attack 1d10 Hitpoints 5

If you manage to defeat the creature, it does not shatter but instead, shrinks in upon itself, finally coalescing into a single **Diamond** at your feet. Keep this Diamond if you wish, marking it on your Action Sheet. Now go to **56**.

49

The crowded road and gatehouse offer a cramped space for combat, and the guards are not able to come at you all at once. You may choose which guards to fight, in which order. Fight the guards **one at a time**.

First Guard	Attack 1d12	Hitpoints 20
Second Guard	Attack 1d12	Hitpoints 14
Third Guard	Attack 1d10	Hitpoints 25
Fourth Guard	Attack 1d8	Hitpoints 30

If you reduce an opponent to 5 Hitpoints or less, this Guard will flee from the combat, diving inside the gatehouse. If you defeat **two** of the guards, the other two will decide they do not fancy their chances against you, and run to get reinforcements.

If you manage to survive the battle – successfully reducing two of the guards to 5 Hitpoints or less in single combat – you have a window of opportunity to flee the city, returning the way you came. Turn to **45**.

50

The enemy forces are arrayed against an assault from the front from the King's Army. They are taken by surprise by your sudden assault. Your cavalry units get **three free hits** and other units **one free hit** before getting into close combat.

Decide which of your units will attack which enemy units. Enemy units will always retaliate against the unit attacking them (if no unit or more than one unit is attacking them, they will target the unit with the highest Unit Strength). The enemy units' strength following the surprise attack, but before your free rolls, is as follows:

Roundheads	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 50
Roundhead Elite	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 10
Metal Elementals	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
Gaseous Elementals	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 10
Rock Elementals	Attack 1d12	Unit Strength 20

If you win the battle, turn to **58**.

If you lose, turn to **91**.

51

The Arthal countryside consists of low grasslands interspersed with rolling downs, and the remains of the once-great forest. Consulting your map, the destination which most suggests itself is the Tower of Spells. Presumably, this is where the King's forces are battling the wizards, and where there might be gold to be made – or histories to change.

From what you know of wizards, you suspect your quest will be known or guessed, and servants sent to interfere with your progress. Elementals or undead may be sent to scour the fields or roads. But the wilder areas are full of dangers of their own.

The Tower is still some distance away, and several routes suggest themselves. The quickest route leads northwards, across the countryside, through the village of Bencross. This route avoids the hills and forests, and brings you directly to your destination.

Alternatively, the shrine of Vairanu the Great, a hero of times immemorial, lies in the hills to the northwest. Perhaps you will find solace, or another vision, at the shrine.

In addition, the port town of Lennua, in the neighbouring realm of Elthen, is less than a day's walk away. The bustling market of Lennua will be a sharp contrast to the sleepy countryside, offering the opportunity to sell any items you have gathered, or spend your gold on new equipment.

If you wish to head for Bencross, turn to **13**.

If you seek the Shrine of Vairanu, turn to **76**.

If you make for Lennua Market, turn to **25**.

52

Your cavalry unit charges boldly towards the enemy lines, planning to run down the archers. Behind them, the remaining units manoeuvre to advance.

The enemy army consists of the following units:

First wave

Roundhead Archers	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 15
-------------------	------------	------------------

If you have already fought the Roundhead Archers, remember to deduct any existing losses from their unit strength.

Roundheads	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 100
------------	------------	-------------------

Roundhead Elite	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 20
-----------------	-------------	------------------

If you have already routed the Roundhead Elite, you do not need to fight them again.

Second wave

Gaseous Elementals	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 10
--------------------	------------	------------------

Third wave

Metal Elementals	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
------------------	-------------	------------------

Rock Elementals	Attack 1d12	Unit Strength 20
-----------------	-------------	------------------

The battle proceeds as follows:

Rounds 1-4: You deploy **one or more** cavalry units to advance towards enemy lines. The enemy archers have **four free rolls** at these units. If your cavalry are wiped out, the archers then get another **four free rolls plus the number of turns the cavalry had left** against the first unit behind them, and if this unit is routed, against successive units until they have made four rolls. So if the cavalry are wiped out on the third turn, the archers have five rolls against the next unit in line.

Rounds 5-8:

If the cavalry have survived the advance, they engage the archers in close combat. The archers cannot use their bows and no longer get to make attack rolls.

The cavalry must make attack rolls against the archers until they are dead. Once the archers are dead, the cavalry can make attack rolls against the Roundhead or Roundhead Elite units.

The Roundhead and Roundhead Elite units (or just the Roundheads if the Elites were routed earlier) make attack rolls against the cavalry.

Rounds 8-9:

The cavalry continue making attack rolls against the archers, Roundheads, or Roundhead Elite.

The Gaseous Elementals unit show up in round 8 and begin attacking the Cavalry (or the unit with the highest Attack if the Cavalry are dead).

The rest of your army now arrives. All units (except archers) may make attack rolls against any of the deployed enemy units.

Round 10 onwards: The Metal and Rock Elementals now arrive, and begin attacking your units, starting with those with the most surviving Unit Strength. You may now choose to have your units attack whichever enemy units you wish.

If you win the battle, turn to **58**.

If you lose, turn to **91**.

53

The radioactive bolts twist your skin and organs, producing festering ulcers and tumours on contact. This will be the hardest battle of your life.

Uranium Elemental Attack 1d20 Hitpoints 20

Rolls below 10 will not hit this adversary as it stays out of range of your attacks. Rolls of over 20 will do a standard 4 Hitpoints damage each time the creature is hit, rather than the number rolled. Each time the elemental scores a successful hit, in addition to the Hitpoints damage it causes, it warps your body, making it harder and harder to fight. After each second hit, deduct 1 from all attack rolls you make after this point.

If you somehow win this extremely difficult battle, turn to 46.

54

The Knight spits on the floor. "Filthy rats. They owe us their lives, that they are not beset by wars. But when we need them, they slink off where we can't find them. They envy our wealth and strength, and they prefer to drink themselves silly instead of providing us with grain. You know, in the divine order, they are the lowest rank, their duty is to obey without question. But they subvert our orders, even talk back when they can. They think we owe them everything, and they owe us nothing. Some were required to serve in the army, but they sneaked back to their villages the moment our backs were turned. I wish we could dispense with them completely."

Nods from surrounding courtiers suggest that the Knight's opinion is widely held.

If you now wish to take the tax collection job, turn to 26.

If you prefer to raid the King's treasury, turn to 35.

If you want to leave for the countryside, turn to 51.

55

The door clicks open as you move the figures into the correct positions. You walk into the room beyond, and are amazed at what you see there.

The room is a shrine, carved from the mountainside. The walls and floor shine the colour of burnished gold. Sunlight shines through a central shaft high in the ceiling, illuminating a golden altar at the centre of the room.

You feel a sensation of deep inner peace as you walk into the shrine. As you approach the sunlit fountain, an ethereal form takes shape above it. As the ghostly image hovers motionless in the air, you hear a voice in your mind.

"Greetings, adventurer. For many ages have I waited, for one who can solve the mystery of the door. Your coming has been foretold. Your task is great, for yours is the age of the tipping point. The world teeters like a great rock perched atop the peak of a mountain. A little pressure and it will fall one way, or the other.

"If the world is not to be cast into an age of darkness, the wizards of the Tower of Spells must be defeated. To you has fallen the task of tilting the balance. Beware, for your enemy has foretold your coming, and even now, his agents are abroad.

"I shall offer you aid, from the timeless past in which all things reside. Three items you shall be offered, but only one may you take, for others shall seek me again in the times to come. Choose carefully, adventurer, for the success of your quest may hinge upon your choice."

Three glowing ethereal images appear beneath the feet of the spirit.

Choose **one** of the following:

Enchanted Sword of Vairanu (Weapon, 1d12+3)

Special effect: this magic weapon also affects most creatures which are immune to normal weapons

Enchanted Glass Shield (-1 from all damage taken in combat)

Special effects: this shield also protects against projectile magic, and can be looked through to safely fight creatures with a petrifying gaze (Basilisks, Cockatrice, Gorgons, etc)

Ward against the Undead (double all damage rolled against Undead opponents, and halve all damage done by Undead opponents, rounding fractions up)

Special effect: this item also offers some protection against dark magic

When you reach for one of the items, this item becomes solid, taking shape in your hand. The other items, and the spectral figure before you, fade into shadows. Gradually, you feel the sanctified presence of the space lift itself from you, and the light on the altar fades. It must be growing late in the world above. You make your way back through the crypt, and climb through the hole in the roof.

After a short walk northwards, the Green Hills give way to farmlands, and you are relieved to see the familiar swinging sign of an inn on the horizon.

Turn to 100.

56

There is nothing exceptional about your appearance, and the guards wave you through without a search.

Linnua is a trading town, ruled by a council of merchant lords. The south and east sides of the city open onto the sea, and merchant ships, along with smaller fishing vessels, can be seen pulling into and out of the various docks which line the seafront. In-town, traders and merchants bustle about, conducting business or transporting goods.

You proceed to the marketplace, which is the centrepiece of the town, and the largest for many leagues. Hundreds of merchants run stalls selling everything from grain to jewelled armour.

Merchants will buy existing items for the following prices:

Diamonds	50 gold pieces <u>each</u>
Enchanted Sword	35 gold pieces
Jewelled Sword	25 gold pieces
Golden Lamp	25 gold pieces
Glass Shield	15 gold pieces
Ward against the Undead	5 gold pieces

Among the many items available in the marketplace, you single out the following as the most likely to be useful for your adventure. Purchase whichever items you wish:

Mace (Weapon, 1d10 damage)	6 gold pieces
Broadsword (Weapon, 1d12 damage)	12 gold pieces
Enchanted Mace (1d8 damage, affects all Undead and Demons)	20 gold pieces

Vials of Poison (+1 to all damage caused for a single combat per vial)	
	5 gold pieces
Shield (-1 to all damage received)	2 gold pieces
Chainmail (-1 to all damage received)	20 gold pieces
Rust Potion (double damage to metallic opponent, one combat only)	10 gold pieces
Holy Water (-10 Hitpoints to Undead opponents if used before combat; one use only)	5 gold pieces per vial
Naphtha vial (-5 Hitpoints damage to all opponents if used in combat with multiple adversaries)	5 gold pieces
Sleeping Potion (puts opponent to sleep)	7 gold pieces
Healing Salve (+5 Hitpoints)	3 gold pieces per vial
Magician's Robes	5 gold pieces
Monk's Hood	2 gold pieces
Onyx Statuette	2 gold pieces
Holy Symbol	2 gold pieces
Rope	1 gold piece
Ball of Twine	1 gold piece
Mirror	1 gold piece

If you wish to stay at an inn for the night, this costs 1 gold piece and restores 5 Hitpoints.

When you are done trading, you leave Lennua and head back towards Arthal. Turn to **45**.

57

The Knights take your Gold Piece (deduct it from your total) and usher you into the city.

Turn to **99**.

58

The battlefield is strewn with the dead and dying, your own and the enemy's. Human bodies are interspersed with rubble, and the shards and stones of the deceased elementals. You thought you were desensitised to such things, but now, the horror of war comes rushing back to you. Was your pursuit of a strange vision really worth so much bloodshed? They would have died anyway, you tell yourself. The King and the wizards would not have sat still forever. Yet you cannot exorcise a deep sense of unease. Is this your calling? Through the horror of your own experience, to create a world in which such things no longer happen?

As you approach the tower, you see a strange sight. The wizards, defeated, are deserting their tower like rats on a sinking ship. The glow of spellcasting lights the sky as dozens of enchanted objects and magical servants carry the now vulnerable wizards to places of erstwhile safety. Is the battle over? Somehow you doubt it. At least, you feel obliged to find out what they were doing – and whether you can really shift the direction of your world.

Your troops have used a fallen tree as a battering ram, and cleared a path into the tower. With trepidation, you step across the threshold.

Turn to **68**.

59

You walk along the valleys between the larger hills. For several hours, you find nothing except wildflowers, stones and a startled fox. You are beginning to wonder if the tomb is simply a myth, when the ground caves in beneath you and you fall onto the floor of a subterranean building. **Deduct 2 Hitpoints** for the fall.

Rising to your feet, you look around the room you have found. It is a wide chamber, filled with stone sarcophagi of ancient design. The walls and floor are also made of stone, and phosphorescent lichen casts an eerie glow. The ceiling is of wattle and daub, cunningly disguised as part of the surrounding valley. A passageway leads north, and downwards into the earth. Could this be the fabled Tomb of Vairanu? Perhaps this antechamber is the resting-place of the hero's followers or servants.

You are about to explore the passageway when a creaking noise draws your attention. You spin around to see one of the sarcophagi slowly open. From the ancient coffin emerges a Ghoul – an undead being which preys on the dead and the living. You cannot evade it in this confined space, and must prepare to fight.

Ghoul Attack 1d6 (claws) Hitpoints 8

The Ghoul's claws are coated in a powerful paralytic venom. The second time it hits you, your combat skill is reduced by paralysis, and you should **deduct 1 from all subsequent dice rolls** (so a roll of 3 only does 2 damage). If it hits you four times, deduct another 1 from subsequent dice rolls (so a roll of 3 only does 1 damage). Repeat this process on every second turn. These deductions only last for the duration of this combat.

If you defeat the Ghoul, turn to **41**.

60

You are in combat with a Knight of the Realm and four members of the King's Guard. This will be a difficult battle, though you are able to manoeuvre yourself into position so they can only attack you one at a time.

King's Guard 1	Attack 1d10	Hitpoints 20
King's Guard 2	Attack 1d12	Hitpoints 17
King's Guard 3	Attack 1d10	Hitpoints 22
King's Guard 4	Attack 1d8	Hitpoints 25
Knight of the Realm	Attack 1d20	Hitpoints 20

When fighting the Knight of the Realm, you may attempt to unhorse him instead of rolling for damage. If you do this, instead of rolling your attack dice, roll 1d6. If you roll 5-6 you have unhorsed him and his Attack from this point onwards is reduced to 1d12.

All of the guards will fight to the death.

If you manage to kill all the guards, you must flee the scene as soon as possible – the outcry has attracted attention and runners are on their way to call for reinforcements. You have time to take 7 gold pieces from the guards' belt pouches, and the Knight's Helmet, which allows you to deduct 1 from all damage received in combat.

You retreat to the forest. Note that you cannot now attempt to enter Ham Duranen via the main gate as you would be killed on sight.

Turn to **20** and choose another option.

61

The glass shield is able to capture and deflect the radioactive bolts fired by this creature, preventing you from being damaged by the bolts. The creature is forced into close combat, seeking to strike you with its enormous fists.

Uranium Elemental Attack 1d12 Hitpoints 20

If you defeat the creature, turn to **46**.

62

You chase the robber around the houses of the village, as he dodges into alleyways and around carts and fences to evade pursuit. You finally catch him at the village square, tackling him as he tries to dart across the square from an alleyway between two houses. Some time during your pursuit, he has discarded his mask, and you now see that he is one of the villagers who confronted you at the gate.

The noise of the chase and fight has drawn attention, and many people come into the square. You are about to announce that the man has robbed you, when the robber cries out: "Neighbours, help me! The outlander has beaten me for no reason!"

Peasant men stand round you with frowns on their faces, and push you away from their friend. You try to explain that the man has robbed you, but to no avail – your word carries little weight among strangers, and any who would bear witness in your favour stay silent. Several of the villagers physically lift you and cast you out of the village gate, onto the road.

There is no chance of staying in the village overnight now, so you resolve to sleep outdoors. Turn to **31**.

63

The villagers are surly and hostile, but they dare not attack a representative of the King. You go from house to house, demanding gold from the peasants. Many houses seem empty when you approach, and some villagers claim that they have no gold. Even with your best efforts at searching and cajoling, you only collect a grand total of **25 Gold Pieces** from the villagers. (Choose whether to steal this for yourself, or mark it on your Action Sheet as **Taxes Collected**). Barely a success, you think, in a village of a hundred households.

You sense hostility from the villagers. Gazes are cast in your direction; people turn aside, or mutter to each other behind their hoods. It is getting late, and there are no other villages for miles around.

If you wish to approach the village inn about staying the night, turn to **81**.

If you wish to visit the village store first, turn to **24**.

64

You empty your pockets and backpack. The highwayman is ruthless, taking all items of value.

Deduct the following from your Action Sheet, if you possess them: **all Gold Pieces** in your personal possession, the **Taxes Collected**, **Diamonds**, **Royal Sceptre**, any **Amulets**, the **Ward against the Undead**, **Jewelled Sword**, **Onyx Statuette**, **Holy Symbol**. (The highwayman is not interested in regular weapons, armour, or potions).

Your load now lighter, but your heart heavier, you continue on the road to Ham Duranen.

If you wish to continue by road, turn to **20**.

If you now wish to leave the road and travel through the forest, turn to **39**.

65

Staying under the cover of the forest, you survey the fieldworks for any possible points of entry. Most of the fortifications consist of thick wooden barricades topped with spikes, guarded day and night by the King's soldiers or the town militia. You see only one possible entrance route: a tunnel into the south side of the hill, apparently used for sewage disposal.

If you wish to attempt the tunnel route, turn to **89**.

If you wish to climb across the barricades at a point guarded by the King's soldiers, turn to **29**.

If you wish to climb across the barricades at a point guarded by the local militia, turn to **18**.

If you do not wish to attempt any of these things, turn back to **20** and choose a different option.

66

This rowdy barracks town is not the best place to be sleeping outdoors.

Roll 1d8. If you are wearing a **Pendant of Narva**, **Holy Symbol**, or **Ward against the Undead**, add 1 to the number rolled.

If the total is 1-2, you are attacked by a cutthroat. Deduct 5 Hitpoints and then fight:

Cutthroat Attack 1d6 Hitpoints 15

If the total is 3-4, you are attacked by a street robber. Deduct 5 Hitpoints and 10 gold pieces if you have them.

If the total is 5-6, you are robbed by a pickpocket. Deduct 10 gold pieces (or all your gold if you do not have 10). If you have no gold, the pickpocket leaves you alone.

If the total is 7 or more, your night is uneventful, but your fitful sleep restores no health.

You awaken to a new dawn, wondering if you can ever make it inside the Tower of Spells.

Turn to **85**.

67

To lure the enemy away from its positions, you attempt to stage the illusion of an unsuccessful attack. The enemy has **five** regular units plus the archers. The enemy will only deploy a ground unit if an advancing unit appears to break and flee.

All of your units will be pitted against the enemy archers:

Roundhead Archers Attack 1d6 Unit Strength 15

Nominate a unit to advance on enemy lines. This unit must sustain **three rounds** of fire from the enemy archers before simulating flight. An enemy unit will then be assigned to pursue. You must repeat this pattern with **five different units** to draw off the five enemy units that can be sent in pursuit. If a unit is eliminated before it can break, it does not count towards the total of five. If a unit is not eliminated, but has **three or fewer** Unit Strength when it breaks, enemy units will not bother pursuing and the unit does not count towards the total of 5. Cavalry may be used, but archers cannot be used.

Once the other units have been drawn off, you must use any remaining units to rout the archers.

If you have an archer unit of your own, they may resolve an individual combat starting in the first

round. In the fifth round, any surviving ground units which are not busy pinning down enemy units may engage the archers in close combat.

If you do not have an archer unit, any surviving ground units will have to survive eight rounds of enemy fire (three rounds for a cavalry unit) before engaging the archers in close combat.

If you manage to draw off the ground units and eliminate the archers, turn to **58**.

If you fail to do this, you try to sneak into the tower through the weakened defences. Turn to **16**, but halve the Hitpoints of all units you face between now and your entry into the tower.

68

You enter the tower, hoping at last to find answers to your questions.

The outside of the tower resembled a fortified position, but the interior could hardly be more different. The inner structure is made of wood, with spiral staircases rising as far as the eye can see. Strange books, jars, and alchemical equipment line the walls. Tables and desks set in alcoves contain the remains of strange experiments, as flasks and bottles fizzle with strangely coloured liquids. On each floor there are cages or shackles, which you guess were made to contain the strange elementals you have encountered on your journey. On the wall is pinned a scroll, depicting more than sixty of these creatures, each marked with a symbol – Io, Ne, Fe, Au.

If you did not realise already, it is now clear to you that the wizards' experiments were the source of the elementals. You are still flabbergasted at the breach of the natural order which these creatures entail. According to the dominant wisdom, only four elements exist. Yet here is uncontrovertible evidence that the wizards have somehow fabricated more. The basic structure of reality has shifted. Yet the strange experiments conducted here are the product of a peculiar imagination. Only here, in the Tower of Spells in Arthal, has alchemy reached such a extreme. After the debacle of the war, you doubt any such experiments will occur for some time. The fate of the tower will determine the direction of the world.

You are still observing the building when you feel yourself being watched. Slowly you turn around. Facing you from a balcony, three feet above your head, is a middle-aged wizard, his robes dyed plain white. He wears a monocle and embroidered gloves, and his blond hair is streaked with grey. He does not wear the familiar pointed hat of his profession, and he exudes an air of charm.

"Welcome to my domain, adventurer. I would wager that you believe you have won." He lets out a cackling laugh.

"They always wondered why wizards have to burn off part of the air and then trap it, to summon an air elemental. I am the one who found out. It is because the air is not one. It is not a single element, but many. Do you see? I can split the air into parts, create many elementals. And more, much more can be split too. The rocks, the earth, the water. Given time, perhaps life itself can be split into new elements, giving us new power!" Another of those laughs.

"The others have fled. Unbelieving fools. But don't you see I am the greatest? I have made this breakthrough, it cannot be reversed. All my life this was written in my destiny, and though they tried to stop me, never gave me my due – still my greatness shines through. You did not deserve your victory – I am sure you cheated fate somehow to come here. But it matters not. Whether I live or die, my greatness is secured in the world I have built. The name of Morden the Magnificent, founder of a new world. Never again will humanity be one with itself! From here to eternity, the world will live by way of the elements! And it is me – my will, my vision – which will always stand between these fools and their lives! This will repay them for denying my brilliance!"

He waves his hands and a cage descends from the floors above, rattling with mechanical strain at the weight it carries. Within stand two last elementals. The first is a bright silver, metallic creature. Flames split from its side. Morden is somehow controlling the creature, from a globe of flashing

lightning beneath his right hand.

You ready yourself for battle.

Potassium Elemental Attack 1d8 Hitpoints 15

This enemy keeps its distance and tries to strike you at range with its fiery discharges. If you roll less than 10 to strike the creature, you will do no damage at all, as it keeps out of range. Hits of 10 or more will damage the creature as usual.

If you win the battle, turn to **21**.

69

Your journey across the fields is uneventful, and the only creatures you encounter are some wandering sheep. You reach the roadway south of the crossroads where the road turns east towards the border with Elthen. This journey, too, is uneventful, until you come across a large abandoned golden oil-lamp by the roadside. At first you think nothing of it, but as you approach it, a purple gas begins seeping from its spout. Your previous encounters with air elementals and djinni have made you wary, and you are instantly on guard, as the gas shapes itself into the familiar form of an air elemental: a tornado-like trunk topped by two tendrils of smoke, and a head resembling a cloud, with shadowy eyes hinting at a malign intelligence. The creature seeps towards you, as you draw your weapon.

Hydrogen Elemental Attack 1d8 Hitpoints 12

If you defeat this odd air elemental, you continue on your journey. If you wish, you may keep the **Golden Lamp** (mark it on your action sheet).

If you wish to continue northwards to the village of Bencross, turn to **13**.

If you head eastwards to the market at Lennua (unless you have been there already), turn to **25**.

70

Once upon a time, the kingdom of Arthal was ruled by a greedy King, who stole from the people and made them poor. The King was in league with a mighty dragon, whose strength and fire-breath kept the people in fear. In return for subduing the people, the King gave the dragon a share of the treasure, which the dragon hoarded in a mountain cave. Hearing of the plight of the people, the trickster Arran came to the kingdom.

Arran came to the king and the dragon, and warned that the people were angry, and plotting to steal the treasure when he wasn't looking. The king sealed himself into the royal treasury, barring the doors and windows. And the dragon brought down the mountainside to seal his caves. But kings and dragons only pretend to divine power – they cannot live without air, water, or food. Weeks later, the people broke down the door to find the greedy king was nothing but a skeleton, and likewise the dragon in his cave. Such is the fate of kings who greedily exploit their people!

The villagers love your performance, and you feel a change in the mood towards you. Villagers offer you a **Club (Weapon, 1d8)** and **3 Gold Pieces**, as well as a free stay at the inn courtesy of the innkeeper's household.

If you have **robbed the king's treasury**, turn to **38**.

If not, you talk with the villagers until the gathering begins to drift apart. Afterwards, one of the villagers invites you to a secret event in the woods.

You are wary. The villagers seem well-disposed towards you, but even so, this could be a trap.

If you wish to take the villagers up on their offer, turn to **34**.

If you would prefer to retire to the inn, turn to **92**.

71

The sceptre protrudes visibly from your backpack. A guard notices it, and demands to search your bag. Two guards roughly grab you while a third reaches into the bag and pulls out the sceptre.

"What have we here?" says the first guard. "A thief who thinks he can rob our neighbour, and launder his spoils in our city. Or perhaps a spy, sent by our neighbour to subvert our sovereignty."

The guards debate what to do with you. They decide to hold you in the dungeons, and send a runner to the King of Arthal to clarify your status. You do not like the sounds of this. The King will not be merciful with one who stole from his treasury. You will have to fight your way out.

Turn to **49**.

72

The fires spread as you run out of the building, clutching whatever valuables you can grab. With the battle over and the tower ablaze, your mercenaries (if you hired any) see little hope for loot, and few remain here for long. The King's armies are now on the move, searching for the robber who denied them their prize. Realising it would be wise to be elsewhere before they find you, you steal a horse abandoned by the wizards, and seek safety under the cover of the forest. The King's forces will try to find you, but you will be far away before they can mount an organised pursuit.

There is nothing left in Arthal for you. The King will be your enemy, the people hold no love for you, and the surviving wizards will be out for revenge. What is more, Arthal is added to your roster of battlefields and disaster zones. Once more, a new land is forever stained in your memory by the blood you have shed there. You flee overnight, passing through the forest into Elthen, and continuing to run until your legs can bear you no longer. Within days, you will be far away, far from where the King's agents can reach, far from the ruins of your life. Perhaps you will work passage on a ship, or sign on for the wars in the north. Your future lies far, far away from the Tower of Spells and the memory of Morden's alchemy.

It will take decades for Arthal to recover. The truce between the wizards and the King has been ruptured, and the story of their conflict will continue to play out long after Morden is forgotten. But you will not be part of that story. You have successfully headed off the world-shifting change portended by Morden's experiments. His secrets died with him. Even if you tell others what you saw, few would believe you. Along with Morden's death, you have also preserved your own way of life as an adventurer in a wild world infused with magic. But will you ever find peace in this life? Perhaps other opportunities will present themselves as you travel the world in search of adventure and glory. For now, however, the adventure is over.

73

The inns and streets of the town are overflowing with mercenaries for hire. In some instances, entire units of seasoned sellswords are available in one place. Few mercenaries have any scruples about whether to work for you or the King, and it will be easy to raise your own army – provided you have the money.

Unless you already have an army marked on your Action Sheet, record that you are in command of a **Mercenary Army**. If you already have an army, the mercenaries will be hired as allies.

The following units are available for hire:

Mercenaries Attack 1d8 Unit Strength: 1 per 1 gold spent
Mercenaries may be arranged into between 1 and 3 separate units

Light Cavalry Attack 1d12 Unit Strength: 1 per 4 gold spent
Cavalry may be arranged into between 1 and 3 separate units

Mercenary Archers Attack 1d6 Unit Strength: 1 per 2 gold spent
 Special: Ranged combat unit
Must be arranged into a single unit

Vandar's Veterans Attack 1d10 Unit Strength 20
Must be hired as an entire unit Cost: 50 gold

Dwarven Warriors Attack 1d10 Unit Strength 20
 Special: -1 to all damage received
Must be hired as an entire unit Cost: 60 gold

If you wish to make further sales or purchases, turn back to **85** and choose again.

If you do not wish to trade any more, you lead your new army onto the field, and prepare to assault the tower defences in the morning. Turn to **9**.

74

You quickly stifle the flames with a blanket, and then call for help. Despite the royalist forces across the barricades, your control of the tower is still intact. During your absence, the King's forces attempted an assault on the Army of Narva, but were forced to beat a hasty retreat as the city militia and many of the conscripts mutinied. The Marshal and his knights are now in transit to Caer Linnaroth, doubtless to obtain reinforcements for a new assault.

Over the following weeks, you pore over the alchemists' work with the help of scribes from Ham Duranen and shamans from the villages. Gradually, your companions decipher the procedures to split the earth and air and to summon and control the new-found elements. They cross-read this knowledge with village ingenuity to craft weapons and traps to even the balance with the King's forces. By the time the King arrives, with an army reinforced by allies from Elthen and numerous mercenaries, they are faced with flaming projectiles, explosive obstacles and vastly improved crossbows. The Army of Narva remain in control of rural Arthal, and the King's forces are besieged within Caer Linnaroth.

Under the guard of the Army of Narva, villagers across Arthal begin to take control of their lives. Royal lands and large estates are broken up, tax offices and land registries burnt to the ground, money-lenders and tax collectors driven out on pain of death, common lands and traditional rights restored, and peasant markets spring up in the towns. The wizards' knowledge spreads through the villages, and, with this new knowledge, the land becomes more fertile than ever. The crafts, too, are revolutionised by new machinery and energy. Peasants and artisans are enriched as never before. Many mercenaries and itinerant adventurers return to the land to partake in the new-found wealth.

But what of your vision? Perhaps there will be a shadow to this new world. And, indeed, after a few years, strains begin to show. The scribes who have access to the wizards' knowledge are beginning to take on a directive role in its distribution and development. With their skills or reading, writing and experimentation, they separate themselves from the peasants and townsfolk. Richer peasants and merchants begin to study their arts, gaining advantages over their neighbours. A new layer of alchemists and scribes comes into being, and this group, with representatives in every village, begins to insist that the new ways be applied to every aspect of life. The old ways of shamanism and

worldly knowledge begin to decline. Machines begin to replace craftsmen and farm labourers. Large factories begin to form, providing employment for people displaced by machines. Each factory is designed and dominated by a chief alchemist, whose scientific schemes squeeze the maximum of productive energy from the people working there.

What is more, the land is cast into eternal war. The success of the Army of Narva has inspired peasants in surrounding realms to challenge their erstwhile masters. The new technologies spread only slowly to the surrounding kingdoms, but the example of Arthal is a powerful force for change. In the turmoil of war and foreign invasion, the alchemists take increasing power upon themselves to protect the freedom of the people with might of arms. The motto of the Army of Narva – to lead while obeying the people – is more than ever lost, as the endless wars against surrounding kingdoms drag on interminably. As the alchemists come to resemble the Kings and Lords of old, and the machines undercut the very conditions for the wealth they make possible, you come to wonder if the rebirth promised by the peasant army has simply come full-circle.

In this new world, you are lauded as a hero. You receive a gift of land in Bencross, as well as full citizenship of the autonomous city-state of Ham Duranen. You are received with honours at the Tower of Spells, which has now become a college for the training of alchemists and scribes. Gradually you come to master the new ways, providing a path to wealth with a minimum of effort. You are still more fulfilled at the sight of the enrichment of the people, which feels as if it makes up, at least in part, for the horrors you have lived. Yet you become restless as the new world evolves. The hope that drove the Army of Narva seems at once realised and lost. Perhaps someday, you will seek to revive the spirit of change, or perhaps spread it to other realms, following the stories which have given you a near prophetic status. For now, however, your adventure is over.

75

Without the King's raiments, you look like an ordinary traveller. The guards are about to wave you through, when the guard who stopped you the first time does a double-check. "You again!"

Irrked by this insult to their authority, the guards draw their swords and advance. You will have to fight.

Turn to **49**.

76

According to legend, the Tomb of Vairanu lies in the Green Hills to the northwest of Caer Linnaroth, and can be found only by those of good heart. The hills are easy enough to reach, but there are no roads in the area, and the surrounding area is a wasteland of moors and bracken.

If you wish to follow the River Swiftwater into the hills, turn to **88**.

If you prefer to try to cut a way through the bracken, turn to **44**.

77

You descend into a decaying, forgotten tomb from ancient times. Cobwebs and moss line the walls and ceiling, and small creatures flee at your approach. At the centre of the tomb is a broken sarcophagus, the yellowed bones of some long-dead lord clearly visible within it. One of the skeletal hands has fallen to the floor, and on one finger there is clearly visible a golden ring, barely tarnished with age, and bearing the seal of an ancient King of Arthal.

Before you can act further, a chill crosses your body. You suddenly feel terribly, overwhelmingly tired, your limbs barely willing to obey your commands, your heart heavy with a sense of futility. The part of you which is still conscious recognises the effects of a Wraith's enervation curse.

If you are carrying a **Ward against the Undead**, turn to **5**.

If you are not carrying a Ward, but you have an **Enchanted Sword, Mace or Shield**, and/or are wearing a **Pendant of Narva** or a **Holy Symbol**, turn to **36**.

If you have none of these items, turn to **87**.

78

The enemy army deploys to meet your weak frontal assault. The lead unit in Group A must withstand six rounds of damage from the enemy archers before the trap is sprung.

Roundhead Archers Attack 1d6 Unit Strength 15

If the whole of Group A is wiped out within six rounds, the enemy notice the flank assault and redeploy to face it. Turn to **2**.

If Group A keeps the enemy's attention for six rounds, then the units in Group B manage to attack by surprise, assailing the enemy flank before they are able to achieve formation. All units in Group B receive two free rolls against whichever enemy units you choose:

Roundheads	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 50
Roundhead Elite	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 10
Metal Elementals	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
Gaseous Elementals	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 10
Rock Elementals	Attack 1d12	Unit Strength 20

After these free rolls, combat proceeds as usual between your units and the enemy units. Enemies will retaliate against units which have attacked them. Units which have not been attacked, or which are facing multiple targets, will target the unit with the highest Unit Strength.

If you win the battle, turn to **58**.

If you lose, turn to **91**.

79

Your nerves are on edge, and you use every ounce of your adventurer's nerve to stay calm. Your fears are well-placed. With a jingling of metal on metal, a black-clad highwayman wielding a rapier springs from the bushes besides the roadside, issuing the familiar challenge: "Your money or your life!"

If you wish to hand over your money, turn to **64**.

If you wish to hand over some of your money, then feign poverty, turn to **82**.

If you wish to fight the highwayman, turn to **3**.

80

You laboriously climb the tallest hills, reaching their summits, but turn up nothing but rocks and a few shallow caves. As you are lit by the evening sunlight striking the crest of the northernmost hill, it occurs to you that a hilltop would be a strange place to put a secret tomb – closer to the life-giving energies of the sun than to the border between this world and the next. But from the hilltops, you can survey the entire range of the Green Hills, including the valleys inbetween. You can make no sign of a tomb or crypt anywhere in the range. Perhaps you are not good enough of heart. Or perhaps the tomb is nothing but a myth.

Disheartened, you climb down through the northern foothills, emerging in wide fields. You see isolated homesteads and barns dotted around the fields, and you are relieved to see the easily recognisable sign of an inn swinging above the doorway of one of the buildings. You approach the cottage, looking for shelter for the night.

Turn to **100**.

81

The village inn is built onto the side of the house of one of the wealthier peasant families. It consists of a small living room used for food and drink, and a bedroom with several beds.

The innkeeper is one of the peasants who reluctantly handed over gold earlier in the day, and you can see a grudge in his eyes. He calmly demands **8 Gold Pieces** for room and board.

This is way above the going rate, but argue as you will, he will not budge – suggesting that you meet his terms, or sleep in the fields.

If you do not have 8 gold pieces of your own, you may choose to rob the king's taxes. If you do this, then delete the **Taxes Collected** from your Action Sheet, and add 25 to your Gold.

If you meet the innkeeper's price, turn to **96**.

If you would rather leave the village and sleep outdoors, turn to **31**.

82

You hand over several gold pieces, pleading that this is all you have. But with one swift move, the highwayman draws his rapier across your backpack, the contents falling to the floor.

Note that **your Backpack is damaged**, and turn to **3** to fight the highwayman.

83

One of the guards notices your clothes and calls to the knight, whispering in his ear. The knight looks back at you, scanning you up and down. "My apologies, sire. I see you bring taxes for the king. You may enter freely."

You reflect silently on the limits to the knight's concept of "freely" as you are led, under armed guard of four glaive-wielding guards, to the encampment of the Field Marshal, the leader of the King's army.

The Marshal is an imposing man, his steel armour brightly painted on the pauldrons and epaulets, his height and girth contributing to his stature. You are forced to wait while he issues orders to two page-boys, while pointing to a map of the battlefield on which carved figures have been placed.

Eventually, the Marshal turns to address you. "So, the collector brings taxes? We always have need of more money to hire troops."

If you are carrying the **Taxes Collected** (and have not raided them for your own use), turn to **32**.

If you are not carrying this item, turn to **27**.

84

The village store is run from the main room of the home of one of the wealthier peasant households. You find the door wide open, and a variety of locally produced and imported wares for sale. Decide if you wish to purchase any of the following items, making the appropriate changes to your Action Sheet:

Club (Weapon, 1d8 damage)	3 Gold Pieces
Mace (Weapon, 1d10 damage)	10 Gold Pieces
Dragon's Tooth Pendant	30 Gold Pieces
Wooden Shield (-1 from all damage received)	5 Gold Pieces
Healing Potion (restores up to 10 Hit Points at any time outside combat)	5 Gold Pieces
Rope	2 Gold Pieces
Corn Dolly	2 Gold Pieces
Amulet	1 Gold Piece
Ball of Twine	1 Gold Piece
Clay Pot	1 Gold Piece

After making any purchases you wish, you head for the inn. Turn to **12**.

85

A new day only adds to the activity which has overtaken Ham Duranen. If you do not already have an army, you will need to think of a way to raise one. Perhaps you could hire some of the horde of mercenaries who have descended on the city.

If you have not done so already, and you are carrying the **Taxes Collected**, you may approach the Marshal to hand in the taxes. Turn to **32**.

Otherwise, if you wish to go to the marketplace to buy or sell items, turn to **14**.

If you wish to inquire about hiring mercenaries, turn to **73**.

86

You will have to fight a number of adversaries to reach the tower on your own. Roll repeatedly on the following table. You must fight any adversaries you encounter. Keep rolling until you roll a 5 (death) or an 8 (success).

You must fight at least two opponents before having a chance to enter the tower. On the first two turns, **roll a d4**. On subsequent turns, **roll a d8**.

1	Roundhead	Attack 1d6	Hitpoints 10
2	Roundhead	Attack 1d6	Hitpoints 8
3	Elite Roundhead	Attack 1d10	Hitpoints 10
4	Neon Elemental	Attack 1d8	Hitpoints 14
5	You are shot down by an arrow from the tower. Your adventure is over.		
6	Copper Elemental	Attack 1d8	Hitpoints 20
7	Aluminium Elemental	Attack 1d8	Hitpoints 40
8	You have successfully reached the tower. Turn to 68 .		

87

The Wraith is a powerful opponent, and its powers of enervation have found a welcome hook in your remembered past. You sink to the floor, too tired to move. You try to raise your weapon against the Wraith, but your mind drifts back to the worst of your past combat experiences, reliving your comrades' deaths and your own paralysing fear. Your weapon slips from your hand as you slip into a nightmare from which you shall never awaken.

Your adventure ends here.

88

Holding to the banks of the river, you avoid the worst of the terrain. When necessary, you wade or swim in the shallow water, working your way upstream. You make rapid progress towards the hills, and you are beginning to enjoy the scenery and the weather.

You are wading across rocks along the waterside, in the foothills of the Green Hills, when your relaxation almost proves costly. You notice a silvery sheen on the water, floating downstream from the hills. At first you discount it as waterborne waste, but then you notice that it is gradually angling itself in your direction. Now alert, you wade towards the shore, but the swift-moving creature outpaces you. Rising from the water and taking almost solid form, it is some kind of strange liquid elemental, similar to the familiar water elementals, but far swifter.

Mercury Elemental

Attack 1d8 *2

Hitpoints 7

Owing to its speed, the elemental attacks **twice** on its turn.

If you win the battle, you wonder at the possibilities it suggests. Established wisdom says that elementals can only be made from the four elements of earth, fire, air and water. Yet this creature was made of another substance. Perhaps established wisdom is about to change.

Turn to 15.

89

The tunnel is claustrophobic and reeks of sewage. You are wading up to your midriff in rancid water. Your medieval nose is unoffended by such things, and you lack the aversions of a merchant or burgher, but the smell is sometimes so overwhelming as to make you cough.

Worse is to come, as you feel something brush against your leg. A moment later, you feel the strong grip of a tentacle on the same leg. The creature rolls, trying to pull you down.

Sewer Monster

Attack 1d4

Hitpoints 15

The creature's attack is not severe, but you are at serious risk. You must defeat the monster within **four rounds**, or else it will drag you under and you will drown.

If you manage to kill the Sewer Monster, turn to 90.

90

The Sewage Monster drops from your leg into the depths, and you continue down the tunnel. Eventually you arrive at a portcullis which is guarded by two guards. The guards look inattentive and sleepy, and sip from mugs of ale while periodically looking through the bars. Their conversation consists of drunken tales of sexual and marshal prowess, each less believable than the one before.

An opportunity soon presents itself, as the first guard wanders off to relieve himself in a corner, and the second follows him to continue their conversation.

If you have some Sleeping Potion, you can slip it in their drinks and wait for them to doze off. You then lift the portcullis and sneak through into the town. Turn to 99.

If you do not have this item, you will have to lift the portcullis. This alerts the guards, who rush back to see what is happening. By this time, you have lifted the barred gateway far enough to slide beneath it. You must fight the guards:

Drunken Guard 1

Attack 1d6

Hitpoints 15

Drunken Guard 2

Attack 1d4

Hitpoints 20

Fight both guards at once – on their turn, each guard gets to inflict damage before you get to hit back. You may choose which guard to target each round.

If you defeat the guards, you continue into the city. Turn to **99**.

91

Your army has been defeated. Towards the end of the battle, you rally the survivors to launch an all-out assault on the tower. You battle your way past the first fortifications before being pinned down by an enemy unit. Suddenly, a flash from above lights the sky. One of the wizards in the tower has identified you as the leader, and summoned a firebolt spell to strike you down. The last thing you see is your troops breaking and fleeing from the enemy onslaught.

Your adventure is over.

92

You sleep well, although your dreams have troubled you with thoughts of strange elementals unlike any you have seen. Even so, you awaken refreshed, and with renewed resolve to discover any mystery that may await you at the Tower of Spells. **Restore up to 15 Hitpoints** lost in the adventure so far.

Bidding farewell to the innkeeper, and the villagers you see on the road, you leave Bencross by the north gate.

Turn to **10**.

93

Passage through the forest is not easy. The ash trees of the forest are well enough spaced to allow passage, but the underbrush is thick with shrubs and nettles. You continue through the forest through the morning and afternoon, stopping frequently to mop your brow or nibble on food from your backpack. As night approaches, you resolve to make your bed in the treetops, so as to be safe from predatory animals. Climbing one of the tall, smooth ash trees is itself something of a challenge, but you are soon ensconced in the lower branches. Your sleep is undisturbed, and you recover a little from the events of the day before (restore up to **10 Hitpoints**).

The following morning brings worse luck. The first you know of your danger is a shadow cast from the trees above. Instinctively, you dive aside as a dragon-like creature, four feet in length with long jaws of snapping crocodilian teeth, darts down onto the ground where you stood moments before. You instantly recognise the winged, green-scaled horror as a Wood-drake, a small, unintelligent and vicious relative of the green dragon. Wood-drakes are relentless in defence of their territory, and see any large animal as a threat. You prepare to fight as it leaps for your throat.

Wood-drake

Attack 1d12

Hitpoints 8

If you defeat the Wood-drake, you continue on your journey.

If you wish to turn eastwards and head for the village of Bencross, turn to **13**.

If you wish to avoid the village and continue northwards through the forest, approaching the town of Ham Duranen from the west, turn to **39**.

94

The guards at the gate are impassive as you approach. The Knight rides across to inspect you. Looking contemptuously at your dirt-blackened outfit, he sneers. "Another mercenary? We have more than we can afford. But I have orders to afford you entry. The toll to enter the city is one Gold Piece."

If you have previously robbed the royal treasury, turn to **11**.

If you are wearing **Tax Collector's Outfit**, turn to **83**.

Otherwise, if you are willing and able to pay **1 Gold Piece**, turn to **57**.

If you do not have 1 Gold Piece or are not willing to pay for entry, turn back to **20** and choose again.

95

The enemy wizards are keeping a close eye on the King's Army, both through lookouts inside the tower, and secret agents in the town. As your army emerges from the forest, it is ambushed by the entire enemy force. One of the Knights of the Realm units is wiped out before you know what is happening. The other units quickly deploy to defend themselves against the onslaught.

Because of the ambush, **enemy units strike first** in each combat.

Each round, resolve the combats in the order listed:

Knights of the Realm 2	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
vs. Rock Elementals	Attack 1d12	Unit Strength 20
Knights of the Realm 3	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
vs. Metal Elementals	Attack 1d20	Unit Strength 10
King's Guard	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 20
vs. Roundhead Elite	Attack 1d10	Unit Strength 20
Footsoldiers	Attack 1d8	Unit Strength 50
vs. Gaseous Elementals	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 10
Mercenaries	Attack 1d8	Unit Strength 15
vs. Roundheads	Attack 1d6	Unit Strength 100

If one of your units wins a combat, you may redeploy it against any remaining enemy unit. If an enemy unit wins a combat, it will redeploy against one of your units starting from the top down.

Continue the combat until all of your units or all the enemy units are wiped out.

If you win the battle, turn to **58**.

If you lose, turn to **91**.

96

As you retire for the night, you hope the King's reward will be worth the trouble you have had at Bencross. Little do you know, the worst is yet to come.

Your dreams are haunted by strange creatures, ghosts and wraiths calling your name, and strangely coloured elementals spewing noxious fumes. You wake with a start, expecting to find yourself back in the bed at the inn. Instead you feel paralysed in your body. You try to wave your arms and they rise

limply and flop by your sides. You look down and, where there should be flesh, you are shocked to see instead a mass of cloth and stitches.

You realise to your horror that you have fallen victim to dark magic. Someone has cast a soul capture curse on you while your soul was wandering in sleep, and your soul is now trapped in the body of a small doll!

You will need to break the hex through willpower, to return to your body.

Roll a d12 for your Willpower. If you have a **Ward against the Undead**, add 4 to your total, as this ward also protects against dark magic. On the other hand, if you have a **Lucky Amulet**, deduct 2 from your total – the Amulet was cursed to reduce your protection.

Then **roll a d20 to represent the power of the curse.**

If your roll, modified by any additions or deductions, is greater than the power of the curse, you have successfully broken the curse and return to your body. If your roll (as modified) is equal to or less than the power of the curse, you remain trapped in the doll.

Each time you fail the roll, deduct 2 from your **current and Maximum Hitpoints** as your life force is sapped by the effort to return to your body. If your current Hitpoints score reaches zero before you manage to break the curse, you are dead and your adventure is over.

If you succeed in breaking the curse, you leave the village as quickly as possible, before anything else can go wrong. Turn to **10**.

97

The guards are unimpressed with your attire. "This is not your kingdom, tax collector. Elthen is not a vassal of your king, and we shall not see our trade fleeced to fund your wars. Go back from whence you came."

You try to explain that you are not here to collect taxes, but to no avail. You sense the guards becoming increasingly agitated.

If you wish to return to Arthal, turn to **45**.

If you wish to stash your outfit in your bag, and try to enter the city in plain gear, turn to **75**.

If you wish to hide in one of the wagons, turn to **7**.

98

You have defeated a powerful opponent. Wraiths generally inhabit places of dark magic, drawing their strength from the surrounding energy. Yet you cannot sense any magical residues in this place. Perhaps it was summoned here to guard something.

If you wish, you may lift the lid of the sarcophagus and take the treasure buried with the king – the **Royal Seal Ring** on the King's hand, a **Silver Tiara**, and a **Royal Sceptre**. List any or all of these items on your Action Sheet, and then continue to Ham Duranen.

Turn to **20**.

99

The busy town of Ham Duranen is crowded with mercenaries, traders and pickpockets, drawn by the spoils of war. Every house is packed to the rafters with residents, paid guests and King's men

demanding free board. It is the nearest thing to chaos you will find this side of the nether planes. On one corner, an off-duty guard argues vehemently with a merchant he claims sold him rat meat. Across the road, a thief despoils the pockets of a drunken sellsword who has collapsed in the street, before quickly disappearing as a patrol of two of the King's Guard rounds a corner.

Night is falling and you will need to spend the night somewhere. Taking advantage of the town's overcrowding, innkeepers are charging an excessive **3 Gold Pieces** a night for room and board.

If you are prepared to pay this, restore **15 Hitpoints** for a night's sleep and turn to **85**.

If you do not want to pay or cannot afford the price, you will have to sleep rough. Turn to **66**.

100

The inn is a cosy, well fitted-out building which clearly sees a lot of business, although you are the only visitor at this time. The innkeeper enthusiastically explains that he is the youngest son of a local farmer. Unable to obtain a share of his father's land, he set up the inn to attract travellers. This turned out to be an excellent move, as his establishment draws explorers seeking the Tomb of Vairanu, and merchants travelling from the west to reach Caer Linnaroth or Elthen.

However, business has been slow of late, thanks to the war and the appearance in the land of strange elementals unlike those known before. Many now consider it too dangerous to journey off the guarded roads of the kingdom, though those who do are more than ever drawn to the inn, seeking relative safety at night. Now there is talk of undead and bandits on the roads. Bad times for business, but good ones, perhaps, for adventure.

The price of a night's stay is **1 Gold Piece**. If you cannot afford this, the innkeeper succumbs to local honour-codes of hospitality, and lets you stay for free.

You are tired from your labours, and sleep heavily and soundly. You awaken refreshed (restore up to **15 Hitpoints**). Bidding the innkeeper farewell, you set out once more.

If you wish to head eastwards, seeking to join the road south of Bencross before heading either there or eastwards to Lennua, turn to **69**.

If you wish to cut through the forest to the north, avoiding Bencross or approaching it from the west, turn to **93**.