
THE MASSACRE IN BLACK SCYTHE

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Short Gamebook Fiction

The Massacre In Black Scythe

To play this game you need a paper, a pen and one die (d6). You can easily draw your own Adventure Sheet: the only things you need to keep track of are your health and your inventory. So read the rules and start exploring the wicked town Black Scythe.

Rules

You start the game with a health of 4.0 litres of blood. When getting injured you will lose some blood, the more severe injury the bigger the loss will be. If your health falls to 2.0 litres or below you will become dizzy and confused without the ability to think clearly. If so you must sometimes let the chance decide your actions.

An ordinary situation where you'll have to make a choice might look like this:

To open the left door, turn to **101**.

To open the right door, turn to **102**.

But if it instead looks like this:

To hide behind the curtain, turn to **103**. (1-3)

To hide under the bed, turn to **104**. (4-6)

and you have a health of 2.0 litres or below you must roll the die and choose that option where the numbers inside the brackets match the result of the rolled die.

If you run out of blood completely it means you have died and lost the game.

Inventory

You also need to make two choices regarding the inventory you start with before playing the game.

Knife or Axe. Which weapon do you want to start with? The axe can cause more damage. The knife is lighter and easier to use. Choose one of these two.

Lighter or Matches. How do you prefer to make a fire? Choose either a lighter or a box of matches.

Hints

As usual when it comes to gamebooks the following applies:

There are several ways through this adventure, some more dangerous and riskier than others. If you should fail on your first attempt, try another route.

Drawing a map and making notes can be helpful in future attempts to beat the game.

Don't read other paragraphs than those you're instructed to read, since doing so will lessen the excitement and may spoil the plot.

Background

The dreams started when you were fifteen years old, just a couple of weeks after your sister disappeared. One morning when you woke up Jessica's bed was empty and you've never seen her since then. The whole village searched for her for many days, but not a single clue about where she had gone or been taken to, was found and eventually she was assumed to have run away to one of the bigger cities along the coast. But you knew that Jessica wouldn't do such a thing without at least leaving you a hint about where she was heading.

Your aunt and her husband, who you had grown up with, didn't care much about Jessica's disappearance. This made the already tense relationship between you and them crack. You dropped out from school and started to work, soon being able to provide for yourself and say farewell to your relatives. Some years passed when you put down a lot of time and resources trying to find any kind of information about Jessica, but it was as if your sister never had existed. Most people you asked weren't interested in your problems while some tried to impose on your situation, but what everyone had in common was that they couldn't help you at all.

And then there's this dream. It comes to you three or four times every month and is always the same. You find yourself standing in the middle of a street in a town you don't recognize. It's that kind of place where places don't have names, so the street you're on is simply named the 13th Street. It's in the middle of the night, a dark blue sky is slightly enlightened by lampposts on both sides. Behind dirty windows you can see shadows mowing and eyes following you when you start advancing forward along the street.

After minutes of walking by alleys, shops and restaurants, the street ends in front of a huge house that looks ready to fall apart with a facade of weather-beaten wood, crushed windows and roof tiles that's been sliding down into piles in the muddy garden. You walk up a wide staircase to the house's entrance and open the front door. From here it's hard to remember what happens, you're only seeing fragments of yourself wandering around in a maze of gloomy corridors until you finally stop in front of a room with both a carpet and walls in the same red color. The only things you see in the room are two chairs in front of the opposite wall and a small table between them. Even though you're positive that this room means great danger you can't resist entering it, but in the same moment you do so you always wake up in cold sweat.

Even though nothing really tells so you've gotten convinced that the dream has something to do with your sister's disappearance, but you've never managed to figure out what the connection might be. Even so, at the age of twenty you decided to start searching for the mysterious street and house. You travelled across the country and visited and went through towns in all sizes, but without result. Two weeks ago you almost gave up when something hit you. What if the town you've been searching for is a deserted one? Actually it seemed like a pretty probable theory when thinking about how ragged the buildings in your dream are. After spending some time in a library you had located a dozen new candidates to visit, most of them in the eastern part of the country where wilderness turns into desert.

Your first target is a town called Black Scythe that's said to have been quite large in its days of glory, which ended abruptly when a tenth of the inhabitants died in an accident in the mines outside town. And now you're only half a day of walking from there. The journey through the wilderness has been harsh but still better than you had feared, lots of lakes and rivers with fresh water and fish as well as nuts and berries has helped you keep the mood up. It's only the last day that's been trying with dryer and stonier surroundings and for the first time you're now thinking about taking a break during the hottest hours. When looking for a place with shadow you see smoke from the direction you're heading. Is someone else around? You decide to continue on to check this out. Turn to 1.

PART 1

1

Long before you reach the campfire you see that only one person is sitting on a log next to it. She is old with white hair and dressed in clothes made of thick cloth, boots and a hat. Over the glow is a jug hanging and when seeing you the woman grabs it and pours a cup of tea. She hands you the cup and invites you to sit down. You drink of the bitter tea and offer the woman some water but she shakes her head. You try to start a conversation by asking her if she's from around here and if she knows something about Black Scythe, but she doesn't answer, just sitting there looking into the fire.

Feeling uneasy in the company of this silent person you want to move on. You finish the tea and make yourself ready to leave when the weird woman finally speaks up with a voice so hoarse that it's difficult to make out most words. "You've already gotten too close," she says. "Turn back while you still can. They will guard the street and capture you before you even get to see a glimpse of the house. And even if you defeat them and enter the house only dismay awaits you there. You won't find her."

"Her?" you ask. "Are you talking about Jessica? Is my sister in Black Scythe? You must tell me!" The woman doesn't show any sign of wanting to answer your questions and it's obvious you won't get another word out of her by just being friendly. What do you do?

If you want to try and force the woman to talk, turn to **27**.

If you prefer to ignore her and continue north toward the town, turn to **40**.

2

You head over to the left side where there aren't any lampposts so you can work hidden in the darkness. It only takes a couple of minutes for you to make a hole big enough to squeeze through. On the other side you hear someone coming further up on the street so you go into an alley to your left, where it's even darker, and hide there. Turn to **30**.

3

You throw the stick away, draw your weapon and start walking through the left tunnel. First as silently as you can until the guard discovers you, then you start to run toward him hoping to finish the battle before he gets a fair chance to prepare himself properly. But this one has been around for long and knows the tricks. He gives himself an advantage by throwing the torch toward your face and then immediately attack. With a combination of luck and skill you duck under the torch without getting more than just slightly burned while swinging the weapon at the goblin who comes rushing for you. You both hit each other and the outcome is that the goblin's sword makes a deep wound in your left arm while you cut him through his heart. The goblin falls backward and dies.

The wound hurts but you suppose you should be glad that the goblin didn't swing his sword a little higher, that would've beheaded you. However you'll lose blood from the wound. Roll the die and multiply the result with 0.2 to find out how many litres of blood this fight have drained.

You pick up the torch. It's much better than your stick so you'll keep this one for now. The short sword doesn't look like a better weapon than the one you're carrying so you leave that one behind when you walk into the new tunnel, heading north once again.

Soon you see something in the left wall, it's an unmarked wooden door. The tunnel also continues forward, so you have two options here.

If you want to open the door, turn to **20**.

If you want to continue north through the tunnel, turn to **41**.

4

The street is almost empty, just some smaller animals like cats and rats seem to dare going out in this area and hour. But you still take it carefully and advance one step at the time using various kinds of shelters and alleys to hide if someone should come. When only one block is left to the end of the street and the house from your dream you hear slow steps coming from the gloominess up north.

You take refuge behind a stair of stone. It's quite dark here so you shouldn't be seen when the person will be walking by. You take a peak around the steps and see that it's someone in a medieval armour that's coming. But because of the weird and rhythmic way of walking you don't think it's a human behind the armour, this is more likely a machine. It's holding a big sword in front of it and you duck under the edge of the stairs.

Convinced that you're sitting in a safe corner you prepare to just wait a little until the armour has passed. But then you almost cry out when someone bites your leg. You smash it with your palm and feel how a bug is being crushed between your trousers and skin. Suddenly it appears as if the whole ground around you is crawling, hundreds of spiders and bugs are running around there and you will not be able to prevent all of them from finding a way in behind your clothes and get a chunk of your flesh. You've chose a pretty bad hiding-place after all, but what can you do about it now? If you should get up and run away now you would most certainly be spotted by the armour, and that's an opponent you won't defeat easily. It looks like you'll have to sit here and wait for the armour to walk by, even if it means a minute of torture.

You look behind your shoulder and wonder if there might be another way after all. Behind you is a crushed window. It's right above the ground so you think it's placed in a basement. The shards from the glass has been cleaned away so you should be able to climb down the opening without being cut. You hear how the armour is coming close so you need to make a quick decision.

If you climb down to the basement, turn to **24**.

If you choose to stay where you are and wait for the armour to pass, turn to **43**.

5

You take a second to focus on this task before stepping out on the slope and like you suspected you start to slide immediately. The first priority is to keep the balance since you won't be able to jump over the hole if not standing properly. That one goes fine and you slide toward the edge with full control. When coming close to the hole you try and make the jump as late as possible to make it easier to grab on to the ladder on the other side. Roll the die.

If you rolled an even number, turn to **22**.

If you rolled an odd number, turn to **13**.

6

The few unhurt bottles are all empty, but at least you find a fully functional corkscrew that you can take. Maybe a more important find is a hatch in the floor behind the counter. With your feet you rake all the junk over the hatch away and find it firmly locked with a padlock. If you have an iron key you can try to open it (turn to **23**). If not you may go into the kitchen (turn to **44**).

7

With the crowbar it's no problem to bend the hatch hard enough to break the chain. Your arms are already tired from this exercise so you climb out of the hole quickly and close the hatch behind you, finding that you are outdoors again. Actually you are in a garden. The moon and some lamps give you enough light to see that this garden hasn't been really well taken care of. But more important is what you see when turning around. It's the house from your dreams. Hideous but still elegant in a wicked way.

You hear some grunts from around you. Worried that someone or something is guarding here you get down on all four and start to crawl toward the house, protected by the tall grass. Your knees and hands get both cold and soggy, as well as hurting when touching sharp stones. But you resist the urge to stand up and eventually you reach the point where the grass ends just in front of the staircase leading up to the entrance. A few seconds later you're up there and open the front door to the house. Turn to **50**.

8

You enter a room that's filled with the steel skeletons after about twenty beds. Not much else to see in here so you walk toward an opening on the opposite side from where you entered. The door that once were there is now lying shattered on the floor. In front of the opening is a hammer lying. You can take it and use as a weapon if you don't have any.

As soon as you've come into the next room you feel an intense pain in your left leg. A dog that has been waiting behind the wall, has snapped its jaws around your leg. The animal has been locked in here for days and been driven mad by hunger and thirst and doesn't understand what it's doing. When realizing what is happening you poke the stick in the dog's neck, burning it so much that it releases your leg and start to run around like crazy, whimpering and barking. There is a door in the left wall so you take the opportunity and escape, leaving a trail of blood for the dog to survive on for another day or two. Roll the die, you lose 0.1 litres of blood for every eye on the die.

The next room is bigger than the previous two. Along the western wall is a row of windows toward the street, but so dirty that you don't see much through them from here. The room itself has lots of tables and chairs that was cheap-looking already when brand new. You guess this entire block is an old night shelter and that this was the dining room. Like everywhere else you've been in this town it's dusty in here and not much of value has been left behind.

You walk closer to the windows and see the fire in the barrel still burning. But the men standing around it before are now all lying on the street, looking lifeless. You find the door leading out to the street, but not trusting this situation you stand there for many minutes and watch the street carefully. When you're convinced it's calm outside you open the door and go out. Turn to **42**.

9

As soon as you lift up the medallion a hole opens up on the top of the pedestal. Without you seeing it the same thing is happening on the other side and you can hear how the copper medallion falls down, hitting the inside of the pedestal before landing on metal under the room. So that one is lost forever. You look at the one you got instead. It has six cusps and feels solid, being about an inch thick. Add the jade star to your inventory. Then you leave the room and continue north in the tunnel outside. Turn to **41**.

10

The staircase isn't very long and just lead you down to a small area with walls and floor of decayed wood. It's totally empty, was this some kind of storage? You take some seconds to look around but when not finding anything you make yourself ready to go back up. Without any warning your right foot disappears through the floor when stepping on a particular weak spot. The rotten boards can no longer carry you and you fall through it and land in a bigger room with brick walls and a dusty floor.

In front of you is a steel door. On both the left and right side are cages in human size hanging down from the ceiling and in each cage have dolls portraying youngsters been placed. The two dolls are quite similar, as if they're supposed to look like siblings. But at least they don't remind of neither you or Jessica, such a detail might have been too much for your already tested nerves. The dolls also look very natural and you're almost expecting them to jump alive when walking into the middle of the room. But they don't. Under the right cage is a crowbar lying, that you can take.

When you turn around and face the western wall you see that in both corners are pedestals standing and on top of each one of them are holes. You won't stick your hand in there, that's for sure. Next to the right pedestal is a medallion shaped like a star lying. It's made of jade, an inch thick and feels solid in your hand. Add it to your inventory.

Then you decide to try the door. It's unlocked and behind it is a damp corridor surrounded by rock walls. You suppose north would be the best way to go, so you turn left and start to walk. Turn to **41**.

11

After three more hours of walking you cross a rail road, which is a sign that you'll soon reach the town. From here you can continue on what once was a road. Layers of sand cover it but you can feel the hard and even surface underneath and see the outlines of ditches and rocks lying on its sides.

Soon you see the first houses. It's an awkward sight since you've been travelling for so long through almost uninhabited lands, seeing only a few cottages and the hunters using them. These first few houses you pass have belonged to farmers living outside the town. You also see a well, some barns, a plough and horse trolleys. It must've been quite nice to live a peaceful life here fifty years ago. But soon all this is behind you and you've already forgotten about it when you see the shape of the town you've been walking toward for almost a month. You can already see it's a real ghost town with many buildings gotten heavily exposed by the elements. All of them are still standing but some barely. You increase the pace of your steps and walk through the southern entrance to Black Scythe. Turn to **36**.

12

Already when you start to move the staff whatever is in the cabinet goes crazy in there. Someone sure is eager to get out, you think and snatch the staff away and then sprint toward the door. When halfway there you hear how the cabinet's doors fly open with a slam and immediately a power starts to pull you back. It's like you've been caught by a storm but you can also feel that it's something physical, like a pair of enormous and soft hands holding your legs. You grab every part of the kitchen's equipment that you can, but every time the force is there and loosen your grip. So without a chance of preventing it you're soon being drawn into the cabinet. The doors close and you're surrounded by darkness. The inside of the cabinet is more voluminous than it looked from outside, you can actually stand up straight in here. Then you feel that you're in fact not standing on anything solid – it's like you're floating through the universe.

You don't know how long it's been when you finally see a light far away. And you are coming closer to the small circle of light for every minute, or maybe it's the other way around. When you soon see dry sand and a clear blue heaven materializing in the circle you have forgotten almost everything that's happened to you the last day. And suddenly all the darkness around you disappear and you find yourself standing in front of what once was an entrance to a town. Behind it is only desert except

for a few mouldered planks sticking up from the sand here and there. This wasn't what I expected, you think. You take your list with deserted towns and draw a thick line over the name on top of the list, the one called Black Scythe. The next one is Francis' Rock and you should reach it in two days if you head straight to the east, so you start walking. But you will not find your sister there. Or in any other place on the list.

13

Everything goes as you had hoped. You get a firm grip around the ladder with both hands and one of your feet lands perfectly on a rung. You start to climb up and after some metres you find yourself trapped under a steel hatch. You manage to lift it just a little, enough to see a chain holding it in place on the other side.

If you have a crowbar, turn to 7.

If you don't have a crowbar, turn to 31.

14

You head over to the left side where there aren't any lampposts so you can climb hidden by the darkness. Even though the fence is lanky it's easy to climb up to the top. Then the hard part begins, you try to bend your body enough to avoid touching the spears when climbing over to the other side. You think that you're actually going to make it when a roar coming from nearby makes you lose focus for a second and you scratch both your stomach and legs. You lose 1.0 litre of blood from the injuries. But at least you get over to the side you wanted. You climb down quickly and sneak into an alley on the left side of the fence, hoping that you didn't get discovered by whatever was roaring before. Turn to 30.

15

You climb down the ladder. The rust leaves brown marks in your palms, but at least this thing feels strong and steady. When you reach the lowest rung you take a firm grip around it and let your body slide down the wall until you're hanging with straight arms. Then you let go of the rung and fall down. The distance of the fall isn't a problem, but what you failed to see earlier was that the ground below is uneven so when you land you immediately lose your balance and fall forward, scratching both your forearms against the rough concrete. You lose 0.5 litres of blood from the injuries and have to wait for the worst pain to pass before continuing. You find your stick and relight it. There's only one way to go from here, through a tunnel going north. You enter it.

After walking straight forward for a minute, holding a hand over your neck to prevent cold water dripping from the ceiling to hit you and run down your back, you reach a junction where you can either turn left or continue straight on. Light comes from the left path so you sneak up to the junction and take a peek around it. The left tunnel continues for about thirty meters before turning right. In the corner is a creature standing. It looks like a goblin, about a meter tall, dressed in a grey robe and holding a burning torch in one hand and a short sword in the other. The goblin is standing with its right side toward you and stars into the other tunnel.

If you want to turn left and attack the goblin, turn to 3.

If you want to continue going north, turn to 32.

16

After poking at the girl's back several times without her reacting you give up. Maybe she's been drugged. You don't think about putting the stick back, which turns out to be a mistake. The fox, who has been beaten by the stick uncountable times, freaks out when it sees you holding it. The animal starts to bark so loudly that you almost must cover your ears to stand it. You're is such anger with both yourself and the fox so you put the stick in between the cage's bars and hit it unconscious.

The door in the northern wall opens up and an extremely fat man enters the store. He stinks more than the animals from sweat and is breathing heavily. "Another specimen for my collection," he laughs. "I don't have any cage your size, but be sure I'll build you one." He's holding a morning star which looks really frightening, one clean hit from such a weapon and you might be killed instantly. But you're a lot more intelligent than the poor animals that this man is used to hunt and capture. You draw your weapon but use a defensive strategy by jumping away from your opponent's swings. He gets a couple of hits when the spikes from the morning star scratch your arms and legs. But you think it's worth it because this tires the man quickly. When he starts to understand your strategy he curses you but it's too late. You now use your advantage of being both quicker and still having a clear mind. You duck under the puffing man's last desperate swing, make a roll on the floor and slice up the hollow of one of the guy's knees which makes him crash onto the floor when the injured leg can't carry the weight of his body. You finish him off with his own weapon.

The morning star is too heavy to carry around, so you dump it and take a look at your wounds. You'll lose 0.1 litres of blood for every time you got hit during the battle, roll the die to find out how many times you were hit, one time per eye on the die. The inhabitants of the cages sense the death of their master and start a symphony of miserable whimpering. To hell with this, you think and leave the store.

The next room is the old stockroom of the grocery store, but now it's been used as a place to live by the fat guy. You see a table with a sofa and chairs and things like a deck of cards and glasses are on the table. Nothing useful so you continue to the other side where a bed is standing in front of a door. Here are also some torches. You take one of them and turn it on fire. Then you just move the bed enough to be able to open the door and leave this room. Turn to **33**.

17

The way ends with a slope. It's very steep and you don't think it's possible to walk down it without starting to slide. After three meters the slope ends with a hole, but you can't see how deep it is. On the other side of the hole is a ladder, leading up as far as you can see. If you want to continue on forward without falling into the hole you must slide down the slope and make a jump at its end and grab the ladder. It looks difficult, but what choice do you have? If you want to try this, turn to **5**. If you instead want to turn back south and try to find another way out from here, turn to **29**.

18

When you've entered the shop you stop for some seconds and listen carefully without hearing a sound. Your senses are known to be excellent so if you think it's quiet not even a cockroach should be lurking around. You find a dry stick and after a few attempts you manage to put one of its ends on fire which provides you with enough light to see where you're walking.

The room you're in is a small one. All shelves are emptied but several cracked pots on the floor tells you it's once been a flower shop. Nothing of interest is in here but an opening in the northern wall leads you in to the shop's neighbour, so you walk in there.

The first you see are two pool tables and behind them a bar. Pieces from broken, or rather shattered, chairs and tables are covering the floor. On the left side are big windows and the entrance door to this brawn but they're all so dirty so you can't look out through them. And that's fine with you since it

should mean no one will be able to see you from the outside either. In the left wall is an opening that seems to lead into a kitchen, but before examining that you might want to check out the main room. The bar's counter is covered with glass fragments and almost every bottle in the shelf is broken.

If you want to search behind the counter, turn to **6**.

If you want to go into the kitchen, turn to **44**.

19

You don't want to call this a garden, doing so would feel like an insult to real ones. This is more of an area with far too high grass and a couple of trees so aged and rotten that they're ready to die any day. The grass is moving with a whispering sound and you can't tell if someone is there or if it's just the wind. So to not take any chances of being spotted you go down on your knees and start to crawl forward. Your knees and hands get both cold and soggy, as well as hurting when touching sharp stones. You resist the urge to stand up and eventually you reach the point where the grass ends just in front of the staircase that leads up to the entrance. A few seconds later you're up there and open the front door to the house. Turn to **50**.

20

Behind the door is a quite large room with four brick walls and a dusty floor. On both the left and right side are cages in human size hanging down from the ceiling and in each cage have dolls portraying youngsters been placed. The two dolls are quite similar, as if they're supposed to look like siblings. But at least they don't remind of neither you or Jessica, such a detail might have been too much for your already tested nerves. The dolls also look very natural and you're almost expecting them to jump alive when walking into the middle of the room. But they don't. Under the right cage is a crowbar lying, that you can take.

In both far corners in this room are a pedestal standing and on each one of them is a medallion shaped like a star lying. The medallion on the right pedestal looks to be made of jade while the one on the left pedestal looks like copper. In the dust on the floor you see several shoe marks between the door and the right pedestal, but none leading to the left one. Now what do you do?

If you want to take the jade medallion, turn to **9**.

If you want to take the copper medallion, turn to **34**.

If you decide to not touch the medallions you may leave the room and go back to the tunnel where you continue north, turn to **41**.

21

You feel almost invisible when walking in this pitch dark part of the street. You see how guises of both animals and humanoids are moving inside some of the buildings you pass by but none seem to notice you. The street itself is calm for a long bit until you finally have to stop because you spot something who looks like a guard.

A person in a full body armour stands on the street holding a sword in front of him. A curious cat is advancing against the person but when coming close the sword is being raised and the cat turns around and runs back in panic. From the way of moving you don't think it's a real person inside the armour, it moves more like a machine. You only dare to go a little closer and hide behind a bunch of trash cans on the pavement. You're now about thirty meters from the armour and since it looks like an opponent you wouldn't be able to defeat you try to figure out another way to move on. Of course you could just try to go into the building behind you, it looks like you've now entered an area with apartments.

Another strategy might be to try and throw something to the other side of the street and hope that it would distract the guard long enough for you to pass by him without being noticed. The best would be if you could break a window there to make a lot of noise. The most suitable thing to throw is a stone lying near you, big as a fist.

If you want to enter the closest door behind you, turn to **46**.

If you want to try and throw the stone on a window, turn to **39**.

22

You make the jump and get a grip around the ladder with both hands but unfortunately your foot slides of the rung you aimed for and when your body falls you don't have a chance of holding on to the ladder. The hole is only a meter deep but filled with barbed wire. You hear voices coming from south, which makes you stressed and both your trousers and legs becomes shredded before you can leave this sadistic trap and climb up the ladder. You lose 1.0 litre of blood from this.

After some metres of climbing you find yourself trapped under a steel hatch. You manage to lift it just a little, enough to see a chain holding it in place on the other side.

If you have a crowbar, turn to **7**.

If you don't have a crowbar, turn to **31**.

23

The key fits perfectly and soon you've unlocked it and opened the hatch. It's too dark and deep to see what's down there so you put some old magazines on fire and drop them down the hole. After they've landed you estimate the distance to the bottom to at least five meters.. A rusty ladder is attached to the concrete walls surrounding the hole but there is a problem, the ladder is only two meters long. This means that if you should use the ladder to drop yourself down to the bottom you will probably have to struggle a lot if you would like to climb back up again. If you still want to try going down the hole, then turn to **15**. If you instead want to close the hatch and go into the kitchen, turn to **44**.

24

After getting your feet and legs inside the opening you let the rest of your body slide in and you land safely on the cement floor. Some bugs have joined you in here but you just shake them off. In total you lose 0.3 litres of blood from the few wounds you received. Soon you can hear how the armour walks by outside and continues on southwards.

Now, the only problem left is to get back out from here. It's quite a bit up to the opening so you make some light and look for something to stand on. A big machine with a hatch and many buttons is standing in front of one wall – it's something from the ancient times and you have no idea what it's for. There are two doors in here, but you don't want to risk anything when you are so close to the house, so you ignore them. On one wall in here someone has written a message with white paint:

CHOOSE THE WEAK
THE STRONG IS AN ILLUSION

In a corner is a wooden box standing. It should fit your need perfectly so you take it to place under the opening to stand on. When you're back outside you notice that the armour has stopped some thirty meters down the street. It's standing guard there, but not looking back so it's safe for you to walk up the last meters to the house. Soon you're standing in front of its garden. Turn to **19**.

25

You enter a small room which is divided in two halves by a steel grating crossing it. You can't see any way for you to reach the other side of the room. On one of the walls there is a man hanging with his bony limbs in shackles attached to the stone wall. Under him are some rats jumping, trying to get a snack and you can tell that they've succeeded before from several bite marks on the man's feet and blood stains on the wall. The man himself isn't so old, maybe thirty years, but he looks undernourished and more hackneyed than the rags he's wearing. But he is at least alive, you can see his chest moving slightly while breathing. He doesn't answer, or even react, to your calls though. You don't want to throw anything hard on the man, but maybe a handful of water would wake him up? If you want to try this, turn to 38. If not, you leave him to his own destiny and go back to the tunnel and continue north, turn to 17.

26

You take one of the glasses and put some cards in it, enough to make them be fixed there. After turning the cards on fire you wait until the flames has grown big. You find two laser beams to throw the glass between, making sure to not touch them you make the throw and immediately feel it's a great one. Satisfied you see how the glass lands in the end of the bed, between where the man's toes are seen over the bed's gable.

You take some steps back and wait. And you don't have to wait for long, in just seconds the whole bed turns into an inferno, it's like it's soaked in paraffin oil. With a scream of horror an extremely fat man throws himself out from the bed and starts rolling around on the floor trying to suffocate the flames. But he's too slow and it doesn't help much so when he can't stand it more he just gets up and starts running around. When coming toward you you make yourself ready to knock him out, but the laser beams take care of that and cut him into slices when he's trying to run through them. So they weren't harmless then... Anyway, that doesn't matter now since the beams are gone, probably the system got overloaded. You walk over to the other part of the room and wait for the flames to grow small and die. You see some things here, a morning star and a couple of torches. The weapon looks strong but is too heavy for you to carry around, but you take a torch and light it, receiving a much better light than from the candles.

In the remains of the bed is some kind of staff lying, it's made of gold and must have been hidden in the bed. One of its ends is a loop and the last third of its other side is carved in an irregular pattern. This might be some kind of key, you think and take it with you. Then you open the door and leave. Turn to 33.

27

You grab the woman's shoulders and immediately she falls apart in a cloud of dust as if she was made of ash. Seconds later only a pile of what looks like a combination of salt and sand remains of her. When you've come back to normal after the shock caused from this you see something metallic sticking up from the remains of the woman. It's an iron key, the size of your thumb and not marked with anything and you put it in a pocket. You don't feel for staying here longer than necessary so you put out the fire and continue north. Turn to 11.

28

When you start to scratch the cabinet's doors with the staff and weapon things go crazy in there and for a second you think the whole cabinet is going to explode. When the staff is in your hand you have gotten enough of this jangle and without caring about checking out the rest of the kitchen you leave. Turn to 49.

29

You don't make it very far until you sense something pass just an inch from your head. It's an arrow coming from the darkness in front of you and you're way too exposed standing here. So you turn around and start to run, screaming in agony when the next arrow rips your left ear off, spraying the wall with blood. You will lose 0.5 litres of blood from this wound, but you can't worry about that now. After sprinting north you reach the slope again. Turn to 5.

30

In the gloominess you can catch a glimpse of a shape running on the street, it's as big as a full-grown human but looks more beefy. Before you can see it good enough to determine exactly what it is it disappears into the alley on the other side. When you can't hear or see it any longer you walk back out on the street.

You've come to the conclusion that going inside the buildings isn't safer than staying on the outside so this time you're going to try to avoid going indoors when advancing north. And far away you see a house, if it's the one you're searching for you don't have that long left and if things should get messy out here you might have the chance of making a run for it.

You don't want to walk in the centre of the street, so you must decide which side to use. The right side has many obstacles, like containers, piles of junk and other things to hide behind. On the other hand is the left side much darker.

If you choose to continue on the right side of the street, turn to 4.

If you choose to continue on the left side of the street, turn to 21.

31

You try to break the chain by bending the hatch with your weapon, but it's not long enough so you don't get the power needed. After some minutes of struggling with this you hear someone walking above you. In the next second a skewer is piercing the hatch with an enormous power going right into your back and coming out through your chest. Your lifeless body slides off the skewer and you're dead even before landing in the hole below.

32

To be really certain that the guard doesn't spot you you put out the fire on your stick temporarily before passing the junction, hidden by the darkness. After walking another two hundred meters you see something moving on the ground in front of you. A couple of spiders, big as your fists, are running around there trying to bite through your shoes but failing. You end the life for two spiders by stomping on them but this doesn't frighten the rest, in fact the amount of them increases when more and more are coming out from holes in the walls. It seems pointless to try and kill these creeps so you change strategy and start running. This would probably have worked if someone hadn't rigged a tripwire in the tunnel. You stumble on it and crash into the ground, getting a remainder of your wounded forearms when the pain there intensifies.

You feel how something lands on your back. It's another spider, but many times bigger than the other ones. When realising the danger you roll around quickly trying to trap this monster between the wall and your back to crush her with your body weight, but she escapes in the last moment and trips up on your stomach. With your left hand you grasp the spider's head and prevent her from piercing your chest with her tentacles and sucking your bowels out while your right hand fumbles around until it finally finds your weapon. With a fixed cut you split the big spider in two halves. This one didn't manage to hurt you, but during the battle some of the smaller spiders bit your legs. They're not

poisonous but the wounds are so nasty that you lose 0.1 litre of blood for each one of them. Roll the die to see how many wounds you received, one per eye on the die.

You get up and continue north. This time the spiders don't follow. The tunnel turns slightly to the left so it goes to northwest for a while until it meets up with another tunnel coming from south. You suppose that the other tunnel just would lead you back to the first junction so you ignore it and continue on forward. The next thing breaking the monotonous walking is a door in the right wall. It's not marked with anything, just an ordinary wooden door.

If you want to open the door, turn to **25**.

If you don't bother about the door you continue through the tunnel, turn to **17**.

33

Behind the door is an old restaurant. On your right side are windows and looking out through them you can see the street. You remember the three figures you saw before, they should be pretty close now. You duck a little to not be spotted when looking for the barrel, it's still there but the men guarding around it isn't to be seen. It's first when you rise up you see them, they're all lying on the ground, looking lifeless. You find the door that leads out to the street from the restaurant, but before going there you check out two other doors that's in the western wall in here. One of them is locked but the other you can open. Behind it is a staircase leading down, you can't make out how far or where to it leads.

If you want to go down the stairs, turn to **10**.

If you want to go out on the street, turn to **42**.

34

As soon as you lift up the medallion a hole opens up on the top of the pedestal. Without you seeing it the same thing is happening on the other side and you can hear how the jade medallion falls down, hitting the inside of the pedestal before landing on metal under the room. So that one is lost forever. You look at the one you got instead. It has six cusps and feels solid, being about an inch thick. Add the copper star to your inventory. Then you leave the room and continue north in the tunnel outside. Turn to **41**.

35

You sneak up to the corner and notice that the street is calm to the south so you take a peak up north. The three men standing guard in the middle of the street all look like hobos with long beards and dressed in hackneyed duds. You can see them quite clear now, they're all armed with daggers and stand around the barrel. Behind the men you see that a high fence has been raised across the street.

Thinking that you've seen enough you decide to go back through the alley. Without you having noticed it a crow has been flying up behind you and scratches your face as soon as you turn around. You give the bird a hard punch so it flies into the wall and break a wing, forcing it to escape by foot croaking in anger and hatred. You lose 0.3 litres of blood from the injuries caused by the crow. But at least no one heard, or at least didn't care about the noises from this so you can keep going on. You open the door in the alley and enter the next building. Turn to **8**.

36

You seem to have entered the main street with buildings that look pretty impressive. The people who used to run things here must've lived in these blocks. You're so used to searching towns so you do this without even thinking about it, the only obvious difference from your earlier experiences is the loneliness here. It doesn't take long before you react to another peculiar detail though: it's such a disorder. Going parallel with this first street is the seventh and crossing them are first the fourteenth and then the eight. Thinking it through you can't find any logic in this arrangement so you decide to just wander around all the streets until you will find the one you're looking for.

The streets aren't entirely straight and it's hard to remember exactly where you've been. Even so, it's not a huge place, and when the sun starts to go down you are positive that you've covered the whole town at least two times – and still no street thirteen. When you estimate that only half an hour of daylight remains you give up and decide to make camp outside town. But obviously you've made a gross misjudgement when you don't even make it out of town before surrounded by darkness. You don't need to worry about not seeing anything though since some of the lampposts lights up. And this in a place that's supposed to have been abandoned for decades. But what really creeps you out is when you see the number thirteen on a sign in the street corner where you're standing. You can swear that sign wasn't there just two minutes ago.

Having only a small piece of orange sky remaining as a memory of the sunset on your left side you face north and realize that this is it: you're at the beginning of your dream. But one thing here isn't like it's supposed to be, you're not alone. In the middle of the street, maybe fifty meters in front of you are three figures standing around a barrel with a fire inside. You don't think they can see you from there but you still feel exposed standing where you are right now. It would feel safer to sneak into one of the buildings and check out the surroundings carefully from there. Maybe it's even possible to move north through the buildings and pass those guards or whatever they are.

On your right side are some smaller shops. One of them has a door standing ajar that you can go in behind. To your left is what looks to have been a larger grocery store. You spot a hole in the wall, big enough for you to crawl in to. The possibility to turn around and leave this eerie and highly uncertain situation doesn't even cross your mind. Your destiny is up ahead and coming this close to it you don't believe you would be allowed to turn back out if you tried.

If you choose to enter the building on the right side, turn to **18**.

If you choose to enter the building on the left side, turn to **47**.

37

The next room used to be the stockroom, but now seems to be used as a place to live. You see a table with chairs and a sofa and things like a deck of cards and glasses on the table. Nothing useful really so you move on. After walking halfway through the room you stop when you see something weird. Thin red beams are crossing the room, the distance between them about one foot, from the left wall to the right, from the floor to the ceiling. You've read about this thing but never seen it in real life. It's an invention from the old ages, called a laser. The beams shouldn't be dangerous themselves, but crossing one of them would probably set off some kind of alarm.

When you look through the beams you see a bed in the far left corner. It's standing in front of a door and someone is lying in it. Only one candle is burning nearby the bed so you can't see very well, but you suppose the person in the bed is sleeping or he would've noticed you by now.

It shouldn't take that many seconds to run up to the bed from here so the simplest idea to take out the sleeping guy would be to do that and don't bother about the alarm. Another idea would be to turn something on fire and throw it through the beams and on the bed so you might get an advantage when you eventually need to confront the person on the other side.

To run through the laser beams and charge the guy in the bed, turn to **45**.
To try and put the bed on fire, turn to **26**.

38

You pour up a handful of water and throw it, making almost every drop hit the man's face. His eyes open up immediately and star at you. "What are you doing here?" he asks loudly. "You're not supposed to be down here!"

You tell the man to calm down and ask him what's going on. "Tonight is the night when it's weak enough," he says. "It's because it's... I forgot the word. But it doesn't matter. Hurry on and defeat it. Or you will end up like me. Or even worse, like her." He closes his eyes and goes back into deep slumber.

That didn't make much sense. And what was that last thing about. Just like that old woman before he mentioned this person "her". You can't help thinking that this might be about Jessica. But standing here won't bring you closer to a solution of the mysteries so you decide to follow the man's advice and hurry on. You leave the room and continue north through the tunnel. Turn to **17**.

39

You take aim at a large window and throw the stone. You're usually good at these kind of activities but this time you feel that it's an unsuccessful throw and you can only watch when the stone goes far too high and hits the eave. The impact makes a wasps' nest fall to the ground. The armour runs over there and starts to swing the sword in the cloud of the mad wasps. Probably the people who programmed the robot didn't think that something like this could happen, but for you it turns out to be perfect. Now you can continue on without even having to worry about being attacked by the armour who will continue with its hopeless struggle for a long time. After walking through two more blocks you're standing in the garden in front of the house you've been searching for so long. Turn to **19**.

40

After walking ten metres something hard and heavy hits you in the back of the head and dizzy you fall down on your knees. When looking back on the campfire the woman is gone. In fact you can't see her in any direction even though there aren't any hiding-places nearby because of the flat terrain. You lose 0.2 litres of blood from the injury but at least you manage to stop the bleeding soon. Next to you is the object that was thrown at you on the ground. It's a pair of tongs, both stained and beaten but still functional, so you put them in your inventory. After resting for a while you decide to continue north. Turn to **11**.

41

After walking a while another tunnel comes from southeast and joins the one you're walking in. Since the other one probably would lead you in the wrong direction you ignore it and continue north. Soon afterwards you reach another wooden door, this one on the right side. Do you want to open it (turn to **25**) or do you ignore it and go on (turn to **17**)?

42

You avoid going too close to the three men lying slaughtered on the street since you don't want to step into the pools of blood surrounding them. It's hard to guess who they were because of scratch marks all over their bodies and faces. This slaughter is probably not the work of humans, it's just too much unnecessary violence but it also feels too organized to be done by unintelligent animals acting

on instinct. Next to one of the corpses is an object lying, it's a medallion in the shape of a star. It's made of copper, about an inch thick. You put it in one of your pockets, then you have to start thinking about how to move on from here.

Behind the macabre scenery is a fence standing in your way, crossing the entire street. It won't be pleasant to climb over the fence, not so much because of its height of about five meters – you can handle that, but on top of it are sharp-looking spears sticking up. The spears are so long and placed so tight that it would probably be impossible to get over to the other side without receiving a couple of cuts. In the middle of the fence is a door, but it's locked and you can't see any way to open it. There's no chain or key hole or anything there. But the hinges look like they've been through a lot, they're deformed and you see the beginning of cracks through them.

If you have a pair of tongs you can cut a hole in the fence, turn to **2**.

If you have an axe or a hammer you can try to break the door's hinges, turn to **48**.

If you have none of these tools you have to climb the fence, turn to **14**.

43

With both hands you try to kill as many of the creeps as you can but some manage to bite your legs and hands both one and two times. When the armour finally walks by you your eyes are tear-filled and you almost throw up feeling ill by the struggle to stay silent. As soon as you're sure it's safe you get up and run into the next alley. There you shake off the bugs still on your body and stomp them to death. You figure that you got about a dozen of bites. Roll the die and add the result to ten to find out the exact number of bites, you'll lose 0.1 litres of blood for every one.

You notice that the armour has stopped some thirty meters down the street. It's standing guard there, but not looking back so it's safe for you to walk up the last meters to the house. Soon you're standing in front of its garden. Turn to **19**.

44

In the centre of the kitchen is a large metal table that you can walk around. Along the walls are the ordinary equipment like ovens, grills and a long sink. You take your time looking around, but this place is cleaned out and the only things that has been left are rusty or broken utensils. You can also catch a glimpse of a steel door in the northern wall on the other side.

When you're standing in the middle of the kitchen a cabinet on the wall starts shaking and something inside it knocks on the doors so hard that the loud noise almost makes you flee the room in panic. But then it calms down as sudden as it started. You take a closer look at the cabinet and see that an object has been placed through the two door's handles so they can't be opened easily. The object is a staff made of silver. One of its ends is a loop and the last third of its other side is carved in an irregular pattern. This might be some kind of key, you think.

The knocks from within the cabinet start again. The noise is not only annoying to listen to, it also worries you that it might attract someone. If you want to take the silver staff you should replace it with something else. And the only thing in here that you trust is your weapon. Or do you dare to just take the staff and leave the cabinet "unlocked"?

If you want to replace the silver staff with your weapon, turn to **28**.

If you want to take the silver staff without replacing it, turn to **12**.

If you don't bother about the staff you leave the kitchen through the steel door in the northern wall, turn to **49**.

45

You don't take any chances with the strange laser. You pick up a card from the table and break one of the beams with it, which cuts the card in two pieces as if the beam had been a razor blade. And indeed an alarm sets off, sounding like a dozen of bells ringing in chorus.

Your reaction to this is to quickly run over to the sofa and hide behind it. You peek toward the bed and see a really fat man rise and grab a weapon. He looks through the room for a while and then push a button on the wall. The bells stop ringing and the laser beams disappear. He starts walking and you get down to not be seen. The man mutters something about "damn flies" and "might as well check the specimens while up" and then pass you without even throwing a glance at the obvious hiding-place you chose. You can kind of sense that this is an evil person and you don't feel for giving him any kind of fair battle. Like an experienced assassin you sneak up behind him and end his life with your sharp weapon.

The weapon that the guy was holding is a morning star which is far too heavy for you to carry around. Instead you walk over to the other side of the room. You find a couple of torches and take one of them and light it, finally getting a much better light than from those candles. Then you just move the bed enough to be able to open the door and leave this room. Turn to 33.

46

The door is unlocked and you enter a stairwell. You prefer to stay on the ground floor and check behind the staircase. A corridor is going through here and you follow it north. There are lots of doors on the corridor's sides and also some more stairwells. You ignore them all.

The corridor ends with a door after what you believe must be at least fifty meters of walking. Behind the door is an alley and when you walk out of it you see that like you had hoped you are now on the other side of the armour and it's standing with the back against you. You now also see that you're bleeding a lot from your left hand. Someone had glued a razor on the last door's handle and you gripped it without noticing it. Roll the die to find out how much blood you lose before you manage to stop the flow, 0.2 litres per eye on the die.

There's only one block left of the street and you walk it down without further incidents. Then you find yourself standing in the garden in front of the house that you've been searching for so long. Turn to 19.

47

After crawling into the store you see that it's surprisingly clean in here, not much dirt and all the junk lies in neat piles. Further into the store are plenty of candles burning so you don't need to waste on your own light source. But this also makes you nervous, someone is probably around, so you take slow steps and listen carefully.

Going almost as far as you can come into the store you hear scratching noises and you hide behind a bunch of boxes. You take a peek at the western wall and see what looks like a long row of cages in different shapes and sizes. The scratches are definitely coming from there. In the northern wall is also a door, which you would like to use to leave the store as soon as possible. But obviously there are creatures in those cages and you don't want them to go crazy and alarm whoever their owner might be. To minimize the risk of this you sneak up to the northern wall and advance toward the door that way instead of passing the cages.

When coming closer you can discern the cages' contents, you see both animals that you recognize like a cat and a raccoon, but also some obscure creatures like some kind of fox with antlers and six legs. You manage to walk up to the door and the creatures that see you doesn't seem to care, giving you a curious look at most.

You're just about to open the door when you see something that's kind of macabre. In one cage, the

largest one, is a human child. You take your chances and go closer and see it's a girl, about ten years old and sleeping. She looks like a pretty normal girl, except for the short hair and you consider the idea of waking her up. She might have information about this place that could be of great value for you, but she might also think you want to do her harm, and what will happen then? A stick is leaning against a cage, you can use it to try and wake the girl.

If you want to wake the girl up, turn to **16**.

If you want to open the door and leave the store, turn to **37**.

48

You hit the hinges and soon they start to bend, getting weaker for every hit. But it's taking its time and you're causing a lot of noise, so maybe this wasn't the best idea after all. A roar is heard from up the street and you stop your work. Out from the gloominess on the other side of the fence is a creature coming in your direction. It's in your size but more beefy and with a grotesque face. Is it wearing a mask or is it a monster? You wonder when the creature is going to stop, but it doesn't and too late you understand that it's planning to ram the door. You try to escape but get hit in the head by the door when the hinges explodes and it flies through the air. Maybe the creature hadn't expected the door to give away so easily because the last thing you see before fainting is how it crashes into the barrel with a scream of anxiety and catches fire.

When you wake up you have a big wound just over your forehead. You've lost 0.5 litres of blood from the injury but at least it has stopped bleeding now. Behind you is the remains of the one causing you this, a skeleton is lying among burnt and still glowing rags. Next to it is a grimy stone. You pick it up and after some polishing you discover it's a diamond. You put it in your pocket and start to consider your options now when you can go through the opening to the other side.

You've come to the conclusion that going inside the buildings isn't safer than staying on the outside so this time you're going to try to avoid going indoors when advancing north. Far away you see a house, if it's the one you're searching for you don't have that long left and if things should get messy out here you might have the chance of making a run for it.

First thing you don't want to walk in the centre of the street, so you must choose which side to go on. The right side has many obstacles, like containers, piles of junk and other things to hide behind. On the other hand is the left side much darker.

If you choose to continue on the right side of the street, turn to **4**.

If you choose to continue on the left side of the street, turn to **21**.

49

When you open the steel door you see that an alley is behind it. The thirteenth street is passing about ten meters to your left. To the right the ally continues a short bit and then ends with a couple of stinking containers standing against the walls. On the opposite of where you came from another door is leading into the next building. You suppose that's where you should go next. But first you might want to sneak up to where the alley begins and take a peak out on the street to see if something interesting is happening and if the three figures still are there. If you want to try this, turn to **35**. If you want to open the door to the next block without checking the street, then turn to **8**.

50

Behind the door is a huge but mostly empty hall and you almost get the feeling that this is the only room in the house. But another door is on the other side so there's at least one more place to explore. In the roof is a chandelier hanging down over the centre of the hall, providing it with light from

hundreds of burning candles. On your left side are four statues in different colors standing in a row and on the right side is a furniture that looks like a throne from some fairytale with princesses and wizards. In the throne is someone sitting, but it's impossible to see who because this person is dressed in a dark coat with a hood, covering everything except his dry and bony hands. You draw your weapon at the sight of this figure but he just signal to you to not come any closer so you stop but stay on your guard.

"I have neither the power or permission to stop you," the man hisses. "And I doubt that I will be able to talk you out of continuing further into the house. But at least listen to what I have to say. Many years ago an incident happened in the mines outside of Black Scythe. In all books regarding this it's written about a horrible accident that killed thousands of people. But that's not the truth.

Some workers made the mistake of exploring to deep into the caves under the mines. These workers discovered something they shouldn't know the existence of, they opened doors that should have remained closed and they pushed buttons that released powers that they couldn't control. So they had to die. But of course others came to look for the first group. And they had to die too. And eventually the only way of keeping the secrets of the mines safe was to end the life of every one that had entered here and then frighten the other inhabitants to leave the town never to return."

"But what does that have to do with me?" you demand. "And Jessica?"

"To keep things running here a lot of energy is needed. And that energy is provided by chosen ones, your sister being one of them. She is not happy here, but not unhappy either. Meeting you would make her miserable though. You have no business at all here and when the one who summoned you is unmasked the punishment will be severe and lengthy. Now, take my advice and turn back." The man rises from the throne and leaves by the entrance door. You do not follow him.

You take a look at the statues in the other side of the hall. They are made of stone, very beautiful but the feelings they express could make anyone depressed. And the paint job is quite sloppy, which is a shame. On the sides are two statues in about your size, on the left is a boy chopping wood, painted in white and on the right is a yellow-painted girl carrying a heavy-looking basket on her back. Between those two are two others, a tall brown-painted statue of a girl treading grapes and next to her a short one portraying a younger boy sitting and performing some kind of handicraft. That one is painted in green. Not much else is in here, except for the door that should lead you deeper into the house. Turn to 51.

PART 2

51

The door seems thick and robust, made of fine wood. It doesn't have any handle so you can't even try to open it. On the door's upper half are four holes, placed in the form of a diamond.

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All holes look like stars with six cusps. Do you have a medallion in the shape of such a star?

If you have a copper star, turn to **90**.

If you have a jade star, turn to **78**.

If you don't have any of these, turn to **65**.

52

You open the bottle like an ordinary one and start pouring its content on the floor. Luckily you didn't try taking a gulp because this is acid that start to corrode the floor and you step away after the key has dropped out. You take it very carefully when you finally pick it up. This key is bent and looks useless, but you still put it in your pocket. Then you go out in the corridor and see that an unmarked door around the first corner has opened. You take a lantern from the wall and enter this door. Behind it is a spiral staircase leading down and you follow it. You couldn't imagine how long it is but after minutes of circling you reach solid ground, probably more than a hundred meters under the house. A new tunnel continues from here and soon you enter a cave with a lot to see and explore. Turn to **95**.

53

As soon as you open the hatch on the birdcage a much bigger one opens with a slam next to you. A black hole is gaping at you and you don't think this was supposed to be a trap since a ladder is attached on one of the hole's sides. Before climbing down you check the medallion, but it's just made of some thin metal and feels hollow so you don't bother about it. You smash the table against the wall and take a suitable piece of wood from it to use as a torch. After climbing the ladder for a bit you see something that glitters in the wall. It looks like the top of a key is sticking out from a hollow between two stones.

If you have a pair of tongs, turn to **92**.

If you don't possess these, turn to **75**.

54

Your foot steps right on the edge of a hole and you stop without losing the balance. You get down and feel around the hole with the hands and find a ladder on one of its sides. After climbing it, which is very eerie in this darkness you reach solid ground again. And now you can actually see things around you. A tunnel continues away from the ladder and light is coming from there. Soon you enter a huge cave with a lot of things to see and explore. Turn to **95**.

55

You put the medallion in the hole. It fits and when you reach the bottom you push, a clicking sound is heard when the star gets caught and a mechanism is triggered. The door unlocks and opens up a little bit. It's heavy and stiff so you must struggle to open it wide but you do enough to see a corridor behind. Far away this corridor turns right, but before that are three pair of doors opposite to each other. Lit lanterns are placed close on the walls, coverings in dark red and trims in gold create an expensive impression. You enter the corridor. Turn to **83**.

56

You cut your wrist and let the blood from it drip into the bowl. It both looks and feels very uncomfortable and you can't help grimacing even if you look away the most time. But at least you get your reward. When the blood reaches the scratch the iron staff falls down next to the altar. You quickly bandage the wrist and make sure the bleeding stops. Then you take the staff and see that one of its side's last third is carved in an irregular pattern. Is it some kind of key? Now you can either look for Jessica (turn to **64**) or go into the opening on the other side (turn to **87**).

57

The tunnel goes straight forward for as long as you can see. You've used up a big portion of your source of light while walking in this labyrinth and to preserve on it you try to walk some parts without light. But this plan works so-so, you're bumping into the walls a lot. Roll the die and multiply the result to 0.1 to find out how many litres of blood you lose from the wounds you receive when scratching your limbs against the uneven walls. Then the tunnel widens into a small cave. Turn to **88**.

58

You put the staff in the hole and push until it can't go any further. Then you take a grip around the loop and turn it a bit clockwise. A wheel is around the hole and marked with the numbers between zero and two. A scratch in the staff shows that it's starting at zero and when reaching position one the staff stops with a click and you hear the sounds of many things happening. Turn to **94**.

59

You put the medallion in the hole. It fits and when you reach the bottom you push, a clicking sound is heard when the star gets caught and a mechanism is triggered. The door unlocks and opens up a little bit. It's heavy and stiff so you must struggle to open it wide but you do enough to see a corridor behind. Far away this corridor turns right, but before that are three pair of doors opposite to each other. Lit lanterns are placed close on the walls, coverings in dark red and trims in gold create an expensive impression. You enter the corridor.

All the doors in here are locked so you continue around the turn. More doors and another turn after ten metres and you decide to not try and open the doors this time. When you are just about to walk by the first one it swings open and something pulls you in to the room behind it before you understand what's happening.

It's pitch black in here. The grip from whoever pulled you in here releases and dry claws start to scratch your arms. You get up, find the door and escape the room. But the corridor is gone now and instead you find yourself standing in a snow-covered field. An ice-cold wind bites your skin and you go through the door's opening once again. This time you come to a stinking swamp that immediately soaks your shoes with muddy water. This door is a portal between billions of worlds and which one you come to is totally random. The chances to find back to your own world is non-existent so let's hope that you soon find one that you like to stay in.

60

You consider to just smash the bottle against the door but instead choose to crack it with your weapon, as carefully as you can. And this probably saved you a lot of suffering, because the liquid inside the bottle is acid. You still get some drops on your hands and lose 0.1 litres of blood from it. While you rub your hands the pool of acid bites through the floor and before you know it the key has fallen through the hole. You hear it land far below and curse your bad luck.

Then you go out in the corridor and see that an unmarked door around the first corner has opened. You take a lantern from the wall and enter this door. Behind it is a spiral staircase leading down and you follow it. You couldn't imagine how long it is but after minutes of circling you reach solid ground, probably more than a hundred meters under the house. A new tunnel continues from here and soon you enter a cave with a lot to see and explore. Turn to 95.

61

You put the medallion in the hole. It fits and when you reach the bottom you push, a clicking sound is heard when the star gets caught and a mechanism is triggered. But the door doesn't open. Instead the chandelier falls down and lands with a crash behind you. You don't get hit directly but the chandelier takes a good chunk of the ceiling with it and you get a piece of that in your head, enough to knock you out.

When you wake up you are being dragged through a cave by two creatures that remind of trolls. Both of them are holding one of your feet in a firm grip and you are too weak and dazed to make any resistance. The unpleasant journey ends in a cell. You expect to be chained against the wall, but there are no fetters in here, just two stones in one wall that has been replaced by logs. When one of the trolls picks up a sledgehammer and a pair of thick spikes you realise with horror that they are going to spike your wrists on to the logs.

The pain is almost insufferable and the more you scream the more your tormentors enjoy it. Then they leave you in your misery. You'll lose 0.1 litres of blood per hour from your new wounds, so with that you can calculate how long you have yet to live.

62

You split the machine in two halves with a sword but also receive an electric shock. You lose 0.5 litres of blood from this. Then, to your great disappointment, a new floating eye comes from a hole in the ceiling and take over where the one you destroyed ended.

This is not going well. The machine will wake up any minute and you can't come up with any idea how to stop it. You decide that your only hope is to take a chance, so you leave the room and run out into the cave. Turn to 84.

63

You light a new match and hold it just under the string. Nothing happens so you take another one and make a switch before the flame dies. You only have about ten matches left and soon you're on the last one. You turn the box itself on fire and prepare to rip off one of your sleeves if that shouldn't be enough either. But it is, the string snaps off when the whole box is on fire except for the corner you're holding in. Not wanting to burn your fingers you drop the box and the fire dies immediately. Now you can open the door, but you can't see a thing. You wait some minutes for your eyes to get used to the darkness before starting to walk slowly. You grip your longest items with your hands and use them to feel where the walls are. But the situation feels hopeless and you need to be lucky to make it out of this mess. Roll the die.

If you rolled an odd number, turn to **80**.
 If you rolled an even number, turn to **54**.

64

After some searching you see the back of a girl that looks like your sister. You run up to her but as soon as you get close she turns around and slap you so hard that you fall to the ground. Some other kids kick you while you lie there and when you finally have managed to get up the girl is gone. You lose 0.2 litres of blood from this beating. If you haven't done so already you can either go over to the altar (turn to **71**) or go into the tunnel on the left side (turn to **87**).

65

Whatever you try you can't open the door so eventually you go back to the town and look for something that might fit into the door's holes. After some time of searching without result you see how the street suddenly fills with robots and monsters, guarding every inch of the surroundings around the house. You are trapped inside a flat. If you stay here too long you'll die from thirst. If you instead go back out on the streets you'll immediately be captured and thrown into a damp cell where the bats will drink up the rest of your blood when you can't held back the sleep any longer. The choice is yours.

66

It's easy to break the cage, all you need to do is to take a grip around its top and bend it until the thin bars snap off. The medallion is light and feels hollow when you lift it. If the first one was real, then this is a fake, so you just leave it there. When you turn around to search the room you see a hole in the wall. Something you did has triggered a hidden passage to open without you noticing it. You smash the table against the wall and take a suitable piece of wood from it to use as a torch. Then you crawl into the opening.

There's lots of dust and crap in here mixed with dead insects and you're happy when the tunnel gets wider and higher so you can stand up. Soon afterwards the corridor starts to slope and you need to go on carefully not to lose control. After a bit you come to some kind of platform where you can rest. Another slope continues down in the direction you came from. Then it continues like this for ten times before you finally reach flat ground again. You must be pretty far under the house now. A new tunnel continues from here and soon you enter a cave with a lot to see and explore. Turn to **95**.

67

You put the medallion in the hole. It fits and when you reach the bottom you push, a clicking sound is heard when the star gets caught and a mechanism is triggered. The door unlocks and opens up a little bit. It's heavy and stiff so you must struggle to open it wide but you do enough to see a corridor behind. Far away this corridor turns right, but before that are three pair of doors opposite to each other. Lit lanterns are placed close on the walls, coverings in dark red and trims in gold create an expensive impression. You enter the corridor.

All the doors in here are locked so you continue around the turn. More doors and another turn after ten metres and you decide to not try and open the doors this time. When you are just about to walk by the last one it swings open and something pulls you in to the room behind it before you understand what's happening.

A ghost has lived in here for a long time and waited for someone with an innocent mind and a young and healthy body to come here so it can make a switch and come back to the real world. Minutes later your body walks out from the room but your soul is left behind to haunt in there for an eternity.

68

You put the medallion in the hole. It fits and when you reach the bottom you push, a clicking sound is heard when the star gets caught and a mechanism is triggered. The door unlocks and opens up a little bit. It's heavy and stiff so you must struggle to open it wide but you do enough to see a corridor behind. Far away this corridor turns right, but before that are three pair of doors opposite to each other. Lit lanterns are placed close on the walls, coverings in dark red and trims in gold create an expensive impression. You enter the corridor. Turn to **83**.

69

You put the staff in the hole and push until it can't go any further. Then you take a grip around the loop and turn it a bit clockwise. A wheel is around the hole and marked with the numbers between zero and two. A scratch in the staff shows that it's starting at zero and when reaching position one the staff stops with a click. The plate sends out a flash that hits you. You scream in pain when it burns through your tunic and gives you a nasty wound. You lose 1.0 litre of blood from this. You also see that a small part of the plate has slid away and revealed a keyhole. If you have a bent key, turn to **79**. If you don't have it, turn to **91**.

70

You put the lighter under the string and let the flame dance around it. A minute goes without anything happening and you start to feel really worried that the gas will run out. It can't be much left. After another two minutes the string finally snaps off and you can open the door. Behind it is a new tunnel but it doesn't take long before it ends with a hole. On the hole's side is a ladder leading down and with that you can avoid taking a fall that would have been dangerously long. A new tunnel continues from here and this one ends with a place where there's plenty of torches burning. Soon you enter a cave with a lot to see and explore. Turn to **95**.

71

The altar is of stone and looks quite modest. On it is a glass bowl in which someone has carved a line around the entire inside. On the wall behind the altar hangs a sign with a message written on it:

ONE LITRE OF YOUR BLOOD
AND THE STAFF IS YOURS

That's weird, you think and look around. You get the idea to look up and see that a staff is actually hanging there. It looks to be made of iron and one of its sides consists of a loop which hangs in a chain that's drilled into the ceiling of the cave. If you have more than one litre of blood left you can empty it into the bowl (turn to **56**). If you don't have so much blood or don't want to sacrifice it you can either look for Jessica (turn to **64**) or enter the opening on the other side (turn to **87**).

72

You open the door and see the room from your nightmares, with its red walls, two chairs and the table between them. Jessica is sitting in one of the chairs and stares at you. She looks like a wreck compared to the Jessica in your memories, with a rugged face and scars all over her bony arms. If you didn't know better you would think she was in her thirties. Nevertheless you just want to run in there and embrace her before leaving this dreadful town together. But here and tonight it's impossible to be certain about anything so you enter the room slowly and expect anything. Jessica orders you to sit in

the other chair and listen to her. "What's going on, Jessica?" you ask. "I've been searching for you for so long."

Jessica ignores you and avoids eye contact, just staring forward and ogling at you sometimes. "I don't have much time," she says. "You shouldn't have come here, but I suppose it's not your fault you did. Anyway, did you know our father's parents lived around here fifty years ago? They were among a group of people who owned the mines outside town. Everything seemed fine, the mines had rich assets and provided many jobs for the townspeople. But on the inside things weren't so ideal, the best assets were to be found deep down in the primary rock and the deeper they drilled and blasted, the more risky and dangerous it got. The owners knew about this, but greed made them take chances until the unavoidable finally happened and a huge part of the mines collapsed. Thousands of workers died in what got known as an accident. Since that day the ghosts of the miners has been trapped down below us, unable to get a peaceful rest until the world finds out the truth about their deaths. But that won't happen, everything got covered up by the owners and there's no evidences whatsoever. I've been chosen to pay the debt on behalf of our grandparents' parts in this dark chapter of our family's history. I'll live my life for all the poor souls that wander around in the mines."

You shake your head. "This is so wrong, Jessica. Neither our father or his parents have been in this part of the world. I've heard different stories about this accident and I don't know or care which of them is true. If anyone. But someone has tricked you into coming here and sacrificing everything you have. For what? Being a slave? I've missed you so much and I would continue to the end of the world to bring you back home. So please come with me now."

"I'm sorry you feel so," Jessica says and keeps staring into the wall. "You must leave now. Don't try to come after me." An almost transparent cloud surrounds your sister and make her vanish. Moments later she is gone. You cover your face in your palms and sigh. This place is getting more and more confusing for every new place you're coming to. And the hunt for the real Jessica is tearing on your mind and nerves.

First now you see that an object is standing on the table. It's a little birdcage made of a thin yellow alloy. On its bottom is a star lying, it looks like the one you used to open the door with before but this one looks to be made of silver. There's a little hatch on the side of the cage, you're dubious about if the hole is big enough to fit the medallion, but can try to open it, turn to **53**. If you just want to break the cage and get the medallion that way, turn to **66**. Or you can just ignore it and search the room instead, turn to **82**.

73

In the forests you find a cottage that you borrow for a few weeks. Jessica heals physical, getting back meat on her bones as well as color on the pale skin. But mentally she is still in her own world where everything that's matter to her is to serve ghosts that doesn't exist. When she grows strong enough she takes every chance of trying to go back to the mines and eventually you have to tie her in her bed whenever you need to sleep or go hunting.

When you try to bring Jessica home everything gets even worse. She gets wilder and more desperate for every mile you travel west and it soon gets unbearable. Your only choice is to settle down just outside Black Scythe where she's quite calm. But whatever you try you can't find a way to penetrate through the shield that block your sister's mind off from the real world and make her understand the truth about what she's been through. Maybe you get another chance to outsmart the machine in the mines in another thirty nine years...

74

You put the medallion in the hole. It fits and when you reach the bottom you push, a clicking sound is heard when the star gets caught and a mechanism is triggered. But the door doesn't open, instead an alarm starts ringing. You expect guards to come running in here any second so desperately you try to

pull out the medallion to try it in another hole before you give up and look around for some place to hide. But no one comes. The alarm gets louder and louder for every second and soon it starts to get painful in your ears and head. The door you came from has been locked so you're trapped in here with no place to escape to. Covering the ears doesn't help for long and when you can't stand this any longer you fall to the floor and roll over it until you faint, never to wake up.

75

The key is sitting tight and there's no chance you can pull it out with just your fingers or anything else you have with you. Instead you continue to climb down. It's much longer than you had expected and when you reach the bottom you're exhausted and some of your muscles hurt. Figure you'd be at least a hundred meters under the house now. A new tunnel continues from here and soon you enter a cave with a lot to see and explore. Turn to 95.

76

After a short bit you see the source of the heat. A pile of lava is lying and boiling in a hole up ahead. You can't go closer or you'll get burnt so it's nothing else than to turn back. But without you having noticed it lava has started to pour out from the walls behind you and has already created a pool that groves bigger for every second. You start to sprint, trying to build up enough speed to jump over the lava. You make it, but land hard and cut a wound along your arm. You lose 0.5 litres of blood and didn't get anything for it, just the feeling of having lost important time. Turn to 57.

77

You put the staff in the hole and push until it can't go any further. Then you take a grip around the loop and turn it clockwise. A wheel is around the hole and marked with the numbers between zero and two. A scratch in the staff shows that it's starting at zero and when reaching position one the staff stops with a click. The plate sends out a flash that hits you. You scream in pain when it burns through your tunic and gives you a nasty wound. You lose 0.5 litres of blood from this. You also hear the sounds of many other things happening. Turn to 94.

78

The medallion looks like it would fit perfectly in any of the holes. But in which one do you place it?

To place the medallion in the upper hole, turn to 89. (1-2)

To place the medallion in the left hole, turn to 59. (3-4)

To place the medallion in the right hole, turn to 86. (5)

To place the medallion in the lower hole, turn to 68. (6)

79

You push the bent key into the keyhole and are surprised over how well it fits. After turning it you hear the sounds of many things happening. Turn to 94.

80

When you take a step there's suddenly no ground there to carry your foot. You have failed to discover a hole in the tunnel and fall down it with a scream that silences when you break your neck several meters down.

81

With the diamond it's easy to make ugly marks in this material and soon some of the symbols have been turned unrecognisable by you. As soon as the eye machine comes in front of one of your deformed symbols it just stops there and falls to the floor like it died in the air.

"Good," a familiar voice speaks up behind you. The man has returned and now he looks really satisfied. "Now, don't you stay here and celebrate this too long. The pile of firewood has already ran out so now the slaves will start with the emergency plan. I think I'll go out in the cave and enjoy the show."

You have no idea what the man meant by the things he said but you fear the worst. Turn to **96**.

82

You walk through this room that you've worried so much about entering. But your mind isn't on the old nightmares now. When you go near a corner something tickles your cheek and you grab it. A thin string is hanging down from the ceiling. You pull it slowly to open up a hatch above you. In the same moment a noise is heard from the corridor outside. This noise gets all your attention for a second so you don't see that an object rolls out from the hole in the ceiling and hit your head. You lose 0.2 litres of blood from this. The item that caused you this is a wine bottle that's filled up and sealed. You're just about to put the bottle on the floor when you spot something else than liquid inside it, a key is lying at the bottom. You sure would like to get hold on that one.

If you have a corkscrew, turn to **52**.

If you don't have it, turn to **60**.

83

All of the doors here are locked so you continue on around the turn, only to find new doors and another turn after about ten metres. This time you decide to walk straight around the corner just to be met of the same sight again. You soon understand that this isn't a maze, it's rather a long corridor with bends. You notice that names are written on most of the doors, some of them meaning nothing to you while you recognize others.

You lose track of time and of how long you've been walking. Is it hundreds of meters? Or thousands? At one time you stop and ask yourself if maybe you're just running around in circles. But that can't be it. The further you walk the more freaky you think this gets. You start to hear whispers around you and imagine deathtraps or demons to be waiting for you after every turn. And you can't go back either, being convinced that someone would be standing behind you if you were to turn around. Your heart is pounding harder and your legs are getting shakier and when you don't think you can make it any longer you step around one last turn, which turns out to actually be the last one.

The corridor you are in now is wider than the previous ones and ends with two doors. On the left one you read the name "Jessica". On the right one you read your own name. The whispers fade away and you soon feel better. But you still have a bad feeling about the decision that you now must make.

If you want to open the door marked with your sister's name, turn to **72**.

If you want to open the door marked with your own name, turn to **93**.

84

You see Jessica in the chaos on the other side of the cave. Hoping that she will forgive you later you just knock her out with a punch. You expect the other kids to attack you but something else is drawing their attention and they're all walking toward the centre of the cave. You don't care what that might be

when you lift your sister's light and emaciated body in your arms and run into the tunnel next to the altar while praying that it will take you out from the mines.

You thought that you would be discovered several times when you heard voices nearby on your escape but somehow you managed to avoid being discovered every time and after an hour or so you stumble out in the desert. It's sunrise and easy to navigate to the wilderness in the west, where you can find fresh water and hunt for food. Turn to **73**.

85

A sign is lying in the sand, looking to have blown down recently. The words "The Mines" are written on it with almost faded paint. You remember the man in the robe talking about the mines before. Finding them might be your last slim chance of finding the real Jessica. You follow the old road even if it feels impossible to see its edges in the moonlight. When everything around you is desert you think you see a weak light up ahead and run toward it, or rather after it since this light seems to keep the same distance to you all the time. When you've gotten to tired to keep running you stop to breathe, the sand under your feet disappear like being in a funnel and you're too exhausted to escape so you have no choice but following it.

You land in a cave on a pile of sand. When you get up you see several tunnels leading away from here in different directions. The light appears again, winking in front of one tunnel and without having a better suggestion you choose that one to enter. Every time the tunnel splits the light returns to tell which way it wants you to go and you obey, hoping this is not another trick because you doubt that you would have any success if trying to find the way out of this labyrinth on your own.

Then you finally come to a junction where the light doesn't appear. You must be deep into the mountain now, feeling how the air is really chilly and seeing how a thin layer of water covers the blue rock walls. And also the ground has gotten harder with less sand and more stones sticking up and making your feet hurt. From the tunnel leading to the left is heat coming and going in there is almost like hitting a wall. If continuing straight in this junction you will soon feel the usual cold again.

If you want to continue straight forward, turn to **57**. (1-3)

If you want to turn left, turn to **76**. (4-6)

86

You put the medallion in the hole. It fits and when you reach the bottom you push, a clicking sound is heard when the star gets caught and a mechanism is triggered. But the door doesn't open. Instead a trap releases and the room is filled with hundreds of darts being shot in every direction. Some of them pierce and scratch you but one would've been enough because they are all poisoned. After rolling on the floor and twisted your body from the cramps and illness you die.

87

After only a small bit the tunnel ends with a staircase that leads you up to a room. On one side are the windows and from here you can see most of what's going on in the cave. On the opposite wall is a strange thing standing, you've never seen anything like it before. It must be very old, you think while looking at the grey machine that covers the entire wall. It's full of buttons, levers and keyholes, some of them with the keys in place, others empty. Most of these are marked with words that you don't understand. In the centre of the machine is a black square, you remember these used to be called screens or monitors, and on it is a text message in green letters:

RESTARTING SYSTEMS
97% COMPLETED
TIME LEFT: 11 MINUTES

"This is Jessika. Isn't she a beauty?" You turn around and see the man that was sitting in the throne in the house. Now he has taken off the hood and reveals a half-rotten head and with a wide grin he continues. "Maybe it's about time I introduce myself too."

"Don't bother," you answer. "I'm trying to think here."

"Yes, a little stressed are we? But don't worry, I explain this to you. Jessika was once a mighty machine that was used in wars. With her super-human abilities she helped the tribes living around here to defend themselves against attackers and also to conquer new areas. But since nothing lasts forever they too got extinguished eventually and the fire that kept Jessika alive died out when no one came back here. So she slept for thousands of years. Until that day when the workers came here and lit the fire again. I was one of them, the only one still alive.

This time Jessika had decided not to let anything stop her. She managed to convince us that she was a goddess and made us keep the fire alive. She created monsters and built robots to protect her and when the workers became worn-out she killed them and scared every single human out of town. She only kept me as her loyal servant. Why you wonder? Because she didn't trust the monsters or the robots to keep supporting the fire with fuel. No, she wants brainwashed slaves that are easy to control for this important task. So I travelled around the world and looked for weak and lonely children and manipulated them to come here and serve Jessika. I guess you understand that's what happened to your sister."

You sigh, annoyed by the man's voice. "You're not exactly easy to understand here. Are you trying to tell me that if I extinguish the fire in the cauldron, this machine will turn into sleep and everything will be fine?"

"Yes, that's it. But you can't just go out in the cave and do it. The slaves are programmed to stop anyone who tries to do something like that. They would tear you into pieces. No, you need to find another way. Stop looking at the buttons and search for their opposite instead." You think that the man is finally about to leave, but instead he continues his speech. "Normally all visitors gets killed as soon as they enter Black Scythe or the entrance of the mines. But as you've been told this is not a normal night. One time every thirty nine years Jessika must restart all her systems and that is an extremely energy-consuming process that put her to her limits. Right now almost all the monsters are in rooms around this cave using their brawns to push wheels that support Jessika with extra energy. And almost all robots are shut down. So as you understand it's only during these hours that Jessika is vulnerable. But there's nothing she can do about it other than taking a chance and try to do the restart as fast as she can. Don't you think it's a funny coincidence that you got here this night of all the nights?"

"Ever since I entered this town I haven't seen anything I would call funny," is your bitter answer. Then you see it. On the wall next to the machine is a metal plate with a hole in it. It doesn't seem to be connected to the machine. You walk up to it and hear the man laugh behind you.

"I thought you would never find it. But I can't help you more, even though Jessika is asleep during the restart she has her ways of sensing if I go too far in my betrayal. You on the other hand are the only one around that can work freely.

You know, I took a huge risk to entice you here. Your sister wasn't the best candidate to become a slave and if I hadn't managed to manipulate her Jessika would've disposed of me. But I thought you were the perfect one for this mission so I took the risk. And making sure you entered the town in the exact right moment was even riskier. But here you are now. Don't disappoint me."

And after that the man finally disappears. At least for now. It's irritating that you obviously have done and still are doing everything that he has planned and wants you to do. But what can you do? Saving Jessika is the only thing that matters. You take a closer look at the hole in the plate. Is it some kind of keyhole? If you have a staff you can try to stick it in the hole. If you have more than one, choose which of them you want to try.

If you have a gold staff, turn to 58.

If you have a silver staff, turn to 77.

If you have an iron staff, turn to **69**.

If you don't have any staff, turn to **91**.

88

In the other end of the cave something is different, a welcomed sight after the monotonous last part of your journey. A rusty double door is standing there and blocks you from continuing forward. Each one of the door's halves has a knob and between them is a thick and black string tied. Above it is a message written:

ONLY FIRE WILL BREAK THIS ONE

You trust this message and don't even try to cut or hit the string with your weapon.

If you carry a box of matches, turn to **63**.

If you carry a lighter, turn to **70**.

89

You put the medallion in the hole. It fits and when you reach the bottom you push, a clicking sound is heard when the star gets caught and a mechanism is triggered. A trapdoor opens under your feet. You fall ten meters and break both your legs when landing hard in the middle of a chamber. Around you are the remains of many other victims of this trap as well. The chamber is surrounded by three stone walls and one that's made of a transparent material. On the other side of this wall are children and youths walking by in irregular intervals and even though you haven't seen her in years you recognize Jessica among them. But neither she or anyone else seem to even know about the chamber, just walking by without even leering at it. The transparent wall is thick and unbreakable. You can see small marks in it after attempts to break it from the earlier visitors. Like them you can only stay in here and wait for the death to free you from your torments.

90

The medallion looks like it would fit perfectly in any of the holes. But in which one do you place it?

To place the medallion in the upper hole, turn to **55**. (1-2)

To place the medallion in the left hole, turn to **61**. (3-4)

To place the medallion in the right hole, turn to **74**. (5)

To place the medallion in the lower hole, turn to **67**. (6)

91

You can't find anything to do in here that would change anything. You try to push the buttons randomly but nothing happens. When the timer on the screen reaches zero it only takes a few seconds for Jessika to wake up. She immediately understands who you are and what a great threat to her you might be, so she simply activates a security machine gun that hangs in the ceiling and orders it to shoot you to death.

92

You need to tussle with it as well as being careful to not fall down, but eventually you pull out the key. It's a little bent, you don't know if this happened when you worked it or if was like this before.

Even though it looks useless you still put it in your pocket. You continue to climb down. It's much longer than you had expected and when you reach the bottom you're exhausted and some of your muscles hurt. Figure you'd be at least a hundred meters under the house now. A new tunnel continues from here and soon you enter a cave with a lot to see and explore. Turn to **95**.

93

You open the door and see the room of your nightmares with its red walls and two chairs with a table between. You always thought you would be terrified when this moment finally occurred, but you're not. Your sister is sitting in one of the chairs. She doesn't seem to have noticed you and without hesitation you run in there and shake her shoulders gently trying to make contact. But she's almost dozed off and squint at you without understanding what's going on, less recognizing you.

You help Jessica to stand up, put her arm around your shoulder and together you leave the room. One step at the time you lead her through the corridor for what feels like hours. Now and then you try to speak to her without getting any answer. When you finally get out from the house you ignore the thirteenth street and head straight to the east. Outside a house in the residential area you find a wheelbarrow, which is perfect timing since helping your sister all the way here has drained your powers almost to their limit. You put Jessica down in the tray and now, under the direct shine from a lamppost, you see how worn-out she is with a rugged face and scars all over her limbs, making her look even older than you. But you don't care about that now. The first priority is to get out of the town, then you'll have all the time you need to nurse and restore your sister's health.

This side of town feels almost dead and it doesn't take you long to find a road that leads straight to the edge of Black Scythe where the road turns into desert. And it is when you pass this boarder that Jessica vanishes like she had never been in the wheelbarrow. You look around screaming her name but can't see a trace after her. You fall down on your knees and curse yourself for being tricked so easily. When you turn back toward the town its streets have been filled with robots and monsters guarding everywhere. There's no way you can just walk back to the house with all these around. Do you have to give up? Turn to **85**.

94

The first you see is a part of the wall next to the plate slide away and reveal a hidden room behind this wall. Before entering you walk over to the windows and watch out. All the openings in the cave are now blocked by heavy-looking gratings, except for the big one next to the altar. The kids still inside the big cave, and there are plenty of them, now start to pick up firewood from the pile to throw in the cauldron. You also take a peak down the staircase and see that the opening that's leading out from here is still unblocked, a sight that make you revealed.

When you pass the screen you see that it's only four minutes left until the restart is completed so you hurry into the hidden room. The first thing you see in there is that one of the walls is made of a bright material in which weird symbols has been carved. In front of this wall is a small machine floating back and forth. It looks like an eye that's reading the symbols. You try to scratch the wall with a sword, but it leaves no marks at all. This must be made of a very hard material.

If you have a diamond and want to scratch the weird symbols with it, turn to **81**.

If not the only thing you can think of is to attack the floating eye, turn to **62**.

95

In the centre of this cave is a gigantic cauldron buried into the ground so its top forms a half metre high border. A fire is burning inside it and you can see the wild flames sometimes reach a bit over its top. There are lots of tunnels leading away from the hall in all directions and from some of them are

children and young adults coming. They are all carrying things like wood and coal that they throw in the cauldron before going back the way they came from. Two guards are standing next to the cauldron and watch everything carefully. Of all the openings you see one on the right side that's bigger than the other ones. Next to it is an altar standing. On the opposite side of the cave is another tunnel that draws your attention, everyone seem to avoid going close to it. Above it you see a couple of windows, so there should be a room there.

When you try to figure out where to go next, something happens. A boy collapses on the ground. The two guards go over there and drag his body to an area where many kids are lying. They wake another boy and force him to take over the work of the first one. When the guards are on the way back to their posts they see you and without hesitation they draw their swords. You take out your weapon as well and the one who reaches you first has no chance, you only need to hit him once for him to disappear in a cloud of dust. But the second guard is there before you can prepare another attack so you must parry his swing. To your surprise the sword just chops off your weapon as if it was made of clay. And it also cuts you. You lose 0.5 litres of blood. Before the guard can make another attack you punch him in the face and he vanishes like the first one. The guard's swords are still lying on the ground. So light and sharp. You equip both scabbards and put the swords in them.

If you want to go check out the altar, turn to **71**. (1-2)

If you want to look for Jessica among the kids, turn to **64**. (3-4)

If you want to go into the mysterious opening to the left, turn to **87**. (5-6)

96

You go back to the room before where the screen is now blinking in red. You look out through the windows, horrified to see how all the kids have gathered around the cauldron and throw themselves in it one after one. Jessica is also there, luckily among the last ones in the line but you must still hurry. Before running out in the cave you sacrifice a second to cut off the staff so the man can't pull anything on you like releasing the monsters.

You run out in the huge cave and try to bring Jessica away from the crowd out there, but she makes wild resistance screaming and hitting you like possessed. Before you get the control over the situation some of the other kids push you to the ground. More and more of them has discovered you and soon you are surrounded. You draw both swords and with mighty swings you cut off the legs of eight of them. These poor bastards loses interest in you and start to drag their bodies toward the cauldron where they will crawl over the border and fall into the fire. But all the others are now after you and they try to surround you again. You behead the ones standing closest and look around for Jessica. You find her quite close but behind another teenage girl that you split in two pieces.

You push Jessica in the direction away from the cauldron and the other kids to give yourself extra time to deal with this. There are still dozens of kids and they all focus on you now. They are slow and if it hadn't been for Jessica's resistance to the idea you could easily have been running away from them. But since that's not happening you can't see any other way to save your sister than taking this the whole way, even though it feels wrong in all ways. So the massacre in Black Scythe is being prosecuted. Heads and limbs are flying, blood is sprinkling the ground and screams of pain and fear fills the cave. And eventually only you and Jessica are still standing, covered in blood and intestines.

Jessica is still trapped in her own fantasy world, set up by that horrible man, and tries to go to the cauldron to sacrifice herself. But you notice a slight change. Now when the fire no longer is constantly fed with fuel she seems a little calmer and her resistance isn't enough to stop you from leading her into the big tunnel.

In the same moment that the fire dies out you and Jessica stumble out in the desert where a beautiful sunrise meets you. Your sister is now back to her old self, thanking and hugging you until the years of hard work and lack of nourishment takes its toll and she falls into a long sleep. You don't mind carrying her light body through the desert. With the sun in your back it's easy to navigate to the

wilderness in the west.

In the forests you find a cottage that you borrow for a few weeks. It's close to fresh water and you can hunt and fish to provide Jessica with healthy food. She gets her shape and color back and soon you can leave this doomed corner of the world and head back home.

THE END

THANK YOU FOR PLAYING

TURN TO 97

EPILOGUE

Gregory looks at the last flame and puts on his widest grin when it finally dies. He's going to fill the cauldron with concrete so Jessika can never be awakened again. Then nothing will stop him from being the ruler of the mines. Almost everything in his plan went as he had hoped. The only miscalculation was that one slave and her rescuer slipped away, but he doesn't worry about that. He'll eventually track them down and silence them for good.

He then looks with pleasure at the gratings that block almost every tunnel. The monsters will find out that they are trapped any minute now, but even though they are strong they won't have a chance to move or break through the thick and heavy iron. When driven mad by hunger and thirst the monsters will start to kill and eat each other until only the strongest one's left to die in its loneliness. Too bad that the slaves trapped behind the other gratings will have to meet the same fate, but he can easily find new ones to serve and worship him the same way he did when he was a servant himself.

Now, only one small detail remains. He must go up into Jessika's room and turn the staff to position two before the first reactor overheats. It has been working hard the last hours and it's time to let the second reactor take over for a while.

He goes up the staircase and smiles when he for the first time ever sees the screen being totally black, the sign of Jessika's defeat and helplessness. Then his smile turns into an expression of shock and despair when he discovers the staff's upper half on the floor. He runs over to the plate and tries to turn the part of the staff that's still there but only a small bit sticks up over the hole's edge so this only makes him getting deep cuts in his fingers. He calls out every curse he knows, but this doesn't help of course.

The walls start to shake and he takes the only chance he has left, even though he knows it's hopeless, and tries to escape through the mines. Only some minutes later, far below the desert where the two persons who was going to make him a ruler are standing, Gregory gets crushed under a rock when the Black Scythe Mines collapse.