
A KNIGHT'S TRIAL

By Kieran Coghlan

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Welcome to Camelot!

You are a young squire determined to become one of the legendary King Arthur's even more legendary Knights of the Round Table. But first you must learn the rules of the game if you are ever to succeed in your trail and slay the foul dragon Patemilias!

How to Read this Book

A cursory glance through the book will reveal that reading it in order makes no sense. The book is divided into numbered sections. You should follow instructions in the text as to which sections to turn to.

Your Adventure Sheet

On page 3 you will find your Adventure Sheet. Use this to record your **Life Points**, **Combat Skill** and **Possessions**.

Life Points

Your **Life Points** are a measure of how healthy you are. You start your adventure with 20 **Life Points**. You may lose or gain **Life Points** throughout the course of your adventure, but you may never have more than your starting total. If your **Life Points** ever reach 0 or below, you are dead and must turn to section 26.

Combat Skill

Your **Combat Skill** is a number between 2 and 5, you will find out what exactly it is soon after your Adventure begins. The higher it is, the better a warrior you are. Although your **Combat Skill** may change throughout the adventure, it may never exceed 5 or go lower than 1.

Combat

At times you may find yourself having to do battle against an enemy. You will be informed of the enemy's **Combat Skill** and **Life Points**. Combat is conducted as follows:

1. You strike first unless the text says otherwise.
2. If you are fighting more than one enemy you must select which opponent you are targeting.
3. Roll one die. If you roll equal to or less than your **Combat Skill** you have hit your opponent! The number you rolled is subtracted from the target's **Life Points**. If you roll higher than your **Combat Skill** you have missed.
4. Any opponent's with 0 **Life Points** or less are now dead and can take no further role in the battle. If there are no opponents left alive, you have won the battle.
5. Any surviving opponents now have an opportunity to strike back. For each opponent, roll a die and compare it with their **Combat Skill**. If they roll equal to or less than their **Combat Skill** they have struck you. Subtract the number rolled from your **Life Points**. Otherwise they have missed.
6. Providing you still have **Life Points** remaining, you must now fight back. Return to step 2 and continue fighting into either you or all opponents are dead.

Possessions

You must keep a record of all items you find on your adventures on your Possession List on your adventure sheet. You start the adventure with a sword and leather armour.

Now Begin!

Got all that? Good. Now begin your adventure by reading the section marked **Background** before turning to section 1.

ADVENTURE SHEET

COMBAT SKILL

LIFE POINTS

POSSESSIONS

BACKGROUND

Camelot! That shining city at the pinnacle of civilization, its many-turreted castle the seat of King Arthur, the greatest ruler that Britain has ever known. With the assistance of the wise wizard Merlin and the dashing Knights of the Round Table, Arthur has ushered in a golden age where all are looked after and causes to complain are few. And now, you have been selected by the wizard himself to undergo a trial; a trial that will decide if you are worthy to join the ranks of the legendary knights! The knights themselves have trained you rigorously and now one of them rides up to your house on his magnificent white steed. He pulls back his visor revealing the handsome smile of Lancelot, most brilliant of all King Arthur's knights.

'Are you ready?' he asks kindly.

'Certainly,' you answer with a smile.

Lancelot extends a gauntleted hand, helping you up onto the saddle behind him. He then wheels his mount around and races down the cobbled streets towards the castle, your fellow townspeople cheering you on and wishing you luck as you pass. The horse's hooves reverberate along the wood of the drawbridge, the ever-alert sentries raising the portcullis to let the two of you pass through the outer gate and into the courtyard. As you both dismount, you spy another knight sauntering up to you, his armour sparkling in the noonday sun. It is the black-bearded Sir Bedivere who approaches, a wooden sword held in each hand. He tosses one of these weapons to you and you catch it easily by the hilt. Bedivere turns to the puzzled Lancelot.

'I am to give our candidate here one last assessment before he begins the trial,' Bedivere responds to Lancelot's unasked question.

The other knight nods and turns to you, reassurance beaming from his face. 'You'll be fine. Just remember all that I have taught you.'

You nod and ready yourself as Bedivere takes a defensive stance across the way, wooden sword gripped tightly in both mailed hands.

'Alright,' he says. 'Let's see what you're made of.'

Now turn to **1**.

1

A crowd gathers round the two of you as you square off against one another. You think you even spy King Arthur himself watching from a high keep window. You have no time to double-check however as Bedivere moves forward, swinging his sword in a slow, heavy arc from the right, aiming directly at your neck. Will you attempt to parry this blow (turn to 75) or will you try to duck under it by turning to 18?

2

The door does not budge as you turn the handle. At first you think it might be locked, but a firm bump with your shoulder brings it swinging open into a small room, dust caking the crates arranged haphazardly all about. A strange marking is on each of the crates - a yellow triangle with a symbol you do not recognise in its centre. An odd crackling buzz can be heard from the corner of the room, its source obscured by crates.

'I think we should head back,' says Lancelot. 'There's nothing for you here.'

If you agree with Lancelot, you return to the cavern of gold from where you can take the north door (turn to 23) or the other eastern door (turn to 69). If you wish to shift the crates about in order to see what is causing the crackling noise however, turn to 61.

3

You push open the door and step forward - straight into a pit where you land with a bone-crunching crash on the hard bottom (lose 8 **Life Points**). If you still live, Lancelot lies across the ground and hauls you up out of the pit which is thankfully rough-sided and only about seven foot deep. Still shaken by the experience, you decide to try the northern door instead, despite the horrible gargoyle above it. Turn to 96.

4

You find yourself facing a short tunnel that seems to end in bare rock. Yet as you look closer, you see that there is a section of the wall not quite flush with the rest of it; it must be a secret door. Beckoning to Lancelot, you move closer and place a hand upon the door and push. It moves slightly, but seems to be jammed on something. The squeak it makes as you push against it sends a chill of some half-forgotten memory icing down your spine and your strength starts to dissipate. Will you ask Lancelot to help you shove the door open (turn to 81)? Or will you continue to try and shift it on your own (turn to 47)? If you would rather just forget all about trying to open the door and search for another way out of the maze, turn to 94.

5

You emerge into a large cavern. The ceiling is covered in stalactites, but what strikes your attention is the litter of bones all across the floor. Stooping over to inspect a near-full skeleton propped against a stalagmite, you see that it is the bones of a child. An identical skeleton sits not far away. In fact all these bones are that of children. Your musings on this are interrupted by a horrible chittering noise, mixed with the crunch of bones. Rounding a stone pillar comes a monstrosity large centipede, covered in armour-like plates, its hundred legs cracking skulls and small bones as it weaves its way towards you, pincers clanking. Lancelot bravely steps in the creature's way, lunging at it with his sword. The centipede dodges from his blow with a twist of its segmented body and then seizes him round the waist with its pincers. With a high-pitched whine, it flings him away, his armoured body crashing into a nearby stalagmite. The nuisance dealt with, it returns to its original target: you!

GIANT CENTIPEDE Combat Skill:3 Life Points:12

If you slay this chitinous horror, turn to 30.

6

The flames rush over you, but you feel no pain, neither your skin nor armour consumed in the inferno. However, the ruby amulet seems to glow even brighter, bathing the whole cavern in its crimson glow. Patemilias gives a howl of frustration. And then he begins to change. His wings shrink, absorbed into his back. Blood-red scales soften and take on a lighter hue. His tail shrinks back in on itself. Massive taloned legs shorten and bend round to look man-like. His ridged spine straightens and he stands upright on two legs, taloned arms at his side, his face looking almost human, but still with a sharp toothed mouth and ridges jutting from his brow. A forked tongue flashes out between crusted lips. A veritable demon stands before you.

With speed you wouldn't have thought it capable of, the demon springs at you, seeking to rend you to pieces with its razor-sharp talons. Again and again it swipes at you and you struggle to keep it at bay, murder reflected in its emerald eyes. If you possess a shield, turn to **28**. If not, turn to **90**.

7

You pick up one of the knives and a chill runs up your spine. This knife used to cut. To cut in order to punish. Punish sinners like you. Before Lancelot can stop you, you drag the blade over your bare forearm, releasing a steady flow of blood. Again and again you cut, before Lancelot snatches the knife from you and throws it to the far end of the chamber. You collapse to your knees, sobbing as the blood cascades from your arms. Lose **2 Life Points**. If you still live, Lancelot hurriedly tears a section of cloth from his undershirt and bandages your arm, the white cloth turning red. At last you feel recovered and motion that you are ready to continue your trial. Averting your gaze from the rack of knives, you follow Lancelot northwards. Turn to **36**.

8

You shrink away from him, as always powerless to stop him from having what he wants. His hand touches your face, that insidious warmth as horrifying as ever. Before you black out, you see a spreading smile and a twinkle of emerald eyes. Turn to **26**.

9

The imp may be fast, but it is also chaotic in its movements, bouncing from wall to wall haphazardly and thus rendering it easy to keep up with. It heads down a small tunnel on your right, it's giggling ceasing when it realises it has gone down a dead end - and now you and Lancelot are barring the way back! The red imp tries to jump past the two of you, but you seize its fat belly in your hands. It squirms and strains, its maniacal laughter returning. Then, realising it cannot struggle free, its bulbous head swings towards you and it grins.

'You lose!' it cries. Then it vanishes in a puff of red smoke!

'I guess that's that,' say Lancelot. 'Now, how shall we find our way out of here?'

You gaze about the warren of tunnels all around you, no idea which one took you to this place. Shrugging your shoulders you head down a tunnel at random. Turn to **45**.

10

The ground gets slippery underfoot, some sort of orange ooze dripping from the tunnel's low ceiling.

'At least it's a slight change of environment,' you remark.

'But perhaps not a welcome one,' says Lancelot, nodding at the ceiling. Two creatures, seemingly made of the orange slime hang from the rock, rubbery maws dripping gunge. As one, they drop to the floor with a plop, barring your passage and reaching out for you with rubbery arms. You and Lancelot

must battle one each.

ORANGE SLIME Combat Skill:2 Life Points:5

If you win, the slime explodes in a burst of orange goo which will doubtless take a long time to scrub off your armour. You turn to see Lancelot's shining plate similarly covered, trying in vain to shake the lingering goo from his sword.

'Come on,' he says. 'Let's move on.'

You head down a side-tunnel. Roll a die. If you roll:

- 1 Reroll!
- 2 Turn to **53**.
- 3 Turn to **4**.
- 4 Turn to **19**.
- 5 Turn to **84**.
- 6 Turn to **63**.

11

The voices are harsh and raspy, mocking you with their whispers.

'Why go on? You know you cannot do anything.'

'You've always been weak. What makes you think you can possibly succeed?'

'You're not worthy to wear a knight's armour. You're not even worthy to live.'

'When will you realise: you're mine!'

A sudden lurch in your stomach greets this last comment and you start to vomit. Lancelot pats you on the back and begins talking to you, but you feel too ill to concentrate on what he's saying. At last you feel well again, but you must lose 3 **Life Points**. Thankfully, the whispering has ceased.

'Are you able to continue?' your companion asks.

You nod though deep down you feel less certain. The two of you continue onward. Turn to **52**.

12

The tunnel you are following is smooth walled and by the looks of it fairly well travelled. Torch brackets line the wall, though none of the torches are lit. Eventually, you emerge into a small square chamber, decorated with banners displaying various heroic deeds. You see depictions of Hercules slaying the Nemean Lion; of Achilles besting Hector; of Boadicea defeating Nero's troops; and, taking pride of place above an archway heading east, of King Arthur pulling the sword from the stone.

'Inspiring stuff, isn't it?' says a female voice behind you. The two of you spin round to see a young woman, clothed in leather armour with a well-notched sword at her side. Her blue eyes focus on Lancelot's own, sparing you not a glance.

'What brings you to this place?' she asks of him.

You start to speak of your trial, but she pays your words no heed, replying only when Lancelot explains your reasons for being here.

'You seek to slay Patemilias? You think this boy is capable of it?' She gives a haughty laugh.

'I am,' you state, but she does not listen to your heartfelt words, instead asking more questions of Lancelot.

Will you shout over her in an effort to be heard (turn to **89**)? Or will you keep silent and allow her and Lancelot to converse without your input if that's what they want (turn to **58**)?

13

'It is your choice of course,' says Lancelot with a nod.

The two of you part, you taking the right passage, Lancelot the left. You light your own torch, the faint sunlight streaming from the entrance insufficient to light your way far down the corridor. All

around you hear whispering and mocking laughter, but every time you stop to gaze about there is no one there. And then your torch goes out! Desperately you try to relight it, but you can get no spark out of it. You try to backtrack calling out for Lancelot, but you collide with a wall. Disoriented, you place one hand on the wall and try to grope your way forward, but you walk straight into another wall. Suddenly the walls are all around you, closing you in. You push back against them and their resistance ceases leaving you to fall flat on your face, open air where there was a wall moments before. Still swathed in darkness, you rush forward, still crying for Lancelot. You run for what seems like miles, thinking that even the mocking laughter of earlier would be better than the complete silence all about you now. Your cries for help become sobs and then a hysterical laughter. You crumble to the floor, fingers digging into your temples. You feel a hand on your shoulder. But it is not the hand of a friend. You scream and go on screaming. The world about you shatters and you collapse, blood pouring from your eyes and mouth. Turn to **26**.

14

Bedivere is a veteran of scores of battles, you are but a squire who has yet to shed his first blood. Couple this with the fact that the knight has the advantage of height and there's only one way this struggle can go. Bedivere pushes you to the ground and places one armoured foot upon your chest, heavy breaths wheezing from him.

'Well, you certainly made me work for it,' he gasps, removing his foot and extending an arm to help you up. He turns to Lancelot. 'Perhaps you and the wizard are right about this one. Maybe he has a chance after all.'

Lancelot simply smiles. 'Come,' he says as Bedivere strides off. 'Merlin awaits.'

He leads you into the keep, the crowd dispersing now that the duel is over. Record a **Combat Skill** of 4 before turning to **60**.

15

The door opens into a simply furnished room with another door in the far wall. Sitting at a small table in the corner of the room is a small man in robes of red and amber. He is fondling a pair of green-painted dice in his delicate hands. He looks up at the two of you as you enter, a smile of greeting on his face.

'So good to see friendly faces in this most unfriendly of places,' he says. Then he frowns. 'But I sense you won't be smiling for long. Why not play a game?' he asks of you. 'I can guarantee it will brighten your destiny if you win. ' Course if you lose there will have to be a payment, but it won't be one that matters to you much in the long run.'

Some half-forgotten memory of being told never to gamble surfaces in your mind. 'Would it be alright?' you ask Lancelot.

He shrugs in response. 'Whatever you wish to do in this place is alright. Listen not to the pangs of conscience and guilt.'

Will you agree to play a game with the little man (turn to **65**)? Or would you prefer to politely decline and take the door to the north (turn to **88**)?

16

Stopping over the frozen pond, you bring the pommel of your sword down hard upon its surface. Some small cracks appear, but the most you achieve is causing a loud echo to reverberate around the cavern, causing the hanging icicles to wobble ominously. The echo bounces around the ceiling and is met by an angry squeaking. A cloud of bats descends from above, eager to gain vengeance on whoever disturbed their rest. Lancelot draws his sword and stands back to back with you as the swarm of angry bats rushes towards you, icy fangs ready to sink in your neck.

SWARM OF BATS Combat Skill:2 Life Points:8

If you win, turn to **80**.

17

The knight topples, his ebony armour crumbling into dust as he hits the ground, the only remnant of the man you just fought the lace handkerchief that hung at his collar. From behind the great gilded doors you hear an almighty roar, the whole cave shaking in response. You take a deep breath and take hold of one door's massive handle. Lancelot places a hand upon your shoulder.

'I shall go no further. Remember: you can defeat him. This land can be forever freed of his influence.'

Without responding you push open the golden door and step through into a massive cavern. In the cavern's centre, reclining on top of a large mound of what appear to be broken toys, is a large dragon, covered from lizard-like head to spiked tail in scarlet scales. A gout of flame spews forth from his nostrils as merciless green eyes fix upon you.

'Foolish boy,' he rumbles. 'You think you can defeat me? The great dragon Patemilias? The being that made this land all that it is?!' He lets out a booming laugh that echoes around the cavern for a horribly long time.

'I will slay you!' you cry.

Patemilias uncurls from atop the broken toys, great clawed feet clambering towards you.

'You shall be my play-thing, boy!' it taunts. 'As you always have been.'

A blast of red hot flame launches from the creature's mouth, rushing straight towards you. If you are wearing a ruby amulet on a silver chain, turn to 6. If not, turn immediately to 82.

18

Just as the blade is about to hit, you drop, the clumsy blow sailing over your head. Realising he is exposed, Bedivere deftly twirls the hilt in his hands, bringing the wooden weapon down towards you. Will you try and block this overhead strike (turn to 66) or instead try to roll out of its way (turn to 31)?

19

Wandering aimlessly along the winding tunnels, you are startled out of your misery by a snort from around the corner.

'What was -' you begin. But your unfinished question is answered by a seven-foot tall minotaur rushing out of the darkness, bellowing at the top of its lungs as it charges towards the two of you, horns lowered. Lancelot heroically leaps in front of you, the minotaur crashing into him, sending him to the ground with a clatter. The minotaur raises its horned head and lets forth another deafening bellow, beating its muscular chest in triumph. Then, with a snort, it turns to you.

MINOTAUR Combat Skill:4 Life Points:12

If you slay the beast, you help Lancelot to his feet. Luckily his armour took most of the impact and he was merely stunned.

'Quite the victory, eh?' you say with a smile, planting one foot upon the bull-man's corpse. As if in answer to your bragging, you hear an almighty roar sounding from far off and the tunnel suddenly gets much warmer.

'Slaying the dragon will be the true triumph,' says Lancelot. 'Come let us continue.'

Suitably cowed, you head down another tunnel. Roll a die. If you roll:

1-3 Turn to 84.

4-6 Turn to 63.

20

Despite your great fear of the shadowy figure, you rush past him and seize the sword, pulling it forth from the ground to reveal a finely-honed edge. You turn to the figure, the sword's hilt grasped tightly between hands that no longer tremble. The shadowy man laughs once more.

'You shall not achieve victory that easily, boy. Your weapon alone cannot defeat Patemilias!'

At that the figure suddenly vanishes. There is no puff of smoke, it is merely that he was there one moment and now no longer is.

'Come, let's leave here quickly,' you say to Lancelot. 'I have no desire to spend another second in this awful place.'

Lancelot's helmeted head nods and he leads you back up the stairs. Record the magic sword on your adventure sheet. It adds 1 point to your **Combat Skill** (up to a maximum of 5). Turn to **94**.

21

The air is close and humid as you follow the corridor which bends round to the left. You feel you can hear a faint whispering coming from the walls themselves but the footfalls you and your companion make drown them out. If you wish to signal to Lancelot to stop so you can better hear these whisperings, turn to **11**. If you would rather hurry along the corridor, turn to **52**.

22

The yellow imp's speed is incredible considering how rotund the little creature is, its little bat-like wings flapping ineffectually as it bounds down tunnel after tunnel.

'We can't lose him!' you gasp at Lancelot, unsure why you feel so strongly about it.

Seemingly, having heard you, the imp stops and turns to you with a devilish grin. You increase your pace, arms outstretched to grasp. Just as you are about to seize him, the imp races away down a nearby tunnel in a blinding yellow flash. He soon disappears from sight, vanishing down another random tunnel.

'Oh, leave him to his games!' you declare. 'Let's leave this place.'

'Very well. But how do we go about that exactly?' says Lancelot gazing about at all the various tunnel entrances, none of them looking like they lead anywhere but deeper into the maze.

'One way's as good as another,' you say, heading down a random tunnel. Turn to **45**.

23

The door opens into a small room, cluttered with broken toys, pieces of chalk, a broken blackboard, misshapen candles and most importantly three cackling imps dancing about the place, throwing whatever is to hand at one another. They turn towards you and Lancelot as you enter.

'New playmates,' laughs the yellow one.

'Yes, yes, yes!' adds the red one triumphantly.

'You want to play our game, humans?' ask the third, a tubby blue imp.

Will you agree to play with the imps? If so, turn to **40**. If not, you push past these cackling creatures, ducking under a hastily thrown candle. You leave via a door in the northern wall, heading down the dark tunnel beyond. Turn to **70**.

24

Feigning an intent of pushing the burly knight back you swing one leg out, catching Bedivere unawares. His plate-covered leg buckles and he topples sideways. Quick as a flash, you jump upright and rest the point of your wooden sword upon the nape of the stricken knight.

'Hardly an honourable victory,' he grunts.

Lancelot steps forward. 'Perhaps not. But life does not play fair as our young lad here knows better than either of us. If anything, I'd be more worried if he did not seize such an opportunity.'

Uncertain whether or not you have done something wrong, you help Bedivere to his feet. He lets out a booming laugh before gripping you by the shoulders.

'Yes, my boy, if you want to succeed, you can't rely on such things as chivalry! I think Merlin and Lancelot here were right about you.' Still laughing he strides away as a round of applause comes from the assembled crowd.

Lancelot smiles. 'Come, best not keep our wizard waiting any longer.'

Head held high, you follow the intrepid knight towards the keep. Record a **Combat Skill** of 5 before turning to 60.

25

As soon as you lift the hefty tome, a mighty cry echoes along the tunnels.

'Put that down, boy! You're always with your head in your book! Put it down I said!'

Will you obey the voice and set the book back down on the ground (turn to 54)? Or will you defy the command and flip open the book (turn to 33)?

26

Darkness. And then flashes of blinding colour! Your body shakes, vague images form, voices ring out all around. Their speech at first meaningless slowly begins to make sense, but you struggle to put faces to the words.

'We're losing him.'

'What the hell? You said this wouldn't happen.'

'He's fitting.'

'The program must have overwhelmed his senses.'

'I told you he wasn't strong enough for this!'

'Now's not the time to apportion blame. Save him!'

'I can't!'

'You have to do something! We talked him into this.'

'Come on, mate. You can pull through.'

'You think he can hear you?'

'Maybe.'

'Damn it, man. He's going to be a vegetable.'

'No, it can't be. He was strong enough. I was so sure.'

'He might have made it on his own. You and your trial have killed him!'

The voices fade. The lights fade. And they never return.

27

After only a few yards you emerge into small room densely packed with all manner of arms and armour, the light from Lancelot's torch reflecting on a myriad of gleaming breastplates, polished helmets, and shining swords. What attracts your attention however, is a rack of knives nailed to the wall. Unlike the rest of the weaponry here, these knives are covered in rust, grime and what looks like dried-blood. There is something oddly familiar about them. Will you take a closer look at them (turn to 7)? Or will you leave them be and hurry on from this place via a passage to the north (turn to 36)?

28

You hold the shield out to protect your face, the demon's claws clattering repeatedly upon it, desperate to get at your face. At last the creature tires and snarlingly backs off. You lower your shield and prepare for its next attack. But no attack comes. Instead, the demon begins the glow, its ridges fading, its dull red skin becoming white. Clawed talons become human hands, bow-legs straighten. The demon's face becomes that of a man. Becomes that of ... HIM! The cause of all your sorrow

standing before you, a cruel smile on his thin lips. His green eyes, *those* green eyes that used to always stare at you in that horrible way, twinkle yet you know no harmless mischief leaks behind them. You shrink back as he approaches, hand outstretched for you, ready to cow you into submission. The way he has done countless times before.

'You are mine, boy,' he says simply. 'Not your own. Mine. And I will do what I wish with you. The way it has always been.'

If you possess a magic sword, turn to **100**. If you do not, turn to **8**.

29

You push open the door to reveal what appears to be a torture chamber, caked in dust. An iron maiden sits in one corner, a rack pressed up against it. Various saws, knives and more exotic cutting implements line the walls and an age-old blood stain is upon the flagstoned floor. Just being in the room and thinking of the horrible mutilations that must have occurred here makes you feel ill. If you would rather leave this foul place immediately you can do so and try the door at the other side of the corridor (providing you have not done so already) by turning to **49** or you can continue down the passageway (turn to **21**).

If you wish to stay and make a thorough search of the room however, you may do so by turning to **37** to open up the iron maiden or to **92** take a closer look at the rack.

30

The dying insect thrashes madly, its death throes shattering bones and stalagmites. Keeping well away, you help a groggy Lancelot to his feet.

'My thanks,' he says. 'I did not expect to meet a beast such as that, nor would I have expected it to move so fast. You did well to overcome it.'

He looks over the child bones that litter the cavern. 'The end of a child is such a shame, whatever the cause,' he says sadly.

You agree, eager to move on from this place of death. There are several exits from the cavern. To the south, you spot a staircase heading upwards; you discount this route as you have no wish to return to the upper levels. To the west, you spot several large creepers hanging from the ceiling. They seem to twitch as if alive. Having no wish to take this route either, you may either head east (turn to **99**) or south-east (turn to **12**).

31

You are just not quick enough and the wooden sword cracks you on the shoulder, your body falling flat to the earth. Bedivere drops his sword and shakes his head.

'We have done so much for you,' he sighs. 'And yet I fear it be not enough for what awaits.' So saying he stalks off, the crowd dispersing, muttering to one another. Lancelot extends an arm and hauls you up, adjusting your leather jerkin.

'You are ready,' he says, dusting off your shoulders. 'This trial will be the making of you, you'll see. Come, best not to keep Merlin waiting.'

Somewhat worried about Bedivere's assessment, you follow Lancelot into the keep. Record a **Combat Skill** of 3 before turning to **60**.

32

The scent and sound of rats greets you, the creatures scattering from the torchlight as the two of you proceed down the stone-clad corridor.

'Yuck,' you say. 'What do they feed on?'

Lancelot merely smiles grimly in response and the two of you proceed in silence.

A rusted portcullis blocks the way ahead. It looks far too heavy to lift. Luckily you shouldn't have to make any attempt to do so as it is connected by a chain to a winch mounted on the stone wall to your right.

'That should be just the ticket,' says your companion. 'Raise the gate.'

You nod and begin turning the lever - only to find you can barely move it! The chain is heavy with rust and it will take a herculean effort to turn it. Roll one die. The result represents the weight of the gate. Now roll the die again. This time the number rolled reflects the strength you are able to put into working the winch. If the second number is equal to or greater than the first, turn to **91**. If it is less than the first number, turn to **98**.

33

A howl of rage reverberates along the tunnel as you open the book at a random page. Written in a large and elegant script are the words "The heroic know to turn their backs to the rainbow." Before you can puzzle out the meaning of these words, the book is suddenly snatched away from you! A maniacally-laughing fat yellow imp juggles the book in its small hands.

'Give that back!' you demand.

Still laughing, the imp bounds away down the passage. Two more imps, coloured red and blue, join it from a side-passage. The three imps toss the book to each other, taking delight and your annoyance. Will you chase after them (turn to **55**) or will you leave the book to them and set out trying to find a way out of this maze (turn to **45**)?

34

The giant tumbles, his agonized expression striking a chilling chord of familiarity. You quickly look away, tears forming in your eyes.

'What have I done?' you say, feeling more guilt than you have any logical reason to do.

'You have done well to strike down such a terrible foe,' reassures Lancelot. 'I am sorry I could not aid you, but some battles need be fought alone.'

You nod, still unable to gaze upon the giant's corpse. 'I have no wish to stay here any longer. Let him keep his treasures in death.'

'Very well,' says Lancelot. 'Which door shall we take?'

Good question. Will you take:

The north door, bearing the design of the laughing child? Turn to **23**.

The first easterly door, marked with the red hexagon? Turn to **2**.

The second easterly door, with the symbol of a snowflake? Turn to **69**.

35

The passageway stops at a set of stone stairs leading down into the perpetual darkness.

'The lower level of the dungeon,' remarks Lancelot. 'You've done well so far, but things are about to get much more taxing. Keep your guard up.'

With no further advice, he leads the way downward, his torch the sole beacon of light. At the base of the stairs you find a narrow tunnel heading north, a mysterious green slime dripping from its craggy ceiling. The two of you head onward. Turn to **5**.

36

The passage is narrow, the cavernous roof covered with moss and creepers. A set of stone stairs carries you down into the bowels of the earth and you find yourself moving closer to the reassuring light of Lancelot's torch.

'Your nervousness is not misplaced,' observes Lancelot. 'The lower level of this dungeon is where your trial will really begin. But take heart, you have coped well so far.'

You reach the bottom of the stairs and follow a passage that twists and turns. The floor is no longer cobbled; instead it is crisscrossed with the gnarled roots of unseen trees. The creepers hanging from the ceiling grow steadily longer as you head onwards. Suddenly, one springs to life and whips out at you! Fast as lightning, Lancelot cleaves it in two with a sweep of his sword. More of the plant-like tentacles twitch into life.

'Draw your sword!' cries Lancelot. 'And run!'

You face along the passage, leaping over the monstrous roots and slashing madly at the predatory creepers.

CREEPERS Combat Skill:2 Life Points:X

To get past the creepers, you must succeed in hitting them in two attack rounds in a row. The creepers will do damage to you as normal though! If you succeed in escaping them, turn to 77.

37

The iron maiden is carved to resemble a stout woman, her eyes tear-stained and her cheeks painted the rosy red of shame. You pull open the heavy door, expecting to reveal a set of razor sharp iron spikes. Instead the inside is just plain wood, reminding you of a wardrobe. At the wooden base sits a strip of cloth. With some trepidation, you stoop down to pick it up. You find it is damp, seemingly from spittle as it looks like it has been chewed upon - a gag. Suddenly you feel very unwell, the gag falls from trembling fingers and Lancelot has to help you to your feet.

'Close it...please...close it,' you gasp. Lancelot slams the door shut with a booted foot and helps you out of the torture room. As soon as you leave that horrible place and Lancelot has closed the door behind you, you feel slightly better, but your whole body is still a-quiver. Lose 1 point from your **Combat Skill**.

'I suggest we tarry no longer here,' says Lancelot. You nod and you shakily follow him down the corridor, eager to stay close to his lighted torch. Turn to 21.

38

You hear a cry of annoyance from the mysterious voice as you peer down the well. You see the bucket suspended about halfway down the shaft. Something appears to be glinting from it. Intrigued, you haul on the rope, dragging the bucket upwards. Once you have pulled it high enough, you stick your hand in and pull out an amulet carved from ruby, hanging from a silver chain.

'A fine treasure indeed,' breathes Lancelot.

Pleased with your new-found treasure, you hang it around your neck before the two of you take the passage north. Turn to 27.

39

You stride between the nuns, hoping to portray more confidence than you feel. As you walk in between each pair thought, the women stop their singing and turn from you, covering their eyes, their beautiful song replaced by pitiful sobs. A sense of unease grips you; why can these holy women not even look upon you?

'Keep walking,' instructs Lancelot behind you. You nod and carry on, but your confidence is shaken. Lose 1 **Combat Skill** point before turning to 46.

40

'Yay!' cheer the imps on unison, bouncing about the small room with abandon.

'You're it!' chortles the yellow one.

Before you can reply, the three of them throw open the door to the north and bound down the passageway beyond, mischievous giggles echoing behind them.

'Come on,' you yell to Lancelot as you race after them. The tunnel is dark, narrow and twisting, a range of turnings on both sides. You spot the three imps ahead. Still laughing, they all race down different tunnels. Will you chase after the yellow one (turn to 22), the red one (turn to 9) or the blue one (turn to 78)?

41

Seated behind Lancelot upon his trusty steed, you ride from the city. Over fields and hills the horse takes you, and not a soul do you see upon your journey. Your mind is a-whirl with the thoughts of what awaits you in the Domus Caverns. The thought of Patemilias' cruel talons and fiery breath hangs heavy on your mind. Your stomach knots in conflict for you yearn to slay the dragon, yet the thought of confronting it terrifies you. Lancelot's presence, silent though he may be, helps reassure you, his shining plate making him seem every bit the invincible ally.

At last, you come in sight of some low lying hills. Lancelot dismounts and helps you do the same. He gives the white horse a slap on its rear and the beast races back towards Camelot.

'Won't we need her to return?' you ask.

The handsome knight shakes his head. 'If you succeed, you will have no more need of her.'

You nod without understanding and follow Lancelot up the steep slope of a grass-covered hillock. At the peak you look down upon a black hole leading into the nearby hillside; the entrance to the caverns. As you start down towards it, there is a high-pitched cry and two green-skinned creatures wielding short-swords and clad in simple leathers race out.

'Goblins!' cries Lancelot. 'Prepare yourself.'

You ready your sword, your first real battle ahead of you. Slavering at the mouth, one of the goblins bounds towards you, the other tackling the knight.

GOBLIN Combat Skill:2 Life Points:4

If you win, turn to 83.

42

The passageway does not go far before terminating at a stout wooden door. Heaving it open, you enter a small room, carved in stone, its only contents a stack of wooden barrels. There is no other exit. If you wish to prise open one of the barrels, turn to 48. Otherwise, you and Lancelot return to the junction and this time head north. Turn to 99.

43

The door opens to reveal a small room with a low-lying circular table in its centre. Around the table on small wooden stools are propped several stuffed toys, the likes of which a child would play with - there is a doll with blonde pigtails, a lion with a comical expression on its maned visage and an egg dressed in a blue jacket with a smiling face sewn onto it. A fourth stool sits at the table empty. Looking down upon this tableau is a stone gargoyle, with a fanged mouth large, cruel eyes and a lolling tongue. The gargoyle is built above a wooden door directly opposite. To take this exit you would have to cross the gruesome carving's gaze. Another door sits to the west. Will you take the north door, despite the horrible gargoyle above it (turn to 96) or the west door (turn to 3)?

44

The ogre lets out an enraged growl and swings its club towards you with brutal savagery.

OGRE Combat Skill:3 Life Points:12

If you slay the ogre, you step over his fallen body and enter the small room it came from. It's incredibly cold in here and you are surprised to see there is ice on the floor. At the northern end of the room is a chute, seemingly made entirely of ice, leading down into the darkness at a steep angle. An almost irresistible urge comes over you. Will you suggest to Lancelot that you slide down the icy chute into the unknown (turn to 62)? If not, there is naught else here. You return to the previous junction and head north. Turn to 99.

45

'Why are there *so* many tunnels you cry out in frustration after turning another corner to find another identical tunnel stretching into the darkness.

'You cannot give up hope,' says Lancelot. 'Not now.'

Muttering to yourself, you set off in another random direction. Roll a die. If you roll:

- 1 Turn to 10.
- 2 Turn to 53.
- 3 Turn to 4.
- 4 Turn to 19.
- 5 Turn to 84.
- 6 Turn to 63.

46

Hurrying on from the bizarre nuns, you choose another passageway in the faint hope that this will be the one to lead you from this infernal maze. Roll a die. If you roll:

- 1 Reroll!
- 2 Reroll!
- 3 Turn to 4.
- 4 Turn to 19.
- 5 Turn to 84.
- 6 Turn to 63.

47

Although it takes a colossal effort, you succeed in heaving the stone door open, revealing a small room, furnished in a way that is both outlandish and familiar at the same time. A flowery wallpaper, resplendent with a mess of odd stains, covers the walls. A set of stairs lead down to a dark basement. As you step towards them you hear a laughing voice ring out; a cruel, mocking cackle that has haunted your nightmares for as long as you can remember.

'You always come back,' laughs the voice. 'You are forever mine!'

Taken by shock, you stumble down the stairs, landing with a crash at the concrete bottom.

'Welcome home, boy,' says the voice. You look up and see - HIM! You scream, Lancelot's racing down the stairs to aid you drowned out by the sheer volume of your terror. A hand seizes you by the collar and hauls you over to a grotesque metal contraption. You pass out. Turn to 26.

48

The lid of the nearest cask opens with a pop. Peering inside, you are shocked to see the eyeless sockets of a dozen human skulls staring straight back at you. In unison, skeletal jaws drop open and a horrible moaning starts.

'Leave this place,' the skulls cry. 'Do not disobey us!'

Unpalatable as it may seem, do you dare plunge your hand amongst the skulls in the hope of finding something of use within the barrel? If so, turn to 74. If you'd rather not, there is nothing for it but to return to the junction and head north. Turn to 99.

49

The brass handle turns easily, the oaken door swinging open to reveal row upon row of shelves filled with almost as many tomes as Merlin's personal collection. A lighted candelabrum hangs from a gilded ceiling, illuminating a surprising lack of dust.

'Someone must come here often,' you mutter.

Your companion does not reply, instead closing the door after the two of you. No sooner has he done so than the books fly from the shelves, hovering in middle air.

'What the -' you begin before a heavy tome slams into your stomach! Lose 1 **Life Point**.

'We'd best leave!' cries Lancelot.

If you insist in making a quick search of this enchanted library, turn to 68.

If however you agree with Lancelot, you race out of the room slamming the door shut behind you. You can now try the room on the opposite side of the corridor if you haven't done so already (turn to 29) or you could carry on along the passage (turn to 21).

50

The corridor you are following leads slowly downward, the only sound the steady thud of yours and Lancelot's boots on the cobbles. The stink of death wafts upwards. You emerge into a square room with exits on each of the four walls. The room is devoid of furniture, but the cause of the deathly stench is revealed as two mouldering corpses, one lying on top of the other. As you move towards the room's centre, there is a clank and you spin round to find an iron portcullis has fallen to close off the passage you came by. A low moan rings out and the two corpses rise to unsteady feet, staring at you with eyeless sockets, lumps of flesh falling from their decaying skeletons. One of them appears to be female, lank grey hair hanging off her skull. The other was apparently male and this one gives you a horrible toothless grin. You back away in terror only to find a restraining hand on your back.

'We must face these creatures if your trial is to stand any chance of success,' says Lancelot, pulling forth his sword.

You nod and shakingly draw your own weapon. The male creature shambles towards you, ready to rend you with talon shaped fingers and looking like he will enjoy every second of doing so. The female moves towards Lancelot. Your whole body trembles, but you force yourself to stride forward.

REVENANT Combat Skill: 3 Life Points: 5

If you destroy this foul creature, turn to 76.

51

You root through the treasure, your stomach giddy, your mouth a-grin at the feeling of gold sifting through your fingers.

'What are you doing?!' yells out a voice that stops you dead in your tracks. You spin round to see a very angry giant striding towards you, the room shaking at each heavy footfall this nine foot Goliath makes.

'How dare you touch my things?' he bellows, drenching you in spittle.

'I-I didn't realise it was y-'

You are cut off by the giant back handing you across the face, sending you flying to the floor in a scattering of coins. Lose 2 **Life Points**.

'Some boys never learn,' the giant grunts, pulling a heavy wooden club from his belt.

'Get up! Fight!' commands Lancelot. Groggily you do so, holding out your sword in front of you.

GIANT Combat Skill:4 Life Points:10

If you defeat this man mountain, turn to **34**.

52

The corridor widens out, ending in a stone wall with two oaken doors before you. One is decorated with a brass carving of an eye, the other with that of a single die.

'Which way speaks to you?' asks Lancelot. 'Remember, no decision is without consequence.'

Will you take the left door, marked with an eye (turn to **43**) or the one on the right, marked with a die (turn to **15**)?

53

'What's that?' you ask of Lancelot, a faint song echoing from somewhere in the maze.

'I hear nothing,' says Lancelot with a shrug.

Curious, you head in the direction of the singing and turn down a wide tunnel where a most bizarre sight awaits. Alongside each craggy wall is a line of women dressed in the black and white habits of nuns. The women are singing a melodious hymn with sweet contralto voices. They are seemingly oblivious to your presence and ignore all your attempts to attract their attention.

'I'm not sure I like this,' mutters Lancelot.

Will you walk between the lines of nuns (turn to **39**) or will you turn back and choose a different route onward by turning to **46**?

54

Gingerly, you place the book back down on the stony ground. A mocking laugh rings out.

'Good boy,' the voice declares in a way that makes your whole body cringe with disgust (lose 1 **Life Point**). Thankfully the voice says no more. Without a word to Lancelot, you lead him away from this place, taking a random passageway. Turn to **45**.

55

You dash after them, Lancelot close on your heels. With a giggle, the imps race off down a turning to the right. You round the corner to see the three of them at the tunnel's end, each taking a different route onwards. It is unclear which of them has the book. Will you pursue the blue imp (turn to **78**), the red imp (turn to **9**) or the yellow imp (turn to **22**)?

56

The passage you follow is narrow and twists and turns, leaving you very disoriented. At last you arrive at a circular room with another tunnel heading north. But what attracts your attention is a stone well in the middle of the room. A wooden beam across the top of the well supports a rope, no doubt the other end attached to a bucket deep within the well. As you start to move towards it a voice rings out: 'Do not go near the well!'

The voice seems horribly familiar and your chest tightens at the sound of it. You take one more step forward.

'I told you, boy. Stay away from the well!'

Your hands are shaking. You turn to Lancelot, but his face is blank. He gives no indication that he has even heard the commanding voice.

Will you dare look down into the well (turn to **38**) or will you promptly flee from this place and take the northern passage by turning to **27**?

57

Lancelot turns to you, concern crossing his handsome face.

'I would counsel against such a division. This dungeon is perilous even with assistance. Without it, it could destroy your very being.'

Dire words. Will you heed them and choose to stick with Lancelot, heading either left (turn to **32**) or right (turn to **67**)?

If you insist on splitting up however, turn to **13**.

58

The two of them go on talking and you stand in sullen silence, too ashamed to join the conversation now, feeling like a child among adults; no warrior at all. Lose 1 **Combat Skill** point. At last the mysterious woman and Lancelot conclude their conversation and she heads back the way she had come. Lancelot turns to you.

'You must not think yourself unworthy of attention,' he says sadly. 'Or Patemilias has already won.'

He leads you eastward, your head hung low in shame. Turn to **64**.

59

Unable to look upon the shadowy man a second longer, you flee up the stairs, not even looking back to see if Lancelot follows though thankfully the torchlight at your back suggests that he does. The mysterious man's laughter echoes up the steps after you and it's only when you leave the wallpapered room and step back into the maze once more that you can no longer hear it. Tears stream down your face and you are forced to choke back a sob. Turn to **94**.

60

A rush of pride sweeps through you as you stride along the keep's corridors, men-at arms saluting and serving girls curtsying as you pass. To think, if all goes well today this will become your permanent residence! Lancelot leads you to a brass bound door many floors above and raps loudly upon it.

'Enter,' rings out a voice laden with authority.

Lancelot turns the handle and both of you enter a vast study, the walls lined with bookshelves packed tight with leather bound tomes. At an oaken desk and clothed in cerulean robes sits Merlin, thin fingers stroking a long white beard. He fixes a grey-eyed glare upon you before a broad smile splits his face.

'Ah, my boy,' he intones. 'This is it the day we've been working towards for months: your trial. How do you feel?'

'Confident, my Lord,' you respond.

'Good, good.' Merlin resumes stroking his beard. For a second it seems to lose some of its lustre, almost looking more like cotton than hair. But then Merlin smiles and all looks normal once more. 'Now your task will not be an easy one. You are to journey with Lancelot to the Domus Caves and there sly the fearsome dragon Patemilias, a creature that has plagued this kingdom for as long as it has existed. Lancelot will assist you, but in the end you must be the one to slay the beast.'

You nod. 'I am ready.'

The wizard looks uncertain for a second, and his beard once again looks different. Perhaps it is a trick of the light? 'I truly hope that is the case,' he says at last. He turns to look as the door behind you swings open. 'Ah, it is the King himself.'

You and Lancelot immediately genuflect. Merlin shows no such obeisance; he has earned that right. Golden-locked Arthur looks down upon you before his attention turns to the wizard.

'You're quite sure he's ready?' This is a big risk.' His eyes flick to you once more. 'For all of us.'

'I have every confidence in the trial,' says Merlin.

Arthur hesitates. Then, with a brisk nod to you, he strides out once more, closing the door behind him.

'Don't mind him,' says Merlin. 'I believe you more than capable to deal with the task ahead of you. Good luck.'

Your audience over, you bow to the wizard and follow Lancelot from the chamber, ready to undergo your trial, a place at the round table your prize. Turn to **41**.

61

Shoving the heavy crates aside, you expose a most curious device. A metal tripod is bolted to the ground in the room's corner, a great metal ball at its top. The ball alternates in colour between blue and red, sparks leaping from its surface - the source of the buzzing noise. Thick cables extend from the tripod's base, disappearing into the walls themselves.

'What is it?' you ask.

'Something best left well alone,' says Lancelot in a commanding voice. 'Come, you have a trial to focus on.'

Yet as you look to Lancelot, his face seems less handsome, his armour less gleaming. The very walls around you seem ill-defined and semi-transparent. Only the device seems whole. Only the device seems real.

'Leave it alone, I say!' snaps Lancelot, a hint of desperation creeping in.

Will you listen to him and leave the room? If so, you can either take the northern door (turn to **23**) or the other eastern door (turn to **69**)? If you ignore his command and touch the glowing device, turn immediately to **86**.

62

You expected an argument from your companion, but he merely nods at your suggestion.

'It is your trial. You must conduct it as you wish.'

The two of you sit at the chute's frozen lip and launch yourself forward. The chute is freezing, but the friction as you rush downwards keeps you altogether too warm, the screech of Lancelot's plate armour scraping along the ice almost unbearable. You reach the chute's end and land with a crash atop a frozen pond. Immediately, the ice shatters from the impact and you find yourself plunged into freezing water! You swim upwards, limbs stiffening from the cold. Lancelot somehow manages to heave himself onto firm ground despite his heavy armour. You are about to follow suit when you spot a magnificent shield at the pond's bottom. Your body aching, you swim downwards and snatch it, the ice of the pond's surface already beginning to reform as you burst upwards. Lancelot extends a gauntleted hand and helps you up onto the ice-covered ground. Shaking the freezing moisture from your body, you gaze down at your prize. The shield is decorated with the motif of a red lion and shows no sign of rust despite its watery home. You strap it to your arm and gaze about the massive cavern you have found yourself in. The whole area is covered with ice, massive icicles dangling precariously from the high ceiling. Turn to **93**.

63

At long last, the passage you are following widens out, no more side-tunnels beckoning back into the gloom. Ahead, a faint light burns.

'You have conquered hopelessness,' intones Lancelot. 'Now the real test begins.'

The light grows brighter and you emerge into a high-ceilinged antechamber. A pair of gilded doors emblazoned with the design of a great dragon sit between a pair of burning braziers. Before these great doors, gauntleted hands resting on the pommel of a magnificent two-handed sword, is a knight clothed head to toe in black plate. One solitary piece of white, a lace handkerchief, hangs from his collar. The black knight acknowledges neither you nor Lancelot. You take a deep breath and step forward.

'Let us pass,' you command. The knight inclines his head towards you, but makes no response.

'Let us pass, I say!' you cry, drawing your sword.

The knight lets out a laugh, a raspy chuckle that sets your teeth on edge. 'Go home, boy. The dragon's neck is not for thy sword.'

'I say different,' you snap.

'What harm has Patemilias ever caused you?'

'He- he -' Words desert you, but a rush of emotion rushes through you. A lifetime of pain and hurt comes rushing back. But the cause of it you don't know. Could it have been Patemilias? You raise your sword, tears staining your eyes. 'Stand aside.'

The black knight raises his own sword. 'Foolish boy,' he spits.

BLACK KNIGHT Combat Skill:4 Life Points:10

If you defeat the knight, turn to 17.

64

The corridor does not go far before ending at a T-junction.

'Yet another arbitrary decision?' you remark wryly.

'Every success relies on a little luck,' remarks Lancelot, but he seems less confident than what you are used to.

Will you take the turning north (turn to 99) or south (turn to 42)?

65

'Here's how this will work,' says the little man. 'I'm going to roll these two dice. Before I do so, you have to guess whether I will roll more than 7 or less than 8. If you get it right, I will brighten your destiny. If you lose,' he continues with a shark-like smile, 'I'll take one of your fingers.'

'My finger?!' you respond, aghast.

'Only the pinky. And as I said, where you'll be going, it won't make a difference.'

Well, you've come too far to back out now without looking a coward. You nod your acceptance. Decide whether you think the little man will roll more than 7 or less than 8. Then roll two dice. If you guessed right, turn to 79. If you guessed wrongly however, turn to 95.

66

Your blade held out flat, you catch Bedivere's downward swing inches from your head. Bedivere grunts, pressing down hard, bringing all his considerable weight to bear down upon you. Will you push back (turn to 14)? Alternatively, you could try sweeping his legs out from under him by turning to 24.

67

Lancelot's torch illuminates strange carvings along the wall as you follow the corridor deeper into the hillside. Your eyes fall upon them as you pass, but there's something about the pictures that makes you feel uncomfortable. They look like the drawings of a child, yet they seem etched in stone with a vicious anger. You avert your eyes from them, focusing on the passage ahead. You espy two doors ahead, one in each wall.

'Who built this place?' you ask. 'Surely a dragon has no use for doors?'

'It was built by many a hand,' replies Lancelot. 'Its purpose goes beyond housing a dragon, though the dragon's presence can be felt throughout.'

You know what he means. Beneath your feet a dull heat rises from the cobbles and you almost feel like you can hear the steady rumble of the beast's breathing from far away.

'Should we check what's behind these doors, then?' you ask.

Your companion shrugs. 'It is your trial. Not mine. Do as you see fit.'

Will you take the left door (turn to **49**), the right door (turn to **29**) or carry on along the corridor by turning to **21**.

68

You snatch random books from the air, looking at their titles before discarding them. All the time, tomes keep flying at you. Lancelot does his best to protect you, placing his armoured body between you and the wrathful volumes again and again, but a few still succeed in smacking into you. Roll one die and subtract the result from your **Life Points**. At long last, you come across a title that looks interesting: *Secrets of the Domus Caverns*. No sooner have you picked up this book than the other fall to the ground with a dull thud. Panting, Lancelot turns to you.

'Go on. Read it.'

The front cover is decorated with swirling patterns of gold and silver. You hesitate to open the heavy tome, almost feeling that to do so would be breaking some trust. But since Lancelot has told you it is alright to do so, you open at a random page and begin reading. Your eyes fall on a passage that tells of a means to strike down your tormentors which apparently can be found in the Maze of Hopelessness. Apparently to find the sword you need "follow the written word." Unsure as to what that means, you close the tome and set it carefully on a random shelf. You take your leave of the library, closing the door behind you.

'Where now?' asks your companion.

Will you take the door opposite if you have not done so already (turn to **29**)? Or will you instead make your way along the passage (turn to **21**)?

69

You enter yet another cavernous chamber. A sudden chill hits you and it is not hard to see why, the place is covered with ice! Razor-sharp icicles dangle precariously from the high ceiling and you have to walk with great care to resist sliding on the icy floor. In the cavern's centre is a pool, its surface completely frozen over. Gazing into it, you spot a magnificent shield with the motif of a lion upon it, floating beneath the ice. You could try smashing the ice with the pommel of your sword. If you wish to try this, turn to **16**. If not, turn to **93**.

70

The tunnel you follow twists and turns, countless passageways leading away from it on either side. You take one at random and find it also twists all over the place, yet more tunnels leading away from it to God knows where.

'The Maze of Hopelessness,' intones Lancelot softly. 'We must be getting near Patemilias' lair.'

As soon as he says those words there is an almighty roar and the tunnel seems to heat up.

'The dragon awakens,' says Lancelot.

Your whole body quivers with a heady mix of fear and anticipation. But before you can face the dragon, you must find your way out of the maze. You spot something lying on the path ahead. Stooping over to investigate, you see it is a leather-bound tome, decorated with a multitude of eyes. Will you pick up the book (turn to **25**)? Or will you ignore it and carry on through the maze in the hope of finding your way out (turn to **45**)?

71

The red one laughs at the top of his little lungs as you and Lancelot chase him through tunnel after tunnel, getting very lost in the process. At last you corner him at a dead end. The imp turns to you and blows a raspberry before disappearing in a puff of red smoke.

'Great. Where now?' says Lancelot.

You survey the warren of tunnels all about you, all bearings lost. Good question. Turn to **45**.

72

The scarlet imp shows little interest in getting away from you, its bounds doing just enough to keep it ahead of you. As you close in, you notice the creature has a leather bound book clutched against its chest. At last, you corner it against a dead-end and seize it by the shoulders. Impossibly its head turns a full 180 degrees to grin at you and Lancelot.

'Bye bye,' it laughs. A puff of bright red smoke surrounds you and you drop the imp in order to swipe the blinding stuff away from your face. When the smoke at last clears, you find the two of you are standing in a different part of the maze entirely. There is no sign of the imp. Turn to **4**.

73

Just in time, you raise the shield to protect yourself. The boulder crashes into it with a metallic clunk, jarring your arm horribly (lose 1 **Combat Skill** point). Cursing in pain, you face along the passage, thankfully hit by nothing more than a few loose pebbles. You take a turning to the left into what you hope is a more stable tunnel. Turn to **63**.

74

The skulls continue to moan as your questing fingers ferret amongst them. At last, your hand clutches a lever of sorts at the barrel's bottom. You give it a sharp tug. Suddenly, the skulls' moaning ceases and a section of the eastern wall slide back to reveal a secret doorway. However, striding through the doorway is a great warty beast with a stone club slung over its broad shoulders - an ogre.

'Here, don't you listen?' the monster growls, yellow beady eyes fixed upon you. 'Little boys should not play foolish games. Be off with you!'

A thick finger points back northwards. Beyond the ogre you can see a faint blue glow. Will you head back northwards and take the other turning at the junction as the ogre commands (turn to **99**)? Or will you attack the irate ogre by turning to **44**?

75

You raise your sword to block, but Bedivere's strength is so great that his wooden blade simply knocks through your own, smashing into your shoulder. You crumple to the ground, stunned. Your opponent lowers his weapon and turns to Lancelot.

'And you and Merlin think he is ready?' he snaps.

Lancelot shrugs and for a second his handsomeness seems to fade. 'As ready as he'll ever be.'

'As he'll ever be?' Bedivere tuts, disgusted, and strides away, sparing you not a second glance.

Lancelot sighs before helping you up, dusting off your clothing and re-adjusting your leather jerkin. 'Don't listen to him,' he says. 'You can do this. I know you can.'

'I hope I don't let you down,' you reply, your confidence a bit shaken.

Lancelot shakes his head. 'No. Hope you do not let yourself down. Come, Merlin awaits.'

You follow Lancelot as he leads you into the keep, the crowd dispersing with many a mutter. Record a **Combat Skill** of 2 before turning to **60**.

76

The hideous undead monstrosity crumbles into dust from your final blow. You turn to Lancelot who is still battling the female revenant. Expertly, he blocks every one of her frantic blows with his sword, but he shows no inclination to finish the fight. As you look on, the foul former woman he battles, you can't help but feel an intense hatred for her. The sight of her lank hair and rotting skin fills you not with disgust and terror as did her male companion, but with uncontrollable anger. You stride up behind her and bring the pommel of your sword crashing down on the back of her skull, shattering it. She drops to the ground and you watch with satisfaction as she rots away to nothing.

'Are you alright?' asks Lancelot.

You notice you are breathing heavily. You slow your breath down and then nod.

'You did well tackling those creatures,' he continues. 'But let us hurry on from this place.'

You agree. The exits to the east and south are sealed off by portcullises so that leaves either the tunnel to the north (turn to **35**) or the one to the west (turn to **27**).

77

Back to back with Lancelot, the two of you swinging your swords in devastating arcs, you slowly break through the irate plants, a clump of severed creepers left in your wake. Once you are clear of them, the two of you rush onwards. Turn to **5**.

78

The imp is fast, bouncing about the place heedless of all direction, but you are faster still. You catch him just as he rounds a corner into a long straight tunnel. He disappears from your clutches in a puff of blue smoke. You hear more giggling and see ahead in the tunnel the other two imps making faces at you. You race after them and they turn tail with exaggerated whoops of terror. The tunnel splits ahead and one rushes left, the other right. Will you dash after the red one (turn to **71**) or the yellow one (turn to **87**)? Alternatively, you could give up on this silly game the imps are playing with you and head off in another direction entirely by turning to **45**.

79

You look up from the dice to the smiling face of the little man.

'Meet your destiny,' he says.

There is a blinding light and you are forced to close your eyes to spare them its intensity. When you open them once more, you find you and Lancelot are in a different place altogether. Turn to **85**.

80

The surviving bats flock back to their home amongst the icicles, leaving the bodies of their fallen to lie scattered on the ice. Satisfied that they are too few in number to attack you again, you bring your hilt down on the frozen pond again and again, but the cracks grow no deeper and by now the echoing is almost deafening. You decide against trying any more, lest you bring the whole ceiling down upon you. Turn to **93**.

81

With Lancelot's help you succeed in heaving the door open. You enter a small room most unlike the others you have seen in the dungeon. A wallpaper decorated with flowers and marked with stains covers the walls and the furniture is outlandish yet strangely familiar. At the far end are a set of wooden steps leading into the darkness. A sense of evil pervades from the gloom, but with a deep breath you head downstairs, Lancelot close behind. A basement with more strange furniture awaits you at the stairs' bottom. An iron monstrosity sits in the corner, a contraption that looks almost like an oven, but much more elaborate. A loose pile of ropes lie clustered around a vertical pipe at the strange oven's end. Seeing these ropes brings forth a panic, Lancelot rushing to your aid as you gasp uncontrollably, hyper-ventilating in the dense basement air.

'Always weak,' comes a voice.

You turn to see a man emerge from a dark corner of the room, his face obscured by shadow.

'You know what happens when you come down here,' says the voice in a mocking tone.

Your panic increases tenfold and it is only Lancelot's reassuring voice that stops you from losing it completely. And then you spot something shining, just past the shadowy man. A magnificent sword, its point thrust into the ground itself, glows bright in the sunlight.

'You yearn for that weapon, don't you, boy?'' mocks the voice. 'Ha! You are not man enough to use it. You'll never be able to stand against me!'

Lancelot places a supporting hand on your shoulder and your confidence begins to grow. Will you dash past the figure and seize the sword? If you make the attempt, turn to 20. If you would rather not risk it, turn to 59.

82

The inferno of the dragon's breath consumes you, armour and skin going up in flames until all that remains of you is ash. Turn to 26.

83

The goblin falls, a dying gurgle escaping his green lips. You turn to see Lancelot has too dispatched his foe.

'You did well,' he says. 'But don't let your guard down. There will be worse than goblins in these caves.'

He leads you down the hill, the darkness of the cave enveloping you as you stride towards it. Lancelot strikes a torch, illuminating the gloom to reveal a stone clad passageway. With a deep breath, you follow the knight into the hillside. The constant drip-drip of water mingles with the sound of Lancelot's steel boots upon the cobbled floor of the passageway. Eventually the corridor splits, archways leading to the left and right.

'An arbitrary decision,' remarks Lancelot. 'But sometimes our fate is in the hands of such things. Which route shall we take?'

Will you head left (turn to 32) or right (turn to 67)? Alternatively, you could suggest splitting up by turning to 57.

84

The passage you are following gets uncomfortably narrow and you are forced to squeeze past various outcrops of rock and stalagmites. Massive stalactites and great lumpen boulders dangle precariously from the ceiling.

'I hope they don't fall anytime soon,' you laugh, using humour to mask genuine unease. No sooner have you spoken, than a crack rings out and one of the boulders behind you crashes to the ground. The whole ceiling starts to rumble.

'Run!' yells Lancelot.

You don't need telling twice! Roll a die. Note the number then roll again. If the two numbers match, turn immediately to 97. If not, you make it out of the tunnel and take a turning to the left. Turn to 63.

85

Immediately your attention is drawn to the great stone statue that dominates this chamber. Rising at least twenty foot high, it looks down at you with a face laden with authority and a stare that seems to look into the very core of your being. One great stone arm points to an archway leading away from the chamber. Another tunnel extends from behind the great statue.

'Looks like he wants you to go that way,' says Lancelot, indicating the tunnel the statue points to. Will you take this exit (turn to 50)? Or will you instead make for the narrow archway behind the statue by turning to 56?

86

'No!' cries Lancelot, hand outstretched to seize you. But it is too late. You touch the glowing sphere and immediately, the room around you begins to flicker, changing rapidly between solid and insubstantial. Lancelot's armour dissolves, a plain looking man standing where the handsome knight should be. The crackling increases in volume, mingling with various cries of annoyance and fear. You cover your ears and close your eyes, your screams trying to drown out the awful noises with little success. The world around you continues to destabilise, the falsehood swapped for reality. The sphere explodes and all turns black and the noises cease. Apart, that is, from your screaming which goes on for all eternity.

87

You don't know if it is the imp's fat belly weighing him down or just that you possess more energy than you have given yourself credit for in the past. Regardless, after no more than a few turnings round the maze's twisting corridors, you leap upon the yellow imp, holding on to his puny arms as he tries to struggle from your grasp. Lancelot catches up and seizes hold of the imp's tiny feet, ceasing its struggles.

'Human did well,' you hear from behind. You spin round to see the red imp dancing on the spot not thirty feet down the tunnel. 'But you ain't never gonna catch me!' it cries before running back down the passage. Suddenly, the yellow imp disappears in a blinding yellow light. When your eyes have readjusted to the gloom, you spot the red imp disappearing down a tunnel to the right.

'What now?' asks Lancelot.

Will you head after the red imp (turn to 72)? Or, if you tire of this game, you can try and find your way out of this labyrinth. Turn to 45.

88

You emerge into a near-black corridor heading westward. The two of you set off in that direction, Lancelot's torch revealing walls covered with moss and crawling insects. You pass a door to the south, but pay it no heed as it would likely take you back the way you came. Turn to 50.

89

The woman turns to you at last, a thin smile upon her face.

'You do well to think of yourself as our equal, for you are a man now. But do not forget childhood joys or Patemilias has won.'

She says no more, turning back the way she had come. You shrug at Lancelot and the two of you leave by the eastern archway, under the banner of King Arthur's greatest victory. Turn to 64.

90

The demon's assault is relentless, pressing you back against the wall. Your attempts to keep the creature at bay with your sword grow feebler as you tire. You take a desperate swing at it, succeeding only in leaving yourself exposed as the demon ducks under the clumsy blow. With a cackle, it rips through your chest, ice-cold talon seizing ahold of your heart. The demon squeezes, the twisted smile on its lips spreading as the life drains from you. Turn to **26**.

91

With the horrendous screech of metal and stone, the portcullis slowly raises. Panting from the effort required to keep turning the wench, you look through sweat-stained eyes to see the rusted gate finally reach its pinnacle.

'Well done,' says Lancelot. 'Let us proceed.'

You lift your hand off the lever - and immediately the gate starts to slide back down!

'Go!' yells Lancelot and the two of you throw yourselves forward, rolling underneath the falling portcullis seconds before it hits the ground with a crash. Lancelot helps you up before retrieving his torch from where it had fallen from its grasp.

The two of you continue onward, the gate falling into shadow as the passage swings round to the right. You haven't followed it long before you emerge in a cavernous chamber. Turn to **85**.

92

The rack is of little interest. It seems to have been poorly kept; the wood is warped and the iron manacles are red with rust. Experimentally, you try turning one of the winches, but it does not even move.

'I don't think we should stay too long here,' says Lancelot, a hint of concern in his voice. You nod. This place is just too unwholesome. You follow your companion from the room, closing the door behind you. Will you now open the door opposite you (turn to **49**) or instead carry on along the passageway by turning to **21**?

93

Despite its frozen splendour, there is little else of interest in this cavern. You spot a tunnel leading away to the north, seemingly devoid of ice.

'I believe that is the way we must go,' says Lancelot.

'Very well,' you reply. You carefully make your way over the slick floor and enter the tunnel. Turn to **70**.

94

You head on from this place.

'Will we ever find our way out of this maze?' you sigh as you make your way along a winding stone tunnel.

'Yes,' responds Lancelot. 'As long as you keep that last bit of hope, you shall make it through.'

Hoping he is right you turn down another side-passage. Roll a die. If you roll:

1 or 2 Turn to **19**.

3 or 4 Turn to **84**.

5 or 6 Turn to **63**.

95

You look at the dice in dismay, the little man smiling genially over their damning result. You hold out your hand.

'Take your payment then,' you say, gritting your teeth.

'But I already have.'

You look down at your hand. Sure enough, only four fingers greet your gaze. There is no wound and the skin where your missing pinky should be growing from feels smooth - it is like you never had a finger there in the first place! Your **Combat Skill** is reduced by 1, but other than that you feel fine. Without saying goodbye to the strange little man you and Lancelot take your leave via the northern door, leaving him to fondle his dice contentedly once more, with hands that seem to have one more finger than before. Turn to **88**.

96

The horrible gargoyle's bug-eyed gaze seems to follow you as you cross the chamber and pull open the door. Luckily, it does not spring to life, if it's even capable of such a feat. Not wishing to give it a chance to change its stony mind however, you hurry through the open door, Lancelot close behind you. You emerge into a tunnel heading east and west. Lancelot's torch reveals that to the east the passage ends within a few feet, a door to the south. Guessing this door would lead you back the way you have come, the two of you head westwards, into the darkness. Turn to **50**.

97

A massive boulder rushes down towards you. If you have a shield, turn immediately to **73**. If not, there is no time to dodge. The boulder slams into you, cracking your bones and crushing your organs. Turn to **26**.

98

You strain with all your might, muscles bulging with veins, sweat cascading down your brow, but you cannot lift the gate more than a couple of inches - inches that are lost as soon as you release the lever and the gate crashes to the ground.

'It's no good,' you gasp. 'You'll have to do it.'

Lancelot shakes his head. 'I cannot. This is your trial and I would be doing you a disservice to remove all its barriers for you. If we can go no further this way we shall return to the entrance and take the other passage.'

Without another word, he turns on his heel and strides back the way you came. You hurry after him, the sunlight streaming from the entrance to your right as you carry on past it, down the other passageway. Turn to **67**.

99

The tunnel is covered with small pebbles that crunch beneath your tread. It leads into another cavern, similar in size to the cavern of bones, but this one is filled with a very different substance; the floor is littered with gold! Coins, ornaments, jewellery, chests spilling their contents with the stuff; all of them here, seemingly unprotected. Even Lancelot lets out a gasp at such wealth. Will you root through this veritable hoard (turn to **51**)? If you resist temptation, there are two passage-ways and three doors leading from this place. The doors intrigue you. A door in the northern wall is painted with a picture of a laughing child. The first door in the eastern wall is decorated with a red octagon, some white writing inside the shape that you do not recognise. The other eastern door has a picture of a snowflake. Will you take:

The northern door? Turn to **23**.

The first eastern door? Turn to **2**.

The second eastern door? Turn to **69**.

You tighten your grip on your sword's hilt and immediately a surge of strength flows through you. 'No,' you say. 'No! You shall do this no more. I am free of you!'

With that last cry you swing the blade in a dazzling arc, your tormentor's eyebrows barely having time to shoot up in surprise before you carve his head from his body. It falls to the ground with a plop, utter surprise still upon its face. The body crumbles to the ground. Twirling your sword in both hands, you bring the point smashing down into the chest, the body erupting into flames. The cavern goes impossibly bright and you close your eyes to spare them from the intense light.

'He's coming around,' says someone.

You open your eyes to a room covered with electrical equipment; computers, monitors, flashing diodes and cables surround four worried-looking faces. One of these faces is pressed up close to your own, concern furrowing its brow. The man before you is red-haired and deep-cheeked, his blue eyes not unlike those of Lancelot though he is nowhere near as handsome. He is dressed in plain red scrubs.

'How do you feel?' he asks.

You give no response, looking down to see you are strapped into some sort of metal chair. Something is pressing into your temples. Another man in similar scrubs removes a metal circlet from around your head, the back of it attached to wires running to one of the larger computers. This man is black-haired and bearded, similar to Bedivere though fat where the knight was burly. He looks at you concernedly.

'Is he supposed to be like this?' he asks of a white-haired man dressed in blue scrubs.

The older man strokes a clean-shaven chin. 'He may just take a minute or two to recover. This is all very experimental, remember.'

'You better not have lost him,' says the fourth man, short-cropped fair hair and elegant suit betraying a man of importance. 'If you've made a vegetable of him, we'll be ruined.'

'There's more important things than money,' snaps the bearded man. 'I told you he wasn't ready for this!'

The old man snorts. 'And who are you to be able to assess who is or is not ready for such an experimental treatment method?'

The red-haired man ignores them, flashing you an encouraging smile. 'I know you're not a vegetable. You won through, didn't you?'

You smile. 'He's dead,' you mutter.

The four exchange a glance.

'Who's dead?' asks the older man.

'Him. The memory of him. Of what he did. I'm free. At long last, I'm free.'

The old man slaps his thigh in delight and even the suited man grins.

'Looks like he was ready after all,' gasps the bearded one.

The red-haired man places a hand upon your shoulder. You do not flinch. 'Well done,' he says. 'Well done indeed.'

May you live happily ever after.