

The Tower of Ardanor

an excerpt from A Lady's Excursion
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(forthcoming)

Preface

In this book, you take on the role of Mariselle, a lady-in-waiting to the Princess Gwendolyn. Her charge to you may take you through many dangers, and it may take all your resources to accomplish it – but accomplish it you must, as a loyal lady of the princess.

Game System

As with other gamebooks, the primary method of playing *A Lady's Excursion* is simple: You read a numbered section, then make a choice from those presented to you. Each choice will give you another numbered section to turn to, where you will repeat the process.

The Tower of Ardanor makes a few additions to this time-tested formula: the first is your character's skills. These will be more fully described in Setup, below – but for now, what you should know is that some of the options you are presented with may say that you must use a skill in order to take that option. Each skill you have has a number of points, and using a skill uses one point. When you have zero points in a skill, you may not use that skill. Some sections will allow you to recover points in a skill, letting you add those points back to it.

You also have items, and possibly a companion. In some sections, you may be given options to choose that require you to have a particular item or companion. In order to choose one of these options, you must have the item or companion mentioned with you. If a section says that you lose an item or a companion, you may not use it again after that.

Your character has six maidenly virtues (Charity, Charm, Faith, Grace, Modesty, and Prudence). You may earn points in these through the game, and in other instances, having points in them may allow you to take certain actions.

Lastly, the game may at times ask you to mark down a letter in the 'keys' section of your character sheet. Other sections may give you different directions, depending on whether or not a particular key is marked on your sheet. (Note that since this is an excerpt, not all keys that are given to you may be used in the story.)

Now you know how to play!

Introduction

For five years, you have been a lady-in-waiting to the Princess Gwendolyn. You've enjoyed these years, as the two of you, along with the other ladies-in-waiting, have become close friends, and you've been able to meet many more people here at Castle Moorguard than you would have in your father's tiny barony, far in the nether reaches of the kingdom.

But the last few days, the princess has been sullen and withdrawn – ever since her father, King Bran, announced that he had negotiated the engagement of Princess Gwendolyn to Nealle, the Duke of Gardal. The political reasons for the marriage are clear – Duke Nealle controls almost an eighth of the kingdom's lands, including the richest farmlands. Of late, the neighboring King Malcolm, who the Duke's lands border, has been courting the Duke with gifts and flattery, and there are whispers that the Duke might be persuaded to turn his colors and swear fealty to Malcolm, forswearing his oaths to Bran.

Compounding King Bran's fears, six months ago the Duke lost his wife of many years. The late Duchess Kaelyn was a much-loved woman – you remember her visit to the court when you were new here, and how kind she was to you then, when you tripped and spilled wine all over her – and with her loss, the grief-stricken Duke has been acting impulsively of late.

The Duke and Duchess, though they were happy, were never blessed with children, and so, the Duke needs a new wife. King Malcolm has six daughters, four of whom are not yet married, so King Bran feels forced to offer his daughter to Nealle, for fear that a blood alliance through marriage with one of Malcolm's daughters could be the last straw needed to sway Nealle over the edge.

So much for matters of politics. In matters of the heart, however, there are more complications. Gwendolyn is distraught over her engagement to a man nearly twice her age, and has withdrawn to her rooms since the announcement, only taking meals. You and the other ladies-in-waiting have been quite worried about her.

Thus, it's with great relief that you and the other ladies-in-waiting receive a message from one of the serving girls, asking you to come to the Princess' chambers to attend upon her as soon as possible. You're tempted to run through the halls of Moorguard, but you manage to restrain yourself from such an unseemly display, instead simply walking swiftly.

You're admitted to Gwendolyn's sitting room immediately, and are delighted to see her smiling again. As you prepare to drop a curtsy, she speaks. "Please, none of that here in private! Come, sit down. Mariselle, I'd like you to sit here." She pats the seat next to her, and you take it, arranging your skirts as you do.

Everyone starts in with questions immediately, but Gwendolyn lifts her hands for silence, and after a moment, everyone is quiet. Then, she turns to you. "Mariselle, I have a... a task for you to perform for me," she says, laying her hand on yours.

"Of course," you reply, putting your other hand on top of hers and squeezing slightly. "You know I'd be happy to do anything for you."

"Thank you," Gwendolyn replies with a smile. "You don't know how much that means to me." She squeezes your hand back before continuing. "What I need you to do is to take a carry a message for me."

"Is that all?" You frown, feeling a bit puzzled.

"To Prince Thomas!" Gwendolyn bursts out, and a few of the other ladies squeal. As they begin chattering to each other, you blink in astonishment.

"Wait... King Malcolm's son? That Prince Thomas?" you ask.

"Well, of course that Prince Thomas!"

"It's a five-week journey to their capital, though... even if I carry a letter to him, by the time I could get back with an answer, you'd already be promised to Duke Nealle. If your father really pushes, you might even be married by then!" The buzz of excitement stops, and everyone looks to Gwendolyn.

"That's the wonderful part – you see, Prince Thomas has sworn to spend six months wandering as a knight-errant... and right now, he's in our kingdom! He's been going from castle to castle, visiting the lords to get to know them, and righting wrongs as he goes... and what knight could resist rescuing a fair maiden who's been unfairly promised?!"

"Oh, how romantic!" puts in one of the ladies, and others join in excitedly. "I've heard he's very handsome!" "Oh, you'd be so lucky to be rescued by him!"

You're not sure that this is the best of plans, but seeing Gwendolyn smiling as she chatters with the others, you can't bring yourself to shoot down her plan. "All right... I'll do it," you find yourself saying.

"Oh, thank you!" Gwendolyn leans over to hug you for a moment, then reaches to the table beside her. "Here's the letter for you to take," she says first, handing you a letter sealed with her personal seal in wax. "And these are the arms that Prince Thomas bears," she goes on, showing you a drawing of the arms Thomas bears on his shield.

While you look over the picture, the princess continues to speak. "Of course, you shouldn't be wandering about unescorted. You'll need to choose an escort before you go. And here's some money," she says, placing a coin purse on the table. "And you'll want to wear a traveling dress, and take one of the horse, and... oh, but listen to me go on!" She pauses a moment, smiling at you. "I've picked you, Mariselle, because you've always been the most practical of us all – I shouldn't be telling you what you need to do – you probably know it better than I!"

"So, don't let us keep you here any longer with our silly prattling. Go on and find Prince Thomas!"

Five minutes later, you're in the room you share with Lady Bridget, going through your things, trying to decide what to bring for this mission...

Setup

At the end of this book, you'll find a character sheet for you to use. While you are taking on the role of Lady Mariselle, you still get to decide some things about her.

First, choose her Skills. You have six points to divide among them, and none can be lower than zero. To simulate points you would have gained earlier in the adventure, you may choose two of your Graces, and put a point into each of those.

Second, decide what items you're taking with you on your journey. A few items are already listed on the character sheet: you must take those. In addition to those, you may select four of the following:

- Book of Poetry
- Dagger
- Hand Mirror
- Jewelry
- Messenger Pigeon
- Pet Cat
- Sewing Kit

You may choose one companion to have with you. These are your choices:

Sir Scudamore is the chief knight of the Princess' Guards. He is skilled in combat and the tactics and strategies of war. He is also renowned for his great endurance.

Roger, one of the King's dogs. A mastiff, he is skilled in bringing down small and medium game, and is very loyal and protective – dogs of his breed have been known to stand over their wounded masters in the midst of battle to protect them. He also has a dog's sense of smell.

Althea the Minstrel is, of course, a skilled musician. Beyond that, she is a frequent traveler and knows the lands about well – and is well-known in them.

Once you've made your choices and written them down, proceed to Section 1 to start the game. Good luck!

1

Emerging into a clearing in the forest, you see ahead a slender tower, rising high into the air – higher than any tower so slender should be able to. Its sides are of smooth, shining stone, like polished marble, but all of a uniform grey color. Glassed windows breach the smooth sides in several places, all high enough that they could not be easily used as entrances by invaders.

This must be the wizard Ardanor's tower that you have been searching for – surely it was not built by any ordinary masonry! You circle the tower, looking for the entrance, but after going all the way around it twice without seeing anything that could be an entrance, you realize that it must be concealed by some sort of magic.

Stopping, you frown in concentration as you try to think what the key to entering might be.

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If Althea the Minstrel is with you, turn to section 90. Otherwise:

You may spend a point of Astronomy and turn to section 59, or yell and hope someone inside hears you; turn to section 37.

2

Going back down as quickly as you can while being quiet about it, you find your companion still in the waiting area. "Come quickly!" you say. "Ardanor's being held prisoner by someone!"

With a look of surprise, your companion stands and immediately follows. The pair of you make your way up to the laboratory.

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Go to section 78.

3

The stairs lead you up to another large, open room, filling an entire floor of the tower. This one is quite different from the previous ones – it appears to be the wizard's laboratory. Tables hold beakers, alembics, vials, burners, and the other accoutrements of alchemy. A full third of the room's circumference is taken up by great bookshelves that reach from floor to ceiling, loaded down with more books than you've ever seen in your life. A writing table sits at one end of the bookcases, and a lamp is beside it, currently unlit.

Hanging from the ceiling in several places are other lamps, much larger versions of the one beside the writing table, casting a warm yellowish light throughout the room. In the center, a great orrery hangs, its planets moving slowly through their paces.

At the far side of the room there is a telescope, sticking out through a window that seems to have been purpose-built for it – and close by the telescope, you see a man with a long white beard, wearing purple robes... a man who has been tied to a chair, his hands bound behind him, and gagged!

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If you wish to approach the man, go to section 16.

To continue upstairs to the next story, go to section 35.

To go back downstairs, go to section 45.

4

You turn to run, but not quickly enough – you hear a harsh-sounding word being spoken behind you, and then everything goes black.

-

You have been captured. Go to section 64.

5

You find the wizard Ardanor in his laboratory, where he has been tied to a chair and gagged. It only takes a few moments to free him, and once freed, Ardanor stands and takes a few moments to rub the circulation back into his limbs.

"Thank you very much for releasing me. I'm afraid that a fellow wizard who was here as my guest – Castiglio, his name is – attacked me! Can you believe it?! He intended to steal my copy of Prinn's *De Vermis Mysteriis* – for what sort of awful purpose I'd rather not imagine. I keep it hidden, though, and wouldn't tell him where it was. Where is he, anyway?" Ardanor asks, suddenly looking around.

You take a few minutes to explain to him how you defeated Castiglio, and Ardanor smiles and nods. "I'm quite glad to hear it! You've no idea how bad it could have been, had he been able to get his hands on that book. But listen to me go on! I'm sure that you didn't come here intending to rescue me, as much as I might appreciate that you did. You must stay as my honored guest, and I shall do anything that it is in my power for you!"

-

To ask him about Prince Thomas, go to section 36.

To speak to him about any injuries your companion may have received, go to section 58.

6

"Wait," you say to Scudamore, and he turns back to look at you. "I remember reading about how wizards turn things invisible – they trap starlight, and use a spell, and –"

"This is very interesting, milady," Scudamore cuts in, "but I do not see how it –"

"You can use a mirror to see through the illusion," you say, "and I have one!"

"Ah! Very good, milady," Scudamore says, smiling now. "You must needs do the looking, however – I need to keep my hands free for my sword."

"Of course," you answer, nodding. First, you check the dining area. When the mirror shows nothing there, you take the lead, and start up the stairs, flicking your gaze back and forth to the mirror, moving it around as you do to check everywhere.

The next floor has a hallway and four doors coming off of it. The doors turn out to open into guest rooms, but a quick check of each with the mirror shows nothing that wasn't already visible.

One of the four, however, appears to have someone staying in it, as the bedclothes are disarranged, one door of the wardrobe is open, and there are books on the night table.

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If you have the key "D" on your sheet, go to section 13.

If you wish to search the wardrobe, go to section 88.

To search through the books in the room, go to section 55.

To leave the room, go to section 23.

7

Taking hold of the disc, you thrust it at the magician and call out the word you heard him say when he used it. A strange sensation passes through you, almost like a wave moving up from your feet, through your legs and torso, and out through your arm – but then it seems to hit the talisman as if it were a plug, a pressure building up in your arm.

The magician laughs. "That was brave, but not very bright. You're no magician, girl, and even if you were, you're not attuned to the disc." Your body feels frozen in place, and then everything goes black.

-

You've been captured. Go to section 64.

8

As the magician struggles against your cat, you close in on him, dagger drawn. He tries to turn to face you, but your cat scratches his face, leaving three streaks of red and making the magician cry out in pain. You thrust your arm forward, and feel your dagger sink into his chest.

His scream changes in tone, and the man falls to the floor, ceasing his struggle against your cat. You stay close watching him warily, then whirl as a hand touches your shoulder. You almost stab without even thinking, but stop as you look at Sir Scudamore.

"Well done, milady. The caitiff rogue's spell is broken, now that he's dying. Now, let us find the true Ardanor."

-
Add the key "M" to your sheet, and go to section 5.

9

Opening the first door on the right, you see what appears to be a small bedroom. Everything in it is very neat, nothing at all out of place, and a musty smell tells you that no one's been in here in quite some time. This could be a good place to hide, but there seems to be no other way out of the room, and instinct tells you that's not a good thing. You open the next door, which is only a few feet away. It opens into a similar room – but this one has been occupied recently, as the bedclothes are in disarray, the wardrobe's door is standing open, and there are a few books and other items on the night table.

But there's still no other way out that you can see – unless you want to count the window, which hardly seems like a good idea. You turn back toward the stairs, then freeze as you hear footsteps coming up it.

-
To hide in the first room, go to section 86.
To hide in the second room, go to section 15.
To wait and see who it is, go to section 40 if you have the key "S"; otherwise go to section 61.

10

You move in on the magician, drawing your dagger and thrusting at his chest. At the last moment, he half-steps, half-falls to the side, barely managing to dodge your thrust. Not wanting to give the magician a chance to try a spell, you step in toward him and bring your dagger down. As you do, the magician grabs your leg and pulls! You try to keep your balance, thrusting a hand out against the wall, but he pulls again and you fall, dropping the dagger as you do.

Struggling, you kick at his head with your free leg, but the distance is wrong, and your kick falls short. The magician snatches for that leg, gets a grip on it, then struggles up to his feet, lifting yours up off the floor. You try to reach for the dagger, but he's moved you away from it.

"Well, well, well..." he says. "You've been quite a bit of trouble, girl. I think I need to put you somewhere safe."

He speaks a few words, and the room seems to spin around you, and then you pass out.

-
You have been captured. Go to section 64.

11

Moving toward the magician, you draw your dagger from its sheathe and lunge in to stab him. He writhes to the side, throwing Roger off as he does, but the point of your dagger rips

through his robe and into his side, and he gasps with pain. You stab again, not daring to let up in your attack, for fear that he'll paralyze you as he did Roger.

Your second stab marks him as well, but it's another flesh wound, and he manages to get a hand against you and shove, trying to get you away from him so he can stand up. As he shoves, however, the ensigiled disk with which he cast his paralyzation spell falls to the floor.

-
You may spend a point of Dance to go to section 31, avoid his shove and stab him again; or spend a point of Drama to go to section 22, distract him, grab the disc, and get away.

12

Moving quickly down the hall, you open both of the doors on the right side, since they're close together, and look in quickly. They both seem to be guest rooms. The one nearer the stairs is neat and somewhat dusty, showing that no one's staying in it, but the one farther from the stairs seems to have been occupied recently – the bedclothes are mussed, the wardrobe door open, and the night table has books on it. Neither, however, has any other exit besides the door you have open. The magician will likely be here at any moment, however, so you must choose quickly....

-
To hide in the unoccupied room, go to section 86.
To hide in the occupied room, go to section 15.
If you wish not to hide here, but to try to go back to the stairs, go to section 61.

13

As you look around the room, you notice a diagram in one of the books that's lying open – a diagram that is the same as that on the disc that the magician dropped! Picking up the book, you scan the open pages quickly, and find instructions on how to use the disc to paralyze someone.

You read over them twice, not saying the activation word aloud, but memorizing it and the rest of the instructions.

-
Add the key "J" to your sheet.
If you wish to search the wardrobe, go to section 88.
To search the other books in the room, go to section 55.
To leave the room, go to section 23.

14

Holding the disc forward as the instructions said to, you call out the words of the spell with the rhythm and meter that seems correct. A feeling goes through you like a wave of power rising in your legs, passing through your torso, then out the arm that holds the disc. The wave seems almost visible as it crosses the room to the magician. He tries to bring up an arm in a warding gesture, but it's too late as the wave strikes him.

He freezes in place, and a feeling of relief washes over you. After a moment, you set the disc aside and take a few moments to just breathe in and out.

-
Add the key "M" to your sheet.
If you wish to look for Ardanor now, go to section 5.
If you just want to leave, go to section 30.

15

Closing the door gently, you look about for a place to hide. Your options seem to be under the bed, inside the wardrobe, or to try to go out the window. Of these, inside the wardrobe seems to be the best position to be in should you be discovered.

-
If you have the key "D" on your sheet, go to section 28. Otherwise, go to section 48.

16

As you approach the man, you notice as well that he seems quite short, and, remembering that the wizard Ardanor is supposed to be short, realize that this is most likely him!

-
If you have the key "S" and a mirror, you may go to section 41 to check the man for an illusion. If you have the mirror but do not have the key "S", you may spend a point of Astronomy to go to section 41.

To remove the man's gag and speak to him without untying him, go to section 49.

To go ahead and untie him, go to section 70.

If you've changed your mind about the man, go to section 35 to go up the stairs to the next level, or section 45 to go back downstairs.

17

You begin to pull books off the shelves and open them, looking in them, but you quickly realize that looking through any reasonable fraction of them would take hours, and you don't have that much time.

-
Return to section 35.

18

Drawing your dagger, you try to circle around the magician, to get him between you and Scudamore. The magician moves to the side, to the edge of the bridge that joins the stairs to the tower's entrance, keeping his conjured blade up to threaten both of you.

"Surrender, sirrah," Scudamore says. "You've nowhere to run to, and you cannot defeat both of us."

"You're wrong there!" the magician cries out, and suddenly lunges at you! Scudamore steps toward you, interposing his blade and swinging it upward to deflect the thrust. He succeeds, and the blade slips from the magician's grasp. For a moment, you think Scudamore has disarmed him – but the conjured blade moves on its own, swinging around to strike at you again.

This time, you step back, dodging. The sword hovers in the air, guarding its master – who has stepped off the edge of the bridge and is himself hovering in the air now, beyond the reach of either you or Scudamore!

"Milady," Scudamore says, "do as I asked and find Ardanor! Quickly, please!"

-
To run inside and look for Ardanor, go to section 71.

To try throwing your dagger at the magician, go to section 26.

If you any points of Faith, you may go to section 42 to try to counter the magician's spells.

19

“Wait,” you say. “I’ll get my cat. He can hear and smell things we can’t – maybe he’ll let us know if the magician is near.”

Scudamore looks at you for a moment, then nods once. “Very well – it’s better than nothing. Get him, but quickly.”

You run out and grab your cat, then run back in – a little bit more slowly, though, as you don’t want to get him mad. When you come in, Scudamore’s still standing there, waiting... and immediately, your cat goes crazy – hissing, spitting, and writhing about in your arms trying to get down.

To keep from getting clawed, you have to let go – and the cat immediately leaps away, yowling, and hits the magician, who becomes visible as he cries out, trying to get your cat away from his face.

You turn to Scudamore – and notice that he hasn’t moved even a finger’s-breadth since you came back in. Immediately, you realize that the magician must have ensorcelled him while you were outside!

-

If you have a dagger, you may attack the magician as he struggles with your cat. To do so, go to section 8.

If you wish, you may try to attack the magician with a piece of furniture from the room; go to section 53 to do so.

Lastly, you may run away up the stairs. Go to section 71.

20

Pulling your dagger from its sheathe, you step toward the magician, slashing at him as you do. He steps back away from your attack, and you miss, but keep at him, stepping forward again and stabbing toward his face this time.

He retreats again, toward the tower, but this time holds up a disc with some sort of strange symbol on it, and cries out a few words you don’t recognize. You try to stab him again as he does, but suddenly it feels like you’re moving through water – water that seems to be thickening around you, as if it were somehow turning to ice without cold... and then everything goes black.

-

You have been captured. Go to section 64.

21

Making sure the disc is in your hand, with the symbol carved into its face facing outward, you wait for the wardrobe door to open. Then it’s opening, and you lift the talisman, thrusting it out. The magician recoils – and you suddenly realize you have no idea how to use the disc.

Thinking quickly, you kick hard at his shins, and feel a satisfying impact as the tip of your boot hits. “Ah!” the magician cries, and jumps back away from you.

-

If you have the dagger, you may attack the magician with it; go to section 10.

Otherwise, go to section 68.

22

Careful not to overact the part, you move your eyes to glance above the man’s shoulder for a mere fraction of a second, then relax your stance just the slightest bit and let the barest hint of a smile touch your lips. Immediately, the man turns, trying to put his back to the wall and maintain his guard against you, just in case you’re faking.

It's not much of an opening, but you spring forward anyway, feinting a stab to his chest. He steps away from you to avoid the blow, and you stoop to grab the disc, keeping your dagger up to discourage him from trying to lunge in and grab you.

-

You have the disc. Mark down the key "D" on your sheet. Now, you may:

Turn and run into the tower, hoping to find somewhere to hide and study the disc – go to section 29.

Attempt to use the disc now – go to section 7.

23

You crack the door open and check the hall to make sure it's clear. Seeing that it is, you come out, then quietly move to the stairs and look both up and down. You know what's below... but what's above?

Cautiously, you move up the stairs, staying to the outside of them so you can see as far as possible ahead of you as they curve. Suddenly, you hear a voice from above, and stop immediately. The voice continues, and you can't tell what it's saying, but you can tell that it's not getting any closer. Still, you wait for several seconds to make sure before moving again.

Reaching the top of the stairs, you carefully peek into the room to see what's there.

-

Go to section 78.

24

Knowing that any response to your message will take some time, you doze as you can, not letting yourself fall fully asleep so that if the magician comes for you, you won't be taken by surprise. You wish you could block the door, but it opens outward from the room, so pushing something in front of it won't help.

The night passes without anyone coming, and you start to worry that you might die of thirst before any sort of rescue comes. Checking out the window in the door, you find that the goblin is no longer there. Unguarded, you try first pushing the door, then kicking it, then throwing your whole weight against it, but it's of no use – the lock or bar that holds it closed is too strong.

Going to the outside window, your heart leaps as you spy knights in King Bran's livery! Pushing the window open, you call down to them, "I'm up here! There are invisible stairs on the east side – go up them to get in!"

"Hai, Milady Mariselle! Are you well?" one of them calls back – you recognize him as Sir Roger by his voice and the arms on his shield.

"I am hungry and thirsty, Sir Roger, but uninjured and unmolested. But hurry, please! I am sure the black magician will hear us, and may not leave me so!"

"Aye, milady," he calls back. "Fear not! Soon, we shall be to you!"

You smile in relief, and then stiffen as you realize something – they will undoubtedly want to know why you are here... and your mission cannot be revealed to the king! Sitting down on the bed, your brow furrows as you try to think of what you can tell them....

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This adventure is at an end, and your result must be counted a failure, as you've learned nothing of where Prince Thomas is, and have now put your mission at risk.

25

Something definitely seems to be wrong here: Ardanor is well-known for his hospitality. It doesn't seem like him to be rushing a visitor to discuss their business. And, now that you think of it, he's reputed to be quite short, but this man seems tall to you....

-

Go on to section 98.

26

Your dagger whirls through the air, heading toward the magician, and time seems almost to slow down as it does. He starts to move sideways, trying to dodge your throw. For a moment, it seems that the dagger is going to hit him, taking him in the chest – but suddenly his body shrinks, changing form and color as it does so – becoming a raven.

Your dagger flies past the magician as he takes to the air, flying up to a window of the tower and in.

-

You have lost your dagger. Mark it off of your sheet.

You may pick up the disc that the magician lost before. If you do, add the key “D” to your sheet.

To enter the tower, go to section 34.

If you wish to make preparations before entering, go to section 62.

27

Getting up on a chair to reach it, you get the skull from the top of the bookshelf and look it over. Unfortunately, you can find no clue to how it might be of use.

-

Return to section 35.

28

As you approach the wardrobe, something catches your eye – an open book stands on the dressing table, and there on the page is a design – the exact design that’s inscribed upon the disc that you have!

Quickly, you grab the book and look, hoping it’s not in some obscure wizardly language. You sigh in relief to find that it’s in plain, simple Latin. The instructions are fairly simple – there’s a short spell to speak, and a certain way to hold the disc, and the rest seems to be simply focusing your gaze on the person or creature you wish to paralyze.

Suddenly, you hear the door to the room start to open! Turning, you find yourself face-to-face with the magician from whom you got the disc. Seeing you holding the book, his face contorts and goes red with anger. “Unhand that book!” he cries out, reaching into his robe for something.

-

You may spend a point of Poetry to try to use the disc on him – go to section 14.

If you wish to try to talk to him first, spend a point of Drama and go to section 68.

29

You find a set of stairs and manage to climb them. The top is a good fifteen feet from the side of the tower, but there seems to be a drawbridge lowered across the way, and after crossing it, you find yourself standing in a doorway, with the door open. From here, you can now see the drawbridge and stairs normally. You smile a bit, pleased with your own cleverness in managing to find your way in.

The room you’re in appears to be an anteroom for those visiting the wizard on business – there’s a hanging tree for guest’s cloaks, several comfortable chairs upholstered in burgundy velvet, and small mahogany tables strategically placed so every sitting spot is in reach of one. The floor is teak, with a large burgundy and gold Oriental rug covering most of it. A staircase, likewise of teak, but with a burgundy carpet runner and polished brass railing, leads up to the next floor. Finishing off the room is a bookcase filled with books and a sideboard with pastries and tea.

The whole is rather tasteful and elegant, and you briefly wonder if the wizard decorated it himself, or if someone else did it for him. The thought only lasts for a moment, however, as you shake your head to clear it of the thought, reminding yourself that you have more important things to worry about – such as finding Ardanor and getting him to help you with locating Prince Thomas.

Nothing in the anteroom seems likely to be of help, so you make your way up the stairs, lifting your skirts slightly as you do. On the next story you find a dining area, tastefully decorated in a style that matches the anteroom. The table is bare at the moment, and this room also seems to fill its level of the tower, with no door that might go to a kitchen. Another flight of stairs leads up from the landing, and you ascend that as well.

The next story is the first that's divided into separate rooms. A hallway crosses the breadth of the tower, with two doors on each side of it, and another set of stairs continues up.

-

Add the key "S" to your sheet.

You may go to section 9 to search this level of the tower more fully, or go to section 78 to continue up the stairs to the next story.

30

Well, this adventure is the Tower of Ardanor, so you're done with it – congratulations on having defeated the evil magician! If this were the full gamebook, the fact that you didn't bother to look for Ardanor would come back to haunt you later, but it's not, so you lucked out on that!

31

Lunging forward, you use one hand to knock aside the arm the magician tries to block you with, while thrusting your dagger into him with the other. Your thrust is good, and his face turns white and his eyes open wide in pain as the blade sinks into his chest. *I did it!*, you think, but your feeling of triumph is short-lived, for even as the magician sinks to the floor, mortally wounded, he spits a word of power, and you feel yourself wrapped in his last spell....

-

Go to section 80.

32

You scan the room, angling the mirror from side-to-side to do so. It shows nothing that you could not see with your own eyes.

-

Add a point to your Prudence and go to section 83.

33

You have to pull over a chair to reach the crystal ball, since it is so high up, but thankfully there are several here to choose from. The ball is somewhat dusty, but you wipe that off quickly with your sleeve. On the base, there is something written:

Queen Bess was Harry's daughter. Stand forward partners all!

Queen Bess was Harry's daughter. Now hand your partners all!

Queen Bess was Harry's daughter. Now turn your partners all!

-

You may spend a point of Poetry to figure out how to use the crystal ball; go to section 56 if you do.

Or, you may return to section 35.

34

“Let me lead the way, my lady. We don’t know what else might be in here.”

You nod back to him. “Yes – please do. And I’ll watch our back, in case that... magician flies back down and tries to sneak up behind us.”

“Very good,” Scudamore responds, and then the two of you enter the tower. The entrance opens into what appears to be an antechamber for those waiting to see Ardanor – there’s a hanging tree for guest’s cloaks, several comfortable chairs upholstered in burgundy velvet, and small mahogany tables strategically placed so every sitting spot is in reach of one. The floor is teak, with a large burgundy and gold Oriental rug covering most of it. A staircase, likewise of teak, but with a burgundy carpet runner and polished brass railing, leads up to the next floor. Finishing off the room is a bookcase filled with books and a sideboard with pastries and tea.

Lacking, however, is any sign of the magician you fought, or any indication of where Ardanor might be. Scudamore and you proceed up the stairs, slowing down again as you near the top, then moving faster once you know the next floor appears to be clear.

This floor is a dining area, with a large table – bare at the moment – surrounded by matching chairs. A rug matching the one below covers much of the floor, and the sideboard is teak, just as the other furniture is. You note all of this in passing, however, focusing on the more important details... namely, the fact that the dining area occupies the whole of this level. There are no doors – just the stairs going up and down.

“I mislike this,” Scudamore says quietly. “This magician could be lying in wait for us invisibly – or he could be setting a trap, with we the poor rabbits who will spring it.”

You think quickly, sucking on your upper lip as you do, trying to think how you might be able to detect a magical trap, should there be one....

-

If have the mirror, you may spend a point of Astronomy to figure out a use for it here; turn to section 6 to do so.

If you brought your pet cat, it may be useful here. Go to section 19.

35

You climb the stairs from the lab, and enter what seems to be the wizard’s attic. There’s furniture stored here, most of it covered with large sheets to keep dust off, a dusty bookshelf full of books, atop which sits a skull and a crystal ball, a few chests, and a pile of old clothes that looks a bit moth-eaten.

There are no more stairs here, although there is a trap door in the ceiling, which you expect leads to the top of the tower, though you see no way of getting up there, unless one were to move furniture over and climb it.

-

If you wish to move furniture over and try to get to the trap door, go to section 8.

To look over the books, go to section 17.

To examine the skull, go to section 27.

To examine the crystal ball, go to section 33.

To go back down the stairs, go to section 45.

36

“Ah,” Ardanor replies, nodding slowly. “You’re searching for the prince. Well... he actually visited here on his travel, a couple of days ago, and he said he was...”

-

Since this is a preview of the full game, you don’t get to find out where Prince Thomas is right now – but congratulations on a successful completion of this portion of the game!

37

Cupping your hands to your mouth, you cry out, "Hello in the tower! We are travelers outside, who wish to enter!"

You wait, and the seconds stretch to minutes. You're considering yelling again, or trying something else, when stone stairs appear before you, leading upwards. You climb them cautiously, to find that the stairs end at what would be empty air – only a drawbridge has been lowered across the space. Before you, standing in the doorway, is a man who appears to be quite old, judging from his white beard and lined face, yet still healthy and upright. He wears robes of emerald green, and a small black cat – barely more than a kitten – sits upon his right shoulder.

"Welcome, lady," the man says, bowing his head slightly. You curtsy in return. "I am Ardanor. There are dangerous creatures abroad in the land," he continues. "So I will not invite you in, lest you be one of them."

"I understand, my lord wizard," you reply, then walk across the drawbridge and through the doorway. "As you can see, I am neither spirit nor dopplegänger."

He nods and makes an obviously fake smile, then bows to you more fully. "Very well. Now, what business brings you here?"

-

If you have Roger the Dog as a companion, you **must** turn to section 74 now.

If you have earned any points of Prudence, or have the key W marked down you may turn to section 25 now, if you wish.

You may also choose to spend a point of History to go to section 98.

Otherwise, go on to section 54.

38

You manage to dart between the two combatants, grab the disc, and move out from between them all in one swift motion! The magician attempts to stab you with his dagger as you do, but Scudamore intercedes, using his sword in a stop-thrust against the magician, wounding the miscreant and causing him to draw back with a curse.

-

Add a point of Grace to your sheet, and mark down the key "D" on your sheet.

If you wish to try to use the disc against the magician, go to section 12.

To run into the tower to look for Ardanor, go to section 71.

To run away, go to section 94.

39

Improvising with what you have, you manage to write a note saying, "Am trapped in Ardanor's tower by an impostor pretending to be Ardanor. Send help. Mariselle." It takes a few minutes to manage to securely tie it to the pigeon's leg, but thankfully the pigeon is used to this process, and stands still for you to do it.

Going to the window, you open it, then release the pigeon, hoping that any help sent will arrive quickly, before the magician decides to do something about you. The pigeon takes to the air immediately, and you see it fly up, then turn southward – the direction of Castle Moorguard. You watch until it disappears from view.

-

Go to section 24.

40

The footsteps continue getting closer, and then a head covered with grey-white hair comes into view. Below it is a lined, but pleasant face, sporting a beard that matches the head hair and

hangs down two handsbreadths below – a face that you recognize from descriptions as belonging to Ardanor.

-

If you have the key “W”, go to section 73.
Otherwise, go to section 81.

41

Recalling an astronomy book that you read, you remember that wizards can create illusions using trapped starlight, but that a mirror can be used to see things under the spell as they are.

Taking a moment to look at the man in the mirror shows the man to look just as he looks to your eyes – this is indeed Ardanor!

-

Add a point to your Prudence, then return to section 16 and make another choice.

42

Recalling the story of Simon Magus, and how he flew through the air by the power of demons, but fell when Saint Peter’s prayer drove the demons away, you grasp the cross that you wear on your necklace and begin to pray. Immediately, the sword disappears – and the magician does as well, landing on the ground with a *whuff* as the breath is knocked out of him!

“Well done, milady!” Scudamore says, turning to run down the stairs toward the magician. Before Scudamore can reach him, however, the magician cries out a word, transforms into a raven, and takes off into the air! You grasp your necklace and pray again, but nothing happens, for what reason you do not know. You can only watch as he flies to one of the tower’s windows, then in through it.

-

You may pick up the disc that the magician lost before. If you do, add the key “D” to your sheet.

To enter the tower, go to section 34.

If you wish to make preparations before entering, go to section 62.

43

You wait as patiently as you can for the magician to come to question you... but darkness falls outside, and still he has not come. With little else to do, you think back over the events here in the tower, and wonder what you could have done differently....

-

You have failed – but feel free to start over and try again!

44

As the door opens, you stab forward blindly – and feel the resistance as the dagger enters your target’s chest. The magician looks blankly at you, his eyes open wide in a way that might be funny under other circumstances, but now is simply pitiful.

“You... you...” he gets out, but you never learn what he was going to say about you, as his body goes limp and he falls to the floor, dead.

-

Mark down the key “W”, and proceed to section 5.

45

As you start back down the stairs, you're startled to see the magician at the bottom of them, looking up at you. You try to move away, where he can't see you, but it seems he's been readying a spell as he waited for you, and he points at you with a wand and speaks a word, and everything goes black....

-
You have been captured. Go to section 64.

46

A quarter hour passes as you wait – and then another, and you begin to wonder if you have been forgotten about, or something has gone wrong. Starting to feel fidgety, you get up to pace and think about going upstairs – when you hear a step creak and look up to see him coming down the stairs.

“My apologies, milady,” he says. “It took me some time to find what I needed.” Reaching into his robe, Ardanor pulls out a box and opens it – and you scream aloud as something issues forth from the box that should not have been able to fit inside it, that should not exist at all anywhere outside of Hell.

As the thing wraps its slimy tentacles around you, the man you saw as Ardanor laughs in a much deeper voice, and the illusion falls from him, revealing him to be another man entirely....

-
You have failed in your mission... but you can always try again! Go back to the start to do so.

47

Thinking of Ardanor, you see him – in the laboratory, still tied to the chair. His head is drooping now, though, as if he's fallen unconscious... or given up hope. You start to put down the crystal, but then he moves, lifting his head to look around with a puzzled expression, until he's looking – directly at you!

You almost drop the ball from surprise when you hear his voice, even though his lips do not move, saying: *I do not know who you are that is scrying me, but I beg succor. The wizard Castiglio has betrayed the bonds of guest and host, and basely attacked me. He searches for a book of dread magic, and should he find it, my death will be the first of thousands.*

Swallowing, you whisper, “But what can I do? I am merely a maiden, not a knight nor wizard.”

If you have found the crystal ball, you are in the attic. Go up through the trap door. There is one there who will aid you. His name is Hengroen – say it, and he will obey you. Hurry! Castiglio has just come in here, and he is heading up the stairs!

Even as Ardanor thinks the last to you, you hear footsteps on the stairs.

-
Gain a point of Purdence and add the key “H” to your sheet.

To move furniture and climb up it to the trap door, go to section 100.

To hide, go to section 87.

48

You breathe in and out slowly, trying to make no noise as you hear the door to the room open. Closing your eyes to concentrate on your hearing, you listen to barely-audible footsteps as someone enters the room. The footsteps pause for a moment, then resume, growing ever-so-slightly louder.

The footsteps stop again, and now you think you hear breathing. Immediately, you hold your breath, but the sound continues, and you feel certain that someone is just outside the wardrobe... and might open the door at any moment.

-
If you have the key "D", you may ready to try to use the disc as soon as the door opens; go to section 21.

If you have a dagger, you may ready it to use against anyone who opens the door; go to section 44.

You can try to force open the wardrobe door and surprise whoever might be there; go to section 57.

Otherwise, if you wait for the door to be opened, go to section 63.

49

It takes a few moments to remove the gag – the knot in the back is tied quite tightly, but as soon as you do, the man begins to speak. "Oh, thank God! I'd thought myself doomed! You must untie me, quickly – that blackguard Castiglio will kill us all if he has a chance!"

-
If you want to talk to the man more before untying him, go to section 99.

To untie him, go to section 70.

To put the gag back on him, go to section 84.

50

Feeling a little hungry, and thinking that it would be wise to eat while you wait, so as to make better use of the time, you venture up the stairs to Ardanor's dining room. It's decorated to match the waiting area, with teak furniture and burgundy and gold fabrics. There's no sign of any door leading to kitchens, and you wonder if the food will be magically created, as Ardanor's instructions indicated the servants are.

Crossing to the table, you sit down, then look about. Feeling faintly ridiculous, you clear your throat and speak. "May I have some bread, please?" you ask, not seeing any reason to be impolite merely because the servants are invisible.

You wait for a few moments, the feeling of being ridiculous growing. "I'm sorry," you say then. "If you haven't any bread, then whatever you do have would be quite welcome."

Again, several moments pass, but there is no reaction that you can perceive. You frown, recalling that if a magician dies, spirits they have summoned are released. Has something happened to Ardanor?

-
To continue waiting here, go to section 72.

If you wish to go upstairs and look for Ardanor, go to section 67.

51

It takes a few seconds of concentration, but then you see a clear image of your mistress in the ball. She and the other ladies are sitting in her rooms, sewing and gossiping, and you feel a momentary pang of envy at them, sitting there without a care, while you brave dangers on Gwendolyn's behalf! In a momentary fit of pique, you shake the crystal, as if that might toss them about, but it does nothing – they gleefully go on with what they are doing.

-
If you had any points in Prudence, lose one; then go to section 91.

52

Rushing past the magician, you spare the room you're in enough of a glance to see that it occupies the entire level of the tower, and offers no place to hide. You dash up the stairs, lifting

your skirts high to keep from tripping, and continue up when you see the next level consists only of a dining room, rejecting the thought of trying to hide under the dining table.

The next story, however, has a hallway with four doors, as well as stairs continuing up. Perhaps here....

-

To try to hide on this level, go to section 12.

To continue up the stairs, go to section 3.

53

As the magician struggles with your cat, you pick up one of the chairs in the waiting room, then swing it as hard as you can into the back of the magician's head. With him distracted by the cat, your swing connects, and the magician falls, unconscious.

Even as he strikes the floor, Scudamore moves from his frozen stance, the spell upon him broken. "Milady!" he says with a smile, seeing the magician on the floor. "Well done! Many a man could not have done as well!"

You simply nod to that, thinking as you look down at the unconscious magician. "We should look for Ardanor immediately – best to leave imprisoning him to his own kind of worker."

"Certainly," Scudamore replies, nodding. "I'll watch this one while you find him. He'll not trick me twice."

-

You have defeated the magician! Mark the key "M" on your sheet, and proceed to section 5.

54

"I have come to seek your help in finding Prince Thomas, the son of King Malcolm. My mistress, the Princess Gwendolyn, has asked me to deliver a letter to him urgently."

"I see," Ardanor responds, nodding. "And he is not to be found at his home, I presume, or you would not need my aid."

"Exactly so, my lord wizard. Can you aid me? I am prepared to pay, and, of course, you would have the Princess' gratitude, in addition to my own."

He strokes his beard for a moment, then nods. "Of course. Please, come with me – I will not have a guest of such importance wait outside." Ardanor leads you and your companion down to the bottom level of the tower. This level of the tower appears to be a waiting area for those seeking the wizard's services – it has several comfortable-looking chairs, upholstered in burgundy velvet; small tables of rich, well-cared for teak provide places for guests to place items they might be carrying, and the floor is covered with a beautiful burgundy-and-gold rug.

"To divine the Prince's location will take me perhaps half an hour," he says. "Please make yourselves comfortable while you wait. Should you require food or drink, the dining area is upstairs from here. My servants are not visible, but merely speak what you wish, and they will supply it if possible."

"Thank you, my lord wizard," you reply, dropping a curtsy to him. "Your hospitality is as great as it is said to be."

"I thank you for your kind words, my lady. Now, I shall perform your divination forthwith." He bows to you, then goes to the stairs and up them, leaving the room.

-

To wait here for Ardanor to return, go to section 46.

If you wish to go upstairs and eat or drink, go to section 50.

If you want to explore the tower while Ardanor is busy, go to section 67.

55

You look through the books, attempting to find anything that might be of use to you. Most of them seem innocent enough, but picking up one that was under others and flipping through it, you find it to be full of black magic of the worst sort – human sacrifices, conjuring of demons, incantations for murder, and still worse things.

Shaking slightly, you place the book aside hurriedly and look around, having read that sometimes books of dark magic have demons bound to them. A few moments pass, and nothing happens, and you relax a bit more.

Then another book catches your eye – a skinny one sticking out from under others. Pulling it out and opening it, you start to read, and discover it to be the journal of the magician who was here. Quickly, you flip to the most recent entry and read.

The fool Ardanor has willingly accepted me as a guest – far from the mighty sorcerer of legend, it seems that he has become a doddering fool. To-morrow I shall enter his laboratory and steal the book I seek. I doubt he will ever even know that I have taken it.

Unfortunately, there is nothing in the entry to indicate what the book he was seeking is, but since you have not yet found a laboratory, it must be upstairs.

-

If you wish to search the wardrobe now, go to section 88.

Otherwise, go to section 23 to leave the room.

56

Queen Bess was Harry's daughter, now kiss your partners all, you think, nodding to yourself as you recall the poem. So, to activate the crystal ball, perhaps you must kiss it....

You take a moment to wipe a spot on the crystal again, making sure that there's no dust left, then kiss it. With that done, you look at the ball. *All right... now what? Maybe if I think about what I want to see....*

-

To see Ardanor, go to section 47.

To see the magician who's been impersonating Ardanor, go to section 72.

To see the Princess Gwendolyn, go to section 51.

To see Prince Thomas, go to section 82.

57

With a shout to (you hope) surprise the magician even more, you push the wardrobe door open as hard as you can. You feel a brief surge of glee as it strikes something, and your glee surges yet more as you hear the magician's startled "Whoof!" as the air is knocked out of his lungs.

Holding up your skirts to help you run, you rush out into the hallway, letting loose of your skirts with one hand to pull the door closed behind you. Immediately, you turn and run for the stairs.

-

If you wish to go down the stairs, turn to section 68.

If you wish to go up the stairs, turn to section 15.

force wardrobe door open and surprise magician – knock him down, run downstairs and be captured (64), or run upstairs and find Ardanor in lab (15)

58

"Your companions? Of course." Ardanor claps his hands once, and although there is no visible change in the room, you nonetheless feel the presence of something. "Caliban!" he says. "See to the Lady Mariselle's companions!"

"Now," he asks then, "I am certain that that is not what brought you here. What else can I do for you?"

-
Gain a point of Charity, and go to section 36.

59

You remember reading in one of the Princess' books on Astronomy that wizards often use a magic to conceal or change the appearance of things that involves trapping the light of the moon on the last night before the new moon. The book also mentioned a means of circumventing the magic, by using a mirror to see the hidden object.

-
If you have the mirror, you use it to quickly find the hidden entrance: go to section 29. Otherwise, you have to feel about for it, which takes some time: mark off a time unit and go to section 29.

60

Sir Scudamore draws his sword and attacks the magician with a thrust that should skewer the man, but instead merely pushes him back, as it fails to penetrate his robe. "Enchanted," Scudamore mutters, then lashes out with another blow as the magician draws out a black disc with some sort of sigil on it. This blow strikes the magician's arm, and while it cannot cut through the enchanted robe, the force of it is great enough to make him drop the disc.

The magician retreats back a step and pulls from the empty air a sword of his own, golden in color and glowing. "Milady," Scudamore says as he assumes a defensive stance, "find Ardanor! I doubt this cur could have killed him!" The magician attacks then, swinging his sword with both hands at Scudamore, but the knight ducks and lifts his sword redirecting the magician's swing over his head, and at the same time punches the magician in the face with an armored fist, causing his nose to begin bleeding copiously.

-
To run inside and look for Ardanor, go to section 71.
To grab the disc the magician dropped, spend a point of Dance and go to section 38.
If you have the dagger, you may attack the magician along with Scudamore. To do so, go to section 18.
To run away, mark down the key "X" and go to section 94.

61

Coming up the stairs is the magician! Seeing you, he cries out, "Aha! I've found you, bitch! Now I'll have you!" Even as he speaks, he begins to reach into his robe for something – undoubtedly something that will bode no good for you.

-
If you have a dagger, you may attack him by going to section 93.
Otherwise, go to section 91.

62

The magician jabs his wand at you and barks out a harsh-sounding word, but you manage to duck behind a stand of alchemical glassware, and it seems to block whatever enchantment he is

trying to lay upon you. “Bitch!” he cries out, and circles, trying to get a clear shot at you, but you circle as well, keeping the glassware between the two of you.

You know, however, that you will not be able to keep this up forever – eventually, you must make a mistake, or move too slowly....

-

If you wish to spend a point of Drama to try to distract the mage, go to section 92.

If you do not have a point of Drama to spend, or do not want to spend one, go to section 91.

63

As you wait, you feel that you can hear your heart beating, and wonder that it isn't loud enough for others to hear. Perhaps it is – who knows what a magician can hear? – and that thought causes you to swallow, your mouth suddenly dry. Your eyes start to itch as well, and you blink a few times in quick succession, not daring to move enough to wipe at them, nor to close them for longer.

Suddenly, a hand grabs you, and you scream, your nervousness released all at once – the hand has come *through* the wardrobe door! It pulls your arm out, and it passes through the door as well, but your chest and head will not, and you struggle vainly, your face pressed up against the wood – and then all goes black.

-

You have been captured. Go on to section 64.

64

You awaken in a small bedroom. From the curve of one wall, it seems you're still in the tower. Checking yourself, you find that you're uninjured and fully dressed. The room has a window, and going to it, you find that you're far above the ground – at least forty feet, you'd guess. The window does open, but a quick check shows you that the sides of the tower are far too smooth to try to climb, and no one seems to be about to hear you yell.

Turning your attention back to the room, you see that there's the bed you awoke on – a simple rope bed, with a down mattress and a headboard elaborately carved to show a hunting scene. A heavy wardrobe is against one wall: opening it reveals that the saddlebags from your horse have been placed in it, and a mirror is attached to the inside of one door. An oil lamp hangs on chains from the ceiling, and there's a striker to light it – but full of oil, it is too heavy for you to lift from its cradle.

Lastly, you try the door, but there's no luck there – it's locked. There's a small panel that you can open – you do so, and see a goblin standing outside your room, guarding it.

-

If you had the dagger, you don't now. You've also lost access to your companion, and if you have the key “D” on your sheet, remove it.

If you wish to take the mirror that's inside the wardrobe door, you may. Add the item “mirror” to your sheet, and you may then make another of the choices below.

If you have the messenger pigeon and wish to use it, go to section 39.

If you have the sewing kit, you may try to make a rope from the bedclothes and climb out. Go to section 79 to do so.

Otherwise, go to section 43.

65

“Hengroen,” you say, and as soon as you say his name, the griffon relaxes, his wings folding down and his tail ceasing to thrash. You breathe a sigh of relief, then say to him, “Following me

is an evil magician who has captured your master. When he comes through that door, attack him!"

Stepping away from the trap door, you move behind Hengroen, keeping your eyes on the door. A minute or so later, it opens, and the evil magician comes up through it. Before you can say anything, Hengroen pounces like a giant cat. You turn your head away so as not to look, but hear the beginning of a scream be cut off by a sickening crunch.

When you turn back toward Hengroen, he has dragged the magician's body away from the trap door, and is beginning to eat it. Looking away again, you make your way to the door, open it and climb down to go free Ardanor.

-
Go to section 5.

66

You quickly find that three of the four guest rooms seem to be currently unoccupied, and have nothing of interest in them. The fourth seems to be occupied – the bed is unmade, one of the doors to the wardrobe is open, and there are books and things on the night table and dresser.

-
If you have the key "D", go to section 13.
To search the wardrobe, go to section 88.
To search through the books, go to section 55.
To leave the room, go to section 23.

67

Your curiosity carries you up to the next floor, which turns out to be a dining area, as Ardanor had told you. The main feature of it is of course a table and its associated chairs, all of teak, just as the furniture below was. Its carpet and upholsterings likewise match those below, but they're not really of great interest.

Ascending to the next level of the castle, you find a hallway with four doors off of it. A quick peek into one shows that these are guest rooms, but you can't bring yourself to be so impolite as to look into all of them – after all, you do not know if there are guests here, and if there are, they would certainly take it ill.

And so you climb the next set of stairs, and then slow as you hear a voice above. It seems different from Ardanor's, although it's difficult to tell, as whoever it belongs to seems to be muttering to themselves.

Listening for another few moments, you begin to recognize some of what's being said, and it shocks you. "Damn you old man," it says, "where in the bleeding hells did you hide that book? No," it goes on, "I'm not going to ungag you so you can answer. I'm not that stupid...."

-
To go back downstairs to get your companion, go to section 2.
If you would rather move up the stairs and try to see what's happening, go to section 78.

68

Taking advantage of the moments you have, you run, hoping to escape from the magician – but it seems that you are too slow. Behind you, you hear him bark out a harsh-sounding word, and your muscles cease to obey you, sending you spilling to the floor in an ungainly heap.

"Bitch," the magician mutters as he gets up and walks to you. "I should have you flogged for that. But your punishment will have to wait for now...." With that, he draws a symbol in the air with his wand, and everything goes black for you.

-
You have been captured. Go to section 64.

69

With no idea how you can calm the angered griffon, you dive back toward the trap door – just in time to see the magician opening it. Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, you hesitate, not knowing which fate is worse....

-

Your fate is a gruesome one. You have failed in your mission, and been killed. Try again, and see what different choices will do for you!

70

Quickly, you untie the man. Once you have finished, he stands up from the chair and moves his limbs about a bit, getting the blood to flow properly through them again.

"I thank you," he says. "Now, the miscreant Castiglio shall find what it means to face me in my place of power without attacking by treachery!"

-

Go to section 96.

71

As Sir Scudamore keeps the magician busy, you run up the stairs, searching for the wizard Ardanor, holding up your skirts with your hands as you run. Precious time ticks away as you find a level of the tower that has four doors, but discover that all of them lead into empty guest rooms; worried that Scudamore will not be able to hold the magician for long, you dash up another set of steps, hoping that perhaps here, you might find the wizard.

-

Go to section 15.

72

Gazing into the crystal, you try to recall the appearance of the magician who you fought before, and wish you knew his name. Is it enough to know an appearance, you wonder, or is a name needed?

You're about to give up when an image appears – the magician, climbing stairs, coming toward the top of them. Quickly, you look over at the stairs to the attic, but he is not there, and you almost sigh out your relief before looking back into the crystal.

He's in the laboratory, you see... the floor right beneath this one. He turns to look at Ardanor, satisfying himself that the wizard has not escaped his bonds, and then moves to the stairs and begins to climb up – toward you!

-

Gain a point of Prudence; forewarned is forearmed. Do you wish to:

Hide? Go to section 87.

Try to climb up to the trapdoor to the roof? Go to section 100.

Think of a way to attack him as he comes up the stairs? Go to section 84.

73

A man who appears to be Ardanor comes up the stairs, but remembering from earlier, you decide to test your suspicions. Curtseying to him, you say, "Good day, my lord wizard. I am quite delighted to finally be here, following our correspondence."

"Um... yes," he replies, and though he tries to hide it you can see the surprise in his face. "I am sorry, but there are many who correspond with me. Can you remind me of whom you are?"

"Of course. I am the Princess Gwendolyn," you boldly lie. "My knights wait without. As we discussed, if we should need to stay, they shall set up camp outside, since you do not have room for so many guests."

"Yes – quite good. I begin to remember now, Your Highness," he says, bowing deeply. "Let me escort you to my waiting area." He offers you his arm, and then, once the two of you are walking down, says, "Forgive an old man's forgetfulness, but the matter you wished assistance with was...?"

"Nothing for such a grand wizard as you, my lord. My father wished to have a charm against poisons, if you will recall. I merely come to collect it."

"Ah, yes..." he says as you enter the anteroom. "I believe I had already made it. Please, rest from your journey here while I fetch it for you."

"I shall, my lord wizard," you say, and he bows again, then proceeds up the stairs, moving quickly for one who is supposed to be so old.

-

To wait for the false Ardanor to return, go to section 46.

To go up and look for him, go to section 67.

74

Roger growls immediately at the wizard, baring his teeth and moving between you and him as if to protect you. The wizard takes a step back, and as he does, his expression changes, becoming hard and angry. "Bah! Damn the nose of your dog!" he cries out, and suddenly his appearance changes, becoming that of a younger man, with dark blond hair and a goatee rather than a beard. Roger rushes toward him, but the man raises his right hand, in which he's holding a disc of black metal with a sigil etched on it, and cries out a word you don't understand.

Roger freezes like a statue – but a little too late for the magician, as he's already in mid-air when it happens, leaping at the man's throat. The impact of Roger's massive body knocks the man down, and he cries out, "Damn you and your mangy cur! You're going to pay for this, bitch!"

-

You have but a moment to act. If you have a dagger, you may try to kill the man; go to section 11 to do so, but beware – magicians are dangerous! If you wish to run into the tower, go to section 52. If you wish to run away from the tower, go to section 94.

75

The seconds pass by as if they were hours as you wait, trying not to breathe, trying not even to think – for surely anyone who could have managed to take the place of Ardanor must be a wizard himself!

Hearing footsteps again, you steel yourself to leap out if the wardrobe door should open – and then you hear the sound of the room's door closing, and finally let your breath out. You let another minute pass, just in case, before cracking open the door of the wardrobe and looking out.

The room is empty to all appearances... yet who knows but that a wizard could be still here, invisibly?

-

If you have a mirror, you may use it to check the room for anything that might be in it but invisible – go to section 32.

To leave the wardrobe, go to section 83.

76

Sir Scudamore rushes forward as well, drawing his sword, and the magician looks back and forth between the two of you as you both approach him. Deciding that the armored knight is the greater threat, he turns and points his wand at Scudamore – and as he does, you throw your dagger at him.

The result is not what you hoped for, as it strikes him hilt-first rather than with the point, and higher than you wanted. However, it is good enough, as the hilt hitting the side of his head causes him to clap his hand to where he was hit in reflex – the hand that has the wand in it!

Seizing the opportunity you've given him, Scudamore charges forward and thrusts his sword into and through the magician, then yanks it back. You both watch as the magician falls to the floor, dead.

-
Go to section 5.

77

"I know you for a liar, sirrah!" you call out. "The true Ardanor has blue eyes, and is taller than you – and much more hospitable to visitors!" The false Ardanor steps back, his face twisting in a grimace of anger. Even as he drops the illusion, revealing his own dark blond hair and goatee, he starts to reach into his robe for something!

-
If Sir Scudamore is your companion, turn to section 60.
If you have a dagger and wish to attack the false Ardanor yourself, turn to section 20.
If you wish to run away, go to section 52 to run past him into the tower, or to section 94 to try to run into the forest.

78

Peeking over the edge of the floor as you stand on the stairs, you see what appears to be Ardanor's laboratory. Ordinarily, you'd find the glassware, books, oil lamps, and other wizard's accoutrements quite fascinating, but at the moment, your attention is devoted to the two men in the room.

The nearer one – a tall man with dark blond hair and a goatee – is standing in front of one of the great bookshelves that take up a full third of the wallspace in the room. As you watch, he takes a book from the shelf, leafs through it, then casts it behind him onto the floor carelessly. He repeats the action with the next book, and as he does, you notice that there's quite a substantial number of books on the floor already.

The second man – an older man with a long white beard – is giving the first a look of such murderous intensity that it is a wonder to you that the target of the gaze does not burst into flame. The first, however, has nothing to fear at the moment, as the older man is currently tied securely to a chair and gagged.

You start to back down a step to remove yourself from view and give yourself a moment to think – but the step under your foot betrays you, giving away your presence with a creak, and the nearer man turns and sees you!

-
If you wish to try to run away, go to section 4.
To attempt to fight the man, go to section 97.

79

It takes some time to tear strips from the bedclothes and stitch them together – but time you have aplenty right now. As you make it, you test each stitching, wrapping the cloth above it around a bedpost and pulling on it as hard as you can. You tear sections twice before you find a good, sturdy way to stitch them to take the weight you need without using too much of your limited thread supply.

You have to light the oil lamp before you're done, and stitch the last two joins by its ruddy glow, but at last, your rope is ready. You tie it to the bedpost closest to the window, then cast it out and watch as it runs out its length. Seeing it fall less than a man's height short of the

ground, you smile for the first time in hours, proud of how well you estimated the length needed.

The climb down is harrowing – once your feet slip, and you wish several times that you'd thought to put knots in your makeshift rope to make it easier to climb – but you make it to the ground without falling!

-

Congratulations! You've escaped, and would now be able to go on to try to get help to come back in the full gamebook. For this, however, this is a successful ending, although not one of the most successful.

80

The next that you know, Ardanor is standing before you, smiling. Startled, you jump back from him, but then he raises his empty palms to you. "It's quite all right, my lady. Thanks to your efforts, disaster has been averted, and I have been freed – and so I have freed you from the blackguard Castiglio's spell."

-

Congratulations! You've reached a successful ending of this excerpt! Of course, if this were the full gamebook, more would happen from here, but you've made a very good show here.

81

Coming up the stairs is none other than Ardanor himself! Glad to have found him, you curtsy, saying, "Good day, my lord wizard. I pray that you will forgive my intrusion, and hope that I do not find you at an inconvenient time."

Bowing in return, he answers, "Good day, milady. You are forgiven; as for the time, it is what it is. What service can I do for you?"

"I am Mariselle, a lady-in-waiting to Her Highness, the Princess Gwendolyn. I have been sent to bear a letter to the Prince Thomas, and hope to seek your aid in finding him."

"I see," he answers, nodding, and reaches into his robe. "I believe I may have something here that could be of aid...."

You watch with interest, then frown as he pulls out a disc of some sort. From the little you know of magic, that does not seem to be the right sort of implement, and – suddenly, his appearance changes, to that of a younger man with dark blond hair and a goatee! Before you can react, he holds the disc out toward you and barks a harsh-sounding word – and then all goes black.

-

Turn to section 64.

82

Staring into the crystal, you think Prince Thomas' name, and, lacking a clear idea of what he looks like, think instead of his heraldic arms. Something seems to shimmer inside the crystal, and then you see a young man who must be him, clad in a mail shirt and riding a white palfrey. You think he's as handsome as the stories say, and simply look at him for a moment before chiding yourself for being so featherbrained as to think about such a thing now. Turning your attention to his surroundings, you see that he's moving through forest, and after a moment, you realize that the forest he is in is none other than the Alderwood – the very forest in which this tower stands!

You suppress the urge to curse at fate, and wish that the crystal you hold could let you communicate with him – or perhaps it will? You see no reason not to try, and you open your mouth to speak to him... but close it again, turning in astonishment, as you hear the magician's voice!

-

Mark down the key "U" on your sheet, and go to section 91.

83

After exiting the wardrobe, you take another look around the room – more leisurely this time – but still find nothing of interest. All that is here is the ordinary furnishings of a guest room.

-
- To inspect the other guest rooms, go to section 66.
 - To go up to the next floor, go to section 78.

84

The man cries out in protest as you put the gag back into his mouth, and tries to spit it out, but you pull the ends around to the back and retie it securely. He gives you a look that sends a cold shiver down your spine, and you think that perhaps it would be best to get away from him.

-
- Add the key “L” to your sheet. Lose all points you have in Charity.
 - To leave the room going upstairs, go to section 35.
 - To go back downstairs, go to section 45.

85

With reflexes and speed gained from your hours of practice at dance, you leap forward and draw your dagger, holding it out and letting the weight of your body give it force. The magician tries to dodge, but is too slow, and you cut him across his face, leaving a line of red.

Hissing with pain, he tries to cast a spell at you, but you prove to be faster than he, and your dagger comes down into his arm, causing a cry of pain as it cuts deeply, forcing him to drop the wand. He tries to grab your arm, but you pull back, then step back in quickly, thrusting with the dagger yet again – and this time, your thrust sinks home into his chest.

Wary that this might be an illusion, or that he might have some last trick, you back away from him, glancing around yourself, but still watching him. Almost a full minute passes before you feel safe enough to turn your attention to freeing Ardanor.

-
- Go to section 5.

86

You look about for somewhere to hide in the room. The only likely places seem to be under the bed or in the wardrobe. Of those two, under the bed seems to be the worse position to be in if you should be discovered hiding, so you enter the wardrobe and gently close the door behind yourself. With this room unoccupied, there’s only a couple of spare coats in the wardrobe, so you ready yourself to leap out in case you should be discovered.

You hear the sound of the door to the room opening, and try to breathe as quietly as you can. Footsteps enter the room, and you wish you could see what’s happening as you strain your ears to catch any other movement.

-
- If you have the key “S” on your sheet, go to section 75. Otherwise, go to section 48.

87

There are plenty of places to choose from to hide, and you choose a spare bed with bedposts taller than you are, obviously meant to support a canopy, but currently only supporting the large sheet that has been draped over the bed. Under the sheet, you sit at the head of the bed, trying to stay as still as you can, letting the drape of the sheet hide you.

The footsteps stop, and you swallow, your throat suddenly dry. “Where are you my little mouse?” you hear the magician say. “I know you’re here – there’s nowhere else you could have

gone without opening the trap door up there, and if you'd gone up, you couldn't have moved what you climbed on back."

You keep your silence. He's only guessing, you tell yourself – and if he's not, well... you'll simply have to try your best to fight him if he finds you. Then he speaks again, saying, "I tire of this." Suddenly a wind springs up, a wind strong as those of the summer storms that sometimes come to your father's retreat on the seashore – a wind that pulls the sheets from all the furniture, including the bed where you were hidden!

"There you are!" he cries out, and then he points his wand at you and speaks, and all goes black.

-
You have been captured. Go to section 64.

88

Opening the wardrobe up fully, you look inside, and are disappointed to find little here to examine: a traveling tunic, breeches, and boots, all still dirty; a man's underclothes, also dirty; and a traveler's bag, now empty.

-
If you wish to search the books in the room, go to section 55.
To leave the room, go to section 23.

89

What he has told you matches what you have heard of Ardanor – surely, this must be the wizard!

-
You gain a point of Prudence. Return to section 99.

90

Althea moves to you and tugs your sleeve lightly. "This is odd. Usually Ardanor is quick to greet visitors – I believe he gets lonely out here. I fear something may be amiss."

-
Mark the key "W" on your sheet, and return to section 1 to make your choice.

91

You leap to the side, trying to get something between you and the magician, but too late – even as you begin to move, he produces a wand and barks a harsh-sounding word. Suddenly, your muscles refuse to obey your commands, and you fall to the ground in an ungainly heap.

Unable even to move your eyes, you can only watch the magician's booted feet under the hem of his robe as he approaches – and then all goes black.

-
You have been captured. Go to section 64.

92

Noticing that the magician's back is now to Ardanor, you point past him and cry out gleefully, saying, "Ha! Ardanor is free, and now you shall pay, miscreant!" You can see the hesitation in his eyes as he wonders if you are bluffing, but work hard not to let the sinking feeling in your heart show upon your face, instead concentrating on keeping your eyes moving as if you were watching Ardanor move up upon the magician, letting your smile grow slightly.

The magician turns to look, trying to do so quickly, but you take advantage of his momentary distraction to duck down, then push up your side of the table, using your legs to do the work. Glassware slides off it, and you hear the sounds of it breaking and liquid spilling, and feel a surge of triumph at the cry of pain that goes up from the magician, and hope that whatever the liquid in there is, that it is painful to him.

You do not let the feeling slow or distract you, however, but instead rush past where the magician is trying to get the table, glass, and liquid off of him, stooping along the way to pick up a large shard of broken glass. Rushing to Ardanor, you saw at his bonds with the glass, not worrying about whether you might cut yourself as well. The cloth parts quickly, and Ardanor stands, using one hand as he does to pull the gag down out of his mouth.

-
Go to section 96.

93

Jumping forward before he can get whatever he is reaching for out, you draw your dagger and stab, but he moves aside, and your dagger goes not into his chest as you had hoped, but into and through his arm.

Wounded, the magician lets out an ear-splitting scream and twists away from you – and as he does, your dagger is ripped from your hand, caught between the bones of his arm!

He backs away, grabbing the handle of the dagger with his other hand, and looks at you murderously. With no weapon to fight him with, you turn and run up the stairs away from him.

-
Cross the dagger off your sheet, and go to section 15.

94

You dash away across the drawbridge, then down the stairs, lifting your skirts as you run. Reaching the bottom of the stairs, you head toward your horse, not even taking time for a glance back.

Quickly, you mount your horse, ignoring propriety and mounting astride. Your horse springs forward, and you pull the reins, guiding her toward a break in the trees. The first trees go by, and you duck down, holding onto your horse by her neck, so as not to be caught by any low branches.

It's then that you hear a cry from above – a screeching sound like that of a hunting hawk, but far louder and deeper. A shiver of fear runs through you, and you look up. Through the branches and leaves of the forest's canopy, you get a glimpse of a flying beast, larger than a horse, with the wings and beak of an eagle and the tail of a lion – a gryphon. You can see the edges of a purple robe about it, and so know that the magician is on it.

Swallowing, you try to get your horse to stop here, where the canopy provides cover, but the beast seems to have panicked, and will not obey your commands. With sinking heart, you try again to stop her, yanking hard on the reins, but to no avail – you burst from the trees into a clearing, and that's all the opportunity the magician needs. The last thing you hear is him crying out the same strange word that froze your companion.

-
You have been captured. Turn to section 64.

95

The gryphon is huge – the size of a horse or bigger – and you recall reading that they eat horses. You do not recall anything being said about them eating people, but you do not care to experiment to find out. “Good boy,” you say, much as you would to a dog, “Calm down...”

-

You may spend a point of Music to go to section 65.
Otherwise, go to section 69.

96

Ardanor cries out something in Greek, and suddenly, the magician is standing directly in front of him! Raising his hands, Ardanor calls out again, and this time the bindings that were on him before wrap themselves about the magician, the gag stuffing itself into his mouth.

"We shall see how you like your own medicine, sirrah!" Ardanor says to the man. "And we shall also see how the King's justice agrees with you!"

Turning to you then, Ardanor says, "I thank you, milady, for freeing me. What service can I perform for you in return?"

-

To ask him about Thomas, go to section 36.
To ask him to check on your companion, go to section 58.

97

"Have at you, varlet!" you cry out, and rush at the magician. Surprised, he steps back away from you, then dashes to the side, putting a table between the two of you.

-

If Scudamore is with you, go to section 76.
If you have the dagger and spend a point of Dance, go to section 85.
Otherwise, go to section 62.

98

Now that you think about it, the history you learned says that Ardanor is famed for his gracious hospitality – and for his height, and brilliant blue eyes. This man seems to have none of these... and therefore must be an impostor!

-

Do you wish to:
Use a point of Drama to lie to him about who you are and your business? Go to section 54.
Call him out as false? Go to section 77.

99

"How can I know you're telling the truth?" you ask him, feeling cautious.
"I've no way to prove that to you," he replies. "However, I beg you to consider: all know the wizard Ardanor as a champion of justice and truth, and a wise man. Would he leave a miscreant tied up in his laboratory, risking disaster should the man free himself? Or would he take him to the lawful authorities, and render him over to them?"

-

You may spend a point of History to verify his statement; to do so, turn to section 89.
If you wish to untie him now, turn to section 70.
Or, you may go to section 84 to gag him again.

100

Climbing up through the trap door, you let it drop shut behind you, there being no good way to prop it open – and then freeze as you see what the door had hidden from you as you climbed up. A griffon watches you with its eagle's eyes, its wings spread open in challenge, the tail of the lion half of its body whipping back and forth like that of a cat about to pounce.

-

If you have the key H on your sheet, go to section 65. Otherwise, go to section 95.

Lady Mariselle

Graces:

Charity
Charm
Faith
Grace
Modesty
Prudence

Skills:

Astronomy
Dance
Drama
History
Music
Poetry

Items:

Traveling Dress
Fancy Dress
Money Purse (50 silver bits)
Letter to Prince Thomas
Food and Water (10 days)
Oilcloth Cloak

Keys: