

**WINDHAMMER PRIZE**  
FOR SHORT GAMEBOOK FICTION

# Alchemist's Apprentice

AN ENTRY IN THE 2015 WINDHAMMER PRIZE FOR  
SHORT GAMEBOOK FICTION

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# Alchemist's Apprentice

by John Evans

Welcome to Alchemist's Apprentice! This is a gamebook, which means that it is both a story and a set of rules to judge your success in an adventure. You should start reading at section 1, then read other sections as directed by the text. You will be reading about the adventures of your character through their time as an alchemist's apprentice. Your choices will determine your character's ultimate fate!

Unlike most gamebooks, Alchemist's Apprentice does not use dice. This story is more of a puzzle — Everything that happens is a result of your choices. See if you can get the best ending!

Alchemist's Apprentice was written by John Evans for Arborell.com's Windhammer Prize contest, 2015. If you have feedback on this story, feel free to email me at JohnEvansCS@gmail.com or jevans@alum.mit.edu, or contact me on Twitter at @Chaoseed.

## Items

During your adventure, your character will acquire various items and currency. (The standard currency of your land is the "Sovereign Coin", abbreviated "SC".) You should have some method for recording these items, like a paper and pencil. Some items have stats; for example, you might acquire 2 hot peppers (M10) (A5). The letters and numbers afterward—the stats—are important, so don't neglect to record them as well. It might also be a good idea to have a section for notes taken during your quest.

## Keywords

Occasionally certain events will have effects on later story developments. To keep track of these occurrences, Alchemist's Apprentice uses a keyword system. When you are told to "gain" a keyword, record it along with your items. You may ultimately be directed to different sections of the book depending on whether you possess certain keywords.

You either have a keyword or you do not. If you are told to gain a keyword, but you already have it, there's no change; you cannot have it "twice", you simply continue to have it.

Incidentally, all the keywords in Alchemist's Apprentice begin with the letter A.

## Energy (Important!)

Your character will start the story with a certain amount of Energy. This represents your capacity to perform labor. Exploring and talking to people isn't that hard, but if you want to, for example, move some hay bales, that takes definite effort.

If you run out of Energy, the story is NOT over! This is different from the "Stamina" stat found in many gamebooks. Energy is more like money; if you spend it all, then you cannot spend any more. You will see sections that say "If you want to perform this action, you must spend 2 Energy"; therefore, if you have less than 2 Energy, you cannot take that choice. Running out of Energy will limit your options, but it's not necessarily the end of your adventure!

**Enough instructions, you're ready for the story! Turn to Section 1!**

1:

You've had a good life growing up in a small village. Your elder siblings are perfectly content to work on the farm, but there are just too many of them--you've got to find some other career. So on your 16th birthday, according to long-standing tradition, you leave your home and search for an apprenticeship.

There is a slight autumn chill in the air as you make your way west, following rutted paths through the fields to the town proper. Fortunately, your village has been growing into a bit of a trade center for the region, so there's a wide variety of professions represented. Yet, somehow, none of them are hiring! "Too skinny," says the blacksmith, "Too athletic," says the wizard, "Too brainy!" says the warrior. Finally you find yourself at the last house in the village, a dilapidated shack nestled among rocks in unfarmable land.

As you consider whether to knock--the door flies open. A woman stands there, looking somewhat worn and frazzled, wearing a spattered leather apron over a brown shirt and trousers. "Aha!" she proclaims. Then she grabs you by the arm and drags you inside.

The shack appears much larger on the inside than without, yet this impression of space is lessened by the sheer volume of stuff inside. The walls are lined with shelves laden with jars, roots and dried things hang from the rafters; several poles provide even more ramshackle shelves and hooks for storage.

"Did I hear something about an apprenticeship?" the woman says. Ignoring your reply, she stalks over to a stained table and rummages through the debris heaped atop it, flinging most of it to the floor. "You were right to come to Saimea the Alchemist! I was just thinking I could use a new apprentice, and you look like a likely lad--lass?" She squints at you and pulls on some thick, cracked goggles. "Whatever, I'm not picky. You look to have just the right mix of brains and brawn. Remember, good alchemists run for cover, great alchemists know when to start running."

Saimea suddenly flings something at you, and you manage to catch it. It's a worn backpack with only a trace of strange odor. "You need to go out and find some ingredients to start your apprenticeship with," she says.

You both take a moment to look around the shack.

"You," Saimea enunciates, "have to find your own ingredients. It's traditional." She grabs you by the shoulders and steers you out the door. "Find magic substances--magic plants, or things made by magic critters. Then bring them back here and I'll help with the other, basic ingredients. Go on! Have fun!" Saimea shoves you out the door and closes it with a bang.

Searching the backpack, you find a pouch of 10 Sovereign Coins (SC). Not a bad daily wage, for an apprentice, but Saimea probably intends you to buy something with it. The backpack is roomy enough to carry whatever you find; you also start your journey with 7 Energy. Given that Saimea was more helpful than any of the other tradesmen you met, perhaps you should go along with her "quest"...

Turn to 68.

2:

"Oh, I'd appreciate your help, dear!" the old woman says. You leap up and grab the trunk of the tree...and slide down. Unfortunately, your lack of tree climbing experience hampers you; you just can't get a grip on it, and the branches are too low to jump for. As you back away, the elderly woman advances and starts waving her broom upward again. "Can't anyone in this village climb a tree?" she exclaims.

Return to 68.

3:

"Going? Oh, things are going, uh, great!" Radost's smile widens. "This is your one-stop shop for anything a farmer can need..."

After a moment, his face falls. "It's not so great," Radost mutters. "I wish I'd paid more attention when my father is around. Now that he's passed, the wholesale merchants are suspicious of me, or something. You see how the store is..." It does strike you that the store shelves are a little sparse. "Am I not as trustworthy as him? I'm in here all day, really, helping people, or if not trying to make connections with the merchants. What am I doing wrong?"

Radost takes in a deep breath and then lets it out in a sigh. "I don't know. You're just an apprentice yourself, right? I don't mean to dump my problems on you. Thanks for listening, anyway."

You offer your commiserations and return to 95.

4:

You hold out the brass rod.

"Astounding!" The swordbearer wraps his hand around your hand, and the rod, engulfing you in his massive grip. He shakes your hand up and down. "Truly, you can call yourself an adventurer. Ranger! What do we have as a prize for our fine young friend?"

The bowman slings a bag off his shoulder and hunts through it, muttering. You think you catch the words 'vendor trash', though you have no idea what that would mean. Finally he nods to himself and withdraws a gleaming metal object. "Here, your reward," he says, voice flat.

"Excellent!" The swordbearer slaps the bowman on the back, almost sending the skinny man sprawling. "Now, we are off to continue our quest for the fabled Hammer of Winds. Be well, my friend."

The adventurers walk past you out of the cave. The hairy one stops to regard you for a moment.

"Grrrrargh."

With that, you are left alone.

You gave away your brass rod and received 1 set of small bronze scissors (P1) (M2). Gain the keyword Appraise and return to 10.

5:

"All right," Saimea says. "If you've found some magical ingredients, or even just one, I'll help you turn them into something useful."

Magical ingredients are items with an A code number after them. You may use any combination of ingredients that you possess, simply add together the code numbers and turn to that section! (For example, if you had code numbers A7 and A9, you would add  $7 + 9 = 16$ , and turn to section 16. But those numbers don't exist, it's just an example.)

NOTE: You MAY use a single ingredient in a potion. Just turn to the section specified by its code number.

NOTE AS WELL: You MAY NOT use the same ingredient TWICE, even if you have enough ingredients. You need a combination of different ingredients. (Continuing with the example above: 7 alone, or 7 plus 9, but NOT 7 plus 7.)

FINAL NOTE: You MAY brew the same potion more than once. As long as you have enough ingredients, of course!

If you've reconsidered brewing for now, return to 35, or go back to the town square at 68.

6:

Peering out at the lake, you spot several patches of glowing plants. They do seem very unusual, perhaps even magic? Unfortunately, to get any of the stuff you're going to have to wade out into the frigid river, and that will sap your strength. For each 1 Energy you spend, you may acquire 1 bladderwort (A32). (You may return here at any time to do this again.)

When you're finished here, return to 39.

7:

You spare a moment to think about the people you've met. There was young Albina, exploring the world and collecting interesting items, yet almost mercenary in her approach to people. There was motherly Mirna, who thanked you for helping her care for her child. And of course old Rostina,

who let you in on the secret of the village...Of course, you're half-inclined to dismiss what she said, but she was quite sincere.

You've spent all your life in this village, but somehow, today, it's like you arrived here for the first time and met everyone anew. Like the people and events here are urgently trying to tell you something, if only you would listen.

After a few minutes' contemplation, though, the curious feeling ebbs. You're left looking only at an ostentatiously large statue of a bird.

Oh, well. Return to 68.

8:

If you have either of the keywords Alliance or Agrarian, you must immediately turn to 24.

"Hello, my friend!" Dalibor says. "What do you think, have you word from someone?"

The decision is up to you. If you agree to open negotiations with Dalibor and the Free Men for pasturage, turn to 22. Otherwise, to tell him your village refuses, turn to 52.

9:

Down a small path you find an old hut--ancient, even. It is built above the ground, between a set of dead trees, and its yard is fenced off with blackened sticks. An old woman in a shapeless gray dress is seated on a tree stump in the yard, with chickens pecking around her. She appears still enough to be a statue.

If you have the keyword Agistor, turn to 57. Otherwise turn to 80.

10:

Up the river, you find yourself in the foothills of the mountains. It's quite barren, and while you rack your brain, you cannot remember seeing anything that might be magic up here. Further north is the old manor, squatting on the hillside like a scarred tortoise. You've explored a couple of times before, all the village kids have, so you could investigate it again by turning to 28.

You also notice a light in one of the caves dotting the hillside. It's not too far, you could investigate it by turning to 40. Otherwise, return to 68.

11:

The bartender raises his thick eyebrows as you give him the letter. He opens it and reads it, then he rolls his eyes and lets out a sigh. "Well. Thanks." With that he tosses you a coin and goes back to wiping the bar.

Note that you no longer have a letter. Gain 1 SC and the keyword Appeal, then return to 19.

12:

"Hmph," Vesna says. "Well, my apprentice dropped a pair of tongs right down in the furnace. I can't quite reach them, I'm going to have to do it tomorrow morning when the furnace is cool. I sent her home as punishment." She laughs shortly, then shrugs. "If you could get them out, that would be handy, I guess. But it's really hot in there, so don't feel you have to strain yourself."

If you have a Firehand Dose and wish to use it, turn to 85. Otherwise return to 87.

13:

"What's that?" Saimea pokes at your hand. "Spider webs? Spider webs. Yes, there does seem to be something strange about these. Good eye, apprentice. What spiders spun these? Curious. Well, I know what to do. Here, take this acid, fill this cup halfway with water, add the acid to the water--always the acid to the water--dissolve the webs..."

Under Saimea's guidance, you render the webs into a fine gray liquid. She pours it into a vial and gives it to you. "Spider grip potion," she says. "Helps you climb. Only one or two drops will last a while. That little bit should go a long way!"

Add a Spidergrip Potion to your inventory, gain the keyword Attach and return to 5.

14:

If you have the keyword August, your business with her is finished, and you must return to 19.

Otherwise, if you have the keyword Arable, turn to 26.

Otherwise, if you have the keyword Agriculture, turn to 56.

Otherwise, if you have the keyword Annual, turn to 27.

If none of these apply, turn to 17.

15:

The town council meets in a plain wooden building; sturdy, but a little drafty. It's not in session today, however, with no matters currently needing the elders' attention. But you do notice one old farmer, Ognyan, sitting on a rock and whittling a piece of wood.

If you would like to talk to Ognyan, check if you have the keyword Altruist. If you do, turn to 55. If not, turn to 84.

If you don't wish to talk to him, you must return to 68.

16:

"Dear me, so it isn't actually legendary after all," Saimea says, poking at the leg. "The red crow of the east that lives in the sun and has three legs. Well, I don't know how much of that is accurate. The sun, definitely, though. Feel the warmth. Yes. Fried. Yes. Heat the skillet."

With Saimea's guidance, you fry one leg in a glob of chicken fat. It smells good, but Saimea orders you to cook it down to a mush, adding a few herbs. She finally smears the end product onto a piece of rye bread and wraps it all up in a leaf, handing you the resulting package. "A tiny bit of essence of sun," she says. "This might seem odd, but this particular preparation will acclimate you to high temperatures. You could reach into a fire without more than a tickle. For a few minutes, anyway. The bread is just to help it go down."

Remove 1 red crow leg from your inventory, add a Firehand Dose (B3) to your inventory, gain the keyword Abjure and return to 5.

17:

The woman has woven clothes and a fur-lined coat; to you, it is the expensive outfit of a well-to-do merchant. She notices you and smiles; her eyes are the same gray of her clothing. "How do you do," she says. "Call me Biserka. I am visiting from the Imperial government."

Of course you know of the Empire, that nominally rules this land and many others besides. Still, their presence has never really been felt in this village. You merely nod, though, and she continues. "We're interested in developing this village," Biserka says. "Bringing it to its full potential, watched over by a new manor. With new crops, to start with, ones that will bring more prosperity, made this a real trade destination. Here." She holds out her hand, and you reflexively do as well; she drops something into your hands--a handful of seeds. "Something to get you started," she says. "Your farmers can grow these crops and sell them for much more money than either rye or oats. I have more seed, if your people wish to deal." She nods and settles back in her chair. "Please, I have not been able to find anyone to speak with. You appear more open-minded than these...ah...quaint townsfolk. I suspect they trust you. You may help them, and you will help me, and we will all help each other. Yes?"



Gain 1 handful of seeds and the keyword Annual, then return to 19.

18:

"Excellent work!" Saimea says, actually smiling. "I think you have a natural talent for this! Have you listened to what I've been saying while we mix and grind things together? I hope you have, because I hate trying to organize lesson plans." She pats you gently on the shoulder. "In any case, I'll be proud to call you my apprentice. I think you're the right choice to carry on my knowledge and traditions. I'm glad you stopped by today."

Congratulations, you're officially an Alchemist's Apprentice! You aren't going to be thrown out, forced to live on the street or become one of those crazy 'adventurers'!

THE END!

4 OF 5

19:

This is the interior of the bar. It serves as a hub for the village, a default place for people to gather. Merchants sometimes stay in the attached guest rooms. With the ongoing renovations to make the walls completely stone, it's slowly becoming an actual inn.

The bartender is wiping down the old wooden bar. He's almost as well-muscled as the village blacksmith, and is one of the few people in the village whose name you don't know. With the suspicious look he's sending your way, you don't feel comfortable talking to him without a good reason. However, if you have the keyword Apport but not the keyword Appeal, you can talk to him by turning to 11.

The bar is mostly empty, but there's a group of people in the common room. You can go see what they're up to at 37. There is also an unfamiliar woman in very nice clothes sitting off by herself; you can talk to her by turning to 14. Finally, if you don't have the keyword Artifice, there is a curious traveler that you can approach by turning to 62. Otherwise, you can return to 68.

20:

"Not bad!" Saimea says. You think you actually catch a hint of a smile on her customarily-dazed face. "I think this might actually work out. Yes, it's about time I started passing on my knowledge to a student." She pats you gently on the shoulder. "I'm looking forward to seeing you around...apprentice."

Congratulations, you're officially an Alchemist's Apprentice! You aren't going to be thrown out, forced to live on the street or become one of those crazy 'adventurers'!

THE END!

3 OF 5

21:

"All right," Saimea says, "Let's see, how DID you do on the first day of your apprenticeship?"

Count the number of keywords you have from this list:

Abjure, Abrade, Accelerate, Accurate, Adhere, Advantage, Adverse, Aid, Amble, Appetite, Apply, Ashen, Assiduous, Attach, Aurora

Then find that number on the following table and turn to the specified section:

0 keywords: turn to 76

1-3 keywords: turn to 73

4-9 keywords: turn to 20

10-14 keywords: turn to 18

15 keywords: turn to 100

22:

"Excellent!" Dalibor throws his arms out expansively. For a moment, you think he's going to give you a hug. "That is excellent news, my friend." He suddenly grasps your hand and shakes it. "I am sure this will be the start of an excellent relationship. Here, for your trouble." When he withdraws his hand, he has left some coins in your palm.

Gain 5 SC and the keyword Alliance, then return to 39.

23:

Anna listens to your explanation. "Paying for pasturage, huh?" She nods, watching her fishing line. "I don't know. At least it's something that makes sense. I had no idea why one of those warriors was poking around..." She reaches over and pats you on the back. "I'll leave it up to you. If you think it would be a good idea to negotiate with him, you can tell him so. I think it's beyond me, maybe there's someone else you can ask about it. Old Rostina, perhaps, she always helps out when one of my horses is sick."

Gain the keyword Aegis and return to 39.

24:

"Oh." As you approach Dalibor, he raises his eyebrows. "I did have one more thought. I hear you are interested in alchemical preparations. Perhaps you have things that might be of use to the Free Men. I have heard of one or two very rare items."

Dalibor will buy any item with a D stat, and he will give you a number of SC equal to it for each

one. (For example, if you have two items with a D5 stat, you can sell one for 5 SC or both for 10 SC.)

Once you're finished, return to 39.

25:

"You see," the swordbearer says, leading you through a tunnel, "We were questing through this area and we lost one of our most valuable magic items."

"Down a hole," the bowman mutters.

"After an intense skirmish!"

"A skirmish between your toe and a rock sticking up from the floor!"

The swordbearer glares at his companion. The party arrives at a hole; a rope is tied around a nearby stalagmite, leading downward. "So, we need you to climb down our...our Rope of Climbing."

"Graaaaargh."

"You can have a torch," the swordsman says. "Don't drop it, though. I'm not made of torches."

The hole not only looks deep, but it twists and turns. It looks like it will take at least some Energy to explore, and there may be other hazards. Maybe even...traps? If you're not feeling up to it, or you just don't want to help, you can return to 10. But if you want to start exploring, turn to 65...

26:

Biserka listens to your report and nods. "I am glad we were able to come to an arrangement. Please, a little reward for your trouble." She holds out her hand and drops some coins into yours. "I'm sure this will mark a new era of cooperation between your village and the larger world."

Gain 3 SC and the keyword August, then return to 19.

27:

"Have you spoken to anyone about our new farming plans?" Biserka says. "The Empire is patient. But I eagerly await word." She taps her fingers on the table. "Of course, if you wish to do some business on the side, I have some time."

If you want to sell Biserka something, turn to 90. Otherwise, return to 19.

28:

The manor was obviously a grand building, the largest building you have ever seen, though it succumbed to fire long ago. Its walls are blackened and overgrown with vines, and its ceiling has fallen in.

Come to think of it, you don't know who lived here or when; it's been ruined as long as you can remember. In fact, you recall some of the village elders mentioning exploring the ruins when they were young, as well. The days of its grandeur are long since past. Not only that, anything of value has been taken by generations of looters, or just exploring kids.

You're pretty sure there is nothing to help you here, so return to 10.

29:

"Hm, the red crow of the east, right out of legend." Saimea has your ingredients laid out on a table, scrutinizing them. "And spiderwebs. Not just any spiderwebs, especially sticky ones. Warmth, yes, and binding." She tugs at the sticky material. "I do have an idea. You get the mortar and pestle, here..."

With Saimea's guidance, you grind the bird leg and some herbs into a fine paste; meanwhile, she applies some preparation to separate the web strands, then she bunches them together to make a kind of fabric. Finally combining the ingredients, you end up with a small square of red material. "If we could actually weave web fabric, it would be powerful indeed," Saimea says. "But who has time for that? This is a magical bandage, it will drive out infection and speed healing. Best used in conjunction with actual bandages, though." She places the square into a leather pouch.

Your alchemy has consumed 1 red crow leg, so make note of that in your inventory (you always have enough spiderwebs). Gain 1 Red Bandage (D3). It will not restore Energy, but perhaps you will find another use for it. Gain the keyword Aid and return to 5.

30:

Anna is fishing by the Slow River. As you sit down, she gives you an immediate smile. You take a moment to explain your quest.

"Magic ingredients," Anna says, looking out over the plains past the river. "Horses are usually pretty mundane, you know. However, I have noticed something unusual in the lake. Bladderworts." She gestures with her fishing rod. "They're plants that live in the water, nothing odd about that. But these, these are larger and they glow. You might want to check them out."

Following Anna's gesture, you realize that she's talking about the glowing patches you spotted earlier. You nod and look back at her, but notice her staring across her horse pasture at the uniformed man. "I wonder what that guy is up to," Anna mutters. "He wanted to talk to me earlier,

but he just looks too suspicious. If he gets too close to my horses..."

If you have the keyword Agistor, turn to 23. Otherwise, return to 39.

31:

Mostly on a whim, you retrieve your pouch of Energy Dust and tip it out over the box. It glitters in the firelight as it wafts through the air. Both you and the tinker watch the dust swirl like smoke, coiling downward, shimmering as it billows out over the box.

Suddenly there is a click. A moment later, another click, and a creak. Before your eyes, the gears in the box begin to turn. There is a curiously springy sound, then another, then more in a slow rhythm. The box is playing music! You recognize it as an old folk tune, plucked out metallically. It's like nothing you've ever heard before.

Then the lid of the box pops open. You see a tiny figurine, made of red-enameled metal sheets, vibrating on a small shaft. A red bird, streamlined to form an arrow pointing in one direction. Pointing right at you.

"South!" the tinker crows. "Of course! Thank you, my friend." The box is closed and stowed somewhere in the figure's clothing. The tinker stands--only coming up to your shoulder--and pats your arm. "Let this be a token of your friendship. Of course, if you merely wish to buy a drink with it, that's all right with me too." The tinker gives you some coins, then pushes past you to leave the bar.

Remove the Energy Dust from your inventory. Gain 5 SC and the keyword Artifice, then return to 19.

32:

Saimea takes your bladderwort sample and holds it up to the light, peering at it. "Interesting things, bladderwort," she murmurs. "The bladders are little traps. They eat animals. Tiny bugs, worms, even tadpoles. Especially this size. And glowing. I think. Hmmm. All right, grind these herbs..."

You boil the bladderwort and add the herbs as directed. Everything dissolves and cooks down to a clear liquid with a curious wavy quality to it. "A hunger potion," Saimea says, decanting the liquid into a vial and looking through it. "The essence of consumption. You might say, what's the point of a potion that makes you hungry, and I would answer, there isn't one, except gaining experience in alchemy. Still, you might find some use. Traditionally you take it on a long trip and, when you run out of food, eat grass or something." She hands you the vial.

Your alchemy has consumed 1 bladderwort, so remove it from your inventory. Add 1 Extract of Hunger to your inventory, gain the keyword Appetite and return to 5.

33:

Anatoly is skinning his catch with a sharp knife. As you approach, he nods. "Thanks for the help. We all depend on each other sometime, you know? Speaking of which, if you got anything else that might help a hunter out, I might buy it off you."

Anatoly will buy the following items from you, for 3 SC each: Snarefriend Fiber, Red Tranquilizer or Seeker's Balm. Remember, if you sell anything, remove it from your inventory!

When you're done, return to 63.

34:

"I'll trade these green rocks for whatever you have," Albina says. "That's what grownups do, right, trade? I got a lot of rocks. You got anything good? I like things I can use to explore, organize my collection...you know."

Albina is only interested in certain items, specifically those items with a P stat (P1, etc.). She will give you 1 ant's peridot (A38) for every 1 such item you give her. (You may come visit her again to trade as many times as you like!)

When you're finished trading, return to 68.

35:

Before you can open the door, Saimea does. She stares at you through her cracked goggles, then she pulls you inside. "Well, come on then!"

If you would like to brew potions with the magic ingredients you've collected, turn to 5.

If you want some hints, turn to 44.

If you feel you have come as far as you can in your quest, and you want Saimea to judge your worth as an apprentice, turn to 21.

Otherwise, you may bid Saimea farewell and return to 68.

36:

The statue is well familiar to you. Twice the height of a man, it is in the form of a bird with wings half-spread. Or, from another perspective, its wings are curled protectively around whatever is before it. Certainly it makes good shelter from snow. Not only that, it's good for climbing; generations of children have grown up being warned about falling off, then climbing it anyway (and often indeed falling). Its features are getting worn, but it's still recognizably a bird.

If you have the keywords Acquire, Antic AND Archetype, turn to 7. Otherwise, return to 68.

37:

It's the middle of the day, but at the same time it's not quite winter planting time yet, so there are some people hanging around the bar's common room. Standing in front of the fire is a slender young woman with blonde hair, wearing a fur coat that's long enough to be called a dress, coming down to about knee length.

She's telling some sort of story to half a dozen patrons, who are listening raptly and occasionally laughing. It sounds quite elaborate. You walk close enough to get a listen...

"So the little boy came to the door and said, 'I'm here to wake up Jugemu-Jugemu Goko-no-surikire Kaijarisuigyō-no Suigyomatsu Unraimatsu Furaimatsu Kunerutokoro-ni Sumutokoro Yaburakoji-no-burakoji Paipo-Paipo-Paipo-no-shuringan Shuringan-no Gurindai Gurindai-no Ponpokopi-no Ponpokona-no Chokyumei-no Chosuke. Because it's time for school'..."

You have no idea what's going on, so you return to 19.

38:

Saimea examines the tiny gem as you relate its origin. "Gems are usually the province of advanced alchemy," she says. "I charged you with finding the product of magical creatures and plants--you know, easy stuff. But I suppose here we have a special opportunity. This gem was easy to obtain, and it's both small and low quality." Do those glasses act as a loupe as well? "And mined out by ants, that's a rare thing. Tumbling would most likely take weeks even for stones this small. But powder, well, that we can work with."

It's a bit painful to watch Saimea grind your supposedly precious (if miniscule) gem literally to powder. "The attributes are travel, shall we say," she continues. "And moving things from one place to another. Shipping, I suppose. When scattered over a vict--over a recipient, that person will find their next journey to be free of trouble." On her direction, you stir other ground herbs into the mixture and place it into a small bag.

Remove 1 ant's peridot from your inventory, gain 1 Dust of the Messenger's Blessing (D5) (B5), gain the keyword Amble and return to 5.

39:

To the southwest of town is a small horse ranch, run by Anna, a middle-aged woman who you suspect is your aunt or second cousin or some distant relation like that. The Slow River runs nearby, and you spot Anna fishing. The river has formed an oxbow lake nearby, which appears to be shining, with scattered patches of light on its surface. Also, on the opposite side of the ranch you see a man loitering, examining the horses; he wears the uniform of the semi-nomadic warriors from across the hills.

To talk to Anna, turn to 30.

If you want to talk to the man, and you have the keyword Aegis, turn to 8; if you don't have that keyword, turn to 81.

To examine the glowing lake more closely, turn to 6.

When you're finished here, return to 68.

40:

If you have the keyword Appraise, you've done everything you can here, so return to 10. Otherwise, if you have the keyword Adventure, turn immediately to 25. Otherwise, keep reading...

You duck into the cave and immediately hear voices.

"Is this magical whatever so important? Can't we get along without it?"

"It's vital to our quest! We've come so far, it would be folly to abandon it!"

"Grarrarrgh."

"Could we replace it somehow? I'm sure we can find an identical magic wand in the next village's pawn shop."

You freeze. The arrogant tone of voice, the mentions of 'quests' and 'magic'. There's only one conclusion that can be drawn...

Adventurers.

"Ah, a native!" The light approaches, illuminating a startlingly tall man with ornate armor that appears to be constructed of fine metal chain links. A sword hangs at his waist. "Can you guide us through this cave? You know its depths, I'm sure!"

"What, this one?" A skinnier figure approaches, eyeing you. This one is dressed in much lighter leather armor and carries a long bow. "No smarter than the rest, I'd wager."

One final figure shuffles into the light. Stooped, covered with fur, it emanates a disgusting stench. Blinking wide eyes, it scratches its belly with long claws.

"Graagh," the thing says.

The others look at it, then at you.



"Is there any chance you can help us retrieve our...our magic item?" the swordbearer asks.

The village mothers always relate horrifying stories of bad children who went off into the tunnels and fell down bottomless pits, or else were eaten by vile monsters. Most of the village kids put no stock in these tales, but after exploring some of the caves yourself you've come to the conclusion that some of are quite dangerous.

Still, it looks like a quest, so you could give it a shot.

Gain the keyword Adventure. If you'd like to try finding the item, turn to 25. Otherwise return to 10.

41:

This seems like the right opportunity to use the spider grip potion. You uncork the vial and let a couple of drops of the grey liquid drip onto your tongue--and immediately you sense a tingling in your fingers (not to mention a bitter, salty, licorice sort of taste in your mouth). Stepping past the old woman, you reach out to grab the trunk of the sycamore--and you are able to grab on and pull yourself up!

Your grip makes it easy to hold onto the tree; you can support yourself with one hand flat against the trunk. It takes a little bit of practice, not to mention upper body strength, but soon you're climbing upward. Finally the lowest branch is in reach, and you grab it.

At this point the rabbit leaps away and falls downward--right into the arms of the elderly woman. "There you are, Jumpy!" she says, embracing the struggling creature tightly. "There's no getting around it, so you might as well stop wiggling--we must have something in the stew pot tonight!"

The elderly woman steps into the shack and closes the door behind her. After climbing down, you can hear bubbling from inside.

Gain the keyword Altruist and return to 68.

42:

Rostina lets out a long sigh. "An alliance? Our home embroiled in struggles of men riding across the land. Tied to those outside. The world is changing too quickly. Rostina may not be around to see it." Suddenly she pokes you in the belly with her cane. "You must take responsibility. Choose carefully. Dependence or independence? Mm. I am tired of this." She sighs and settles back.

Gain the keyword Adjudge. If you have either of the keywords Arable or Agriculture, turn to 64. Otherwise, return to 63.

43:

Have you gained any keywords AFTER gaining the keyword Anticipate? If you have, turn to 75. Otherwise, turn to 47.

44:

Saimea takes in a startlingly deep breath and then lets it out in a very long sigh.

"Do I really have to repeat myself?" she asks. "You must go out into the village and find magical substances. Magical plants are the easiest. Magical animals are rarer, though you can sometimes find parts of them; you can also find products of magical animals, like milk, honeycombs, that sort of thing. You know, products." Saimea pokes at her own fingers as if counting. "There are other magical substances around, of course. Metals are usually the province of the artificers, but we can use them. Stones are gems are classic, but the magical ones are rarer, if only because so many people wish to possess them."

"In any case." Saimea's gaze focuses on you again. "Keep your eyes open. Ask around. Put in some effort. Find the magical substances. Then, bring them back here. Once you do, you decide in what combination to brew the ingredients. Alchemical preparations need a base of at least one or two truly magical substances, but there are always other things; matrices, solvents, and so on. Fortunately for you, I am well stocked, and I'm the one who actually knows how to do this stuff, so I'll help you with all of that. And! Once you have created your potions and preparations, you just might be able to use them to help people out. Or even sell them!"

She grabs you by your shoulders and turns you around, pushing you out the door. "In summary! Find magical substances. Bring them to me. Decide what to do. Simple!"

The door slams behind you.

Return to 68.

45:

"Engorged bladderwort," Saimea says. "And spiderwebs. Of course, these are meant to capture and entrap prey, the commonality is obvious. All right, the webbing will be the matrix, so we render the bladders..."

With time and some simple ingredients, you render the bladderwort plant into a viscous liquid. The webs are drawn through this mixture, soaking it up with startling quickness; she uses tiny metal pinchers to place the resulting fibers in a paper pouch. "These things will adhere to any animal," Saimea says, giving you the packet. "For this reason they cannot be stored in leather! You might find some use for them."

Your alchemy has consumed 1 bladderwort, so remove it from your inventory (you always have enough spiderwebs). Add 1 Snarefriend Fiber to your inventory, gain the keyword Accurate and return to 5.

46:

The sycamore tree is empty. From the shack emanates a happy bustle and a rather enticing smell.

Return to 68.

47:

You only get a little ways into the forest before you come upon Anatoly. He shakes his head when he sees you. "I told you to come back later, we have to give more time for the snare to work." Return to 63.

48:

"Legs of the legendary red crow of the east," Saimea says, examining your find. "And some kind of inflated bladderwort. Interesting. Interesting. The crow is associated with the sun." She keeps poking at the ingredients. "The plant lives in water, yet consumes small animals to survive, bugs, worms, even tadpoles--yes! Consumes. Here, put it in water! I will grind the leg."

Saimea prepares a paste and you induce the bladderwort to 'eat' it. A soft glow suffuses the plant. Then, with some boiling and appropriate additions, the entire thing is rendered to an opaque red liquid in a small vial. "Stamina potion," Saimea says, handing it to you. "I hope you took notes, I don't get the opportunity to make that very often."

Your alchemy has consumed 1 red crow leg and 1 bladderwort, so make note of that in your inventory. You now have 1 Stamina Potion; when drunk, it will restore 2 Energy. You may drink it at any time. (Even right now!)

Gain the keyword Accelerate and return to 5.

49:

Ognyan takes the seeds and rolls them in his palm. He takes one between them and forefinger, squeezes gently, then sniffs it.

"Flax!" he says, nodding. "Sure, lots of people trade for it. Weave the fibers. Mill, press the seeds." Then Ognyan looks at you with a twinkle in his eye. "Needs a lot of work. Weeding, caretaking. Double the days on the field. Village would devote itself and all its labor to flax, leave off grain,

sell it off and hope the merchants give us aught to eat. Person who gave it to you, what do they want from this village? I wonder."

"Tell you what," Ognyan says, rolling the seeds in his hand. "Give you 5 coins for this handful. Show it to the council. Figure out what to do. What do you say?"

You may sell your flax seeds to Ognyan. You must give him the entire handful, and you will receive 5 SC; if you do this, gain the keyword Agriculture. Either way, once you are finished talking with Ognyan, you must return to 68.

50:

Rostina nods to you. "Refusal of alliance, refusal of ties. I agree. Too confining, world is changing too quickly. Rostina may not be around to see it." Suddenly she pokes you in the belly with her cane. "You must take responsibility. Mm. But you did well. This may help." She presses some coins into your hand. "You must choose carefully. Dependence or independence? Mm. I am tired of this." She sighs and settles back.

Gain 5 SC and the keyword Adjudge. If you have either of the keywords Arable or Agriculture, turn to 64. Otherwise, return to 63.

51:

"Small peridots," Saimea mumbles, looking over your finds. "And spiderwebs. One dragged from deep underground, the other tossed through the air. Pulling against each other, forces and connections. Yes, I see. Here, grind this gem, use the good mortar. Now for the acid..."

Under Saimea's direction, you render the ingredients into a sticky green paste. Very sticky, in fact. "An efficient adhesive," Saimea says. "One might even call it a superior glue. Make sure you only use it on things you really want to stick together. Although, I suspect the magic properties will run out after a few days, but that's still a long time to have one's hand stuck to one's nose. Trust me on that."

Your alchemy has consumed 1 ant's peridot, so remove it from your inventory (you always have enough spiderwebs). Add 1 Yellow-Green Adhesive (B3) to your inventory, gain the keyword Adhere and return to 5.

52:

Dalibor is silent a long moment. Then he nods. "I see. Then we have nothing more to talk about this day." He turns, looking off to the east. "I'm sure another will visit and talk with you again." His face is composed, certainly no longer smiling.

Gain the keyword Agrarian and return to 39.

53:

"Magic, aha. Well we don't really stock that sort of thing as a matter of course." Radost reaches back and rubs the back of his neck--then his eyes widen. "Wait a moment. I think..." Ducking below the counter, he comes up with a small leather package. You lean forward to watch as he unwraps the package, revealing a set of small, red...bird legs?

"Got this off a trader from the East," Radost says. "Genuine firebird legs! Yeah. Uh, 10 coins for each package. I have three packages, and each one has three legs. I don't want to unpack them or break up the packages. No one else wants to buy them--I mean, it's a steal how I'm letting them go like this."

The legs are definitely red, and upon examination you realize that they emanate a subtle warmth. Radost has three sets of three for sale. For each set you buy, hand over 10 SC and record 3 red crow legs (A16) in your inventory. You may only buy three sets in all! (That would be a total of 30 SC for 9 legs.)

Gain the keyword Avian. When you are finished, return to 95.

54:

"Delightful," Saimea says, though her voice is calm as ever. "A leg of the semi-legendary red crow, and a somewhat rare, though tiny, gem." She tilts her head and regards you. "The sun and the earth. The depths and the sky. And messengers and or representatives thereof. Yes? Yes. Hm." She rolls the stone in her palm for a moment. "Nothing too innovative comes to mind, but in this case there is always a safe option. Here, we must render the bird meat..."

You boil the red crow leg and remove the fat; this oil is added to the flame, turning it a red color. The meat and bones are cooked until completely dry, then ground. This and some water are placed in a container that is rotated over a fire. "For the real ones you can spend weeks doing this," Saimea says. "But we don't have truly high-quality ingredients to start with, so..."

Eventually Saimea removes the container from the fire. She opens it to reveal a pile of ash--but from this ash she retrieves a newly gleaming green stone! "It will bring you fortune," she says, handing it to you. "Perhaps literally, if you can find a buyer. As souvenirs go, it's not a bad one."

Your alchemy has consumed 1 red crow leg and 1 ant's peridot, so remove them from your inventory. Add 1 Luck Stone to your inventory and gain the keyword Advantage, then return to 5.

55:

As you approach Ognyan, he looks up from his whittling--and a smile breaks over his face. "I saw what you did with old Ozanka. I can't climb any trees with these old bones. Looks like you had some help. Alchemy, huh? Saimea's pots and potions have helped us all out at one time or another,

I'd be the last to say anything bad about her. The old days, we'd just give each other what we needed, not worry about coins and trading with outsiders and whatnot." He shakes out his left arm, a loud crack emanating from his elbow. "Times change," he says, as if his arm hadn't just made a sound like it was breaking. "Truth be told, there was once a lord in that manor, watching us. Even before my time, he was driven off. Any case, I can't help much with whatever you're up to. Times past, I was a farmer, best in these parts. Otherwise, don't know much of anything."

If you have found any seeds in your travels, you can show them to Ognyan by turning to 49. Otherwise, return to 68.

56:

Biserka's brow furrows. She is silent for a few moments. "So the elders of the village are considering the government's proposal. I suppose that's as good as I could have asked for." She leans back in her chair and waves her hand, staring out the window. "You are dismissed."

Gain the keyword August and return to 19.

57:

You approach the old woman, and for some reason you find yourself relating your encounter with Dalibor. This seems to spark her interest, and she leans forward, even nodding at you to continue. When you finish, she places her cane in front of her and rests both hands on it, staring off into space.

"Free Men," she says. "Rostina has seen a few. We live together, farm, give each other food? Apportion land to families, to be fair. We want little. Then people come in, say they are free, we are free, they give us money. Money wants to be spent. Money wants to want, so we want too? So we are tied to those with money." She swivels her cane vaguely, still not quite looking at you. "We depend on each other. Do we depend on others? Ties that bind also pull. Hm." Finally Rostina's gaze focuses on your eyes. "Anything else?"

If you have the keyword Adjudge, you must return to 63.

Otherwise, if you have the keyword Agrarian, turn to 50. Otherwise again, if you have the keyword Alliance, turn to 42.

Finally, if none of that applies, return to 63.

58:

The goods stocked in the shop are quite ordinary. However, there is one unusual thing--a persistent sound of crying. You follow it to a corner, finding a woman sitting on a chair; you

recognize her as Mirna, the mother of one of the farming families. She is holding, and rocking, an incessantly crying baby, both of them wrapped in warm furs. Upon seeing you her face lights up, but it is a tired smile.

"He won't stop fussing," she says. "I know it's just a colic, like his brothers and sisters had, but even worse. He just won't eat. I thought this store would be warm and peaceful for him, but it didn't seem to help. If only he would eat he would feel better, I know..." The baby himself seems tired out by the crying, but he doesn't stop.

If you have an Extract of Hunger, you can try that by turning to 97. Otherwise, return to 95.

59:

If you have the keyword Altruist, turn immediately to 46.

A sycamore tree stands next to a small house, almost a shack. Beneath the tree stands an elderly woman, squinting up into the branches. She wields a dusty old broom, waving it upward. Perched on one of the lower branches you can see a gray rabbit.

"Come on down, Jumpy!" the woman wheedles in a scratchy voice. "Come on!"

You could try climbing the tree to get the rabbit down. If you have a Spidergrip Potion and wish to use it, turn to 41; if you don't, but want to climb anyway, turn to 2.

To go back to the town square, turn to 68.

60:

Bozidara's smile lights the room again. "Oh, how nice! Yes, I recognize this. Here, let me."

You may give her 1 Red Bandage or 1 Snarefriend Fiber. (She will only take one item!) Once you hand it over, she begins changing the dog's dressings. There is a slash in the creature's belly, deep enough to look very painful indeed. The dog whimpers, but Bozidara hesitates not a moment in applying a green paste and then your bandage, as well as more wrappings. When she is finished, the dog quiets again.

"I'm sure that will help him heal faster!" Bozidara says. "Thank you very much. Here, as a reward, take that pouch on the table." She gestures with a nod. You follow her gaze and find an embroidered pouch (M3) (P1). Inside it is 1 portion of scout's pemmican (M3); this food will restore 1 Energy when you eat it! (You may do so at any time, even now.) Add both the pouch and the food to your inventory.

Gain the keyword Assist, then return to 68.

61:

"I see," Saimea says. "I seeee. The web and wort are tools to catch and consume, while the crow represents the sun and fire. I see." She taps her chin. "Not what I usually like to make, but I suppose it must be part of your training. First, we get everything into a liquid form."

You chop, grind and boil, ultimately ending up with a murky red liquid. "If you were paying attention, you might guess what this is," Saimea says, carefully pouring the liquid into a vial. "If not, it's a poison. I mean, it's a poison whether you were paying attention or not. Of course any number of things in this house are poisonous, I even have some gone-off potatoes in the corner. But this, this is a particular preparation to make the vic--er, recipient--well actually victim, make them not dead but rather sluggish and ill." She finally hands it over.

Your alchemy has consumed 1 red crow leg and 1 bladderwort, so remove them from your inventory (you always have enough spiderwebs). Add 1 Red Tranquilizer to your inventory, gain the keyword Adverse and return to 5.

62:

A curious figure wrapped head to toe in mismatched furs sits at a table. "Oh! Hello," the figure says. "I am but a humble traveler and tinker." You cannot tell any sort of gender, and the piping voice doesn't help; however, you realize that the accent is that of warlike peoples from very far away--the southwest, according to your vague understanding of geography. Of course, this person doesn't seem the least bit warlike. "I rely upon my collected treasures to guide my path in life," the tinker continues. "They have brought me here. However, my little box has stopped working. Perhaps there is something in this village that can help?"

The tinker sets a wooden box on the table. It's very ornate; the top is glass, showing myriad tiny gears below. There is also a windup key sticking out from one side of the box; the tinker gives it a turn, but nothing happens.

If you have Energy Dust, you can try it by turning to 31. Otherwise, return to 19.

63:

The plains give way to scrub, then a forest. Soon the path winds through trees, their branches spread above you like wings of great birds. On the outskirts of the village, you find the corpse-renderer sitting outside his smelly hut, rendering tallow in a bubbling cauldron. He gives you a cagey look. "Want to buy anything? Candles? Leather?" You ask about magic items, but he shakes his head. "Nah. Never had any truck with that. Don't have any use for such things either." Then he pauses for a moment, only to jerk his head toward the forest. "Saw a trapper having difficulties. I suppose if he has difficulties then I do too eventually. You could ask him. And, hey, there's always the witch." He snickers crudely.



You do recall that there is an old woman living around here, who some come to for advice and others refer to as a 'witch'. If you would like to visit her, turn to 9. Alternately, if you want to find the hunter, turn to 79. Otherwise return to 68.

64:

You decide to relate your encounter with Biserka as well. Once again Rostina listens with interest to your story, thinking a long time after you fall silent. Then, finally, she nods once and leans forward.

"Much interest in our village," she murmurs. "We have much here. Rye? Horses? Yes. What else? Do you know? No one knows." She suddenly cackles. "Secrets. Do they know? Who knows. Very secret." She digs a hand in her pocket and holds it out to you. "Look. Don't touch. Look. Look."

You see...a pod. Loose, with several large seeds spilling from it.

"Vetch," she murmurs. "Magic vetch. Magic beans. Don't touch!" She pulls her hand away and cackles again. "Yes. Saimea's apprentice. That old looney. Yes, you search for magic? You cannot have this. No, not this. Too powerful, too magic. Bitter secret of our village. Saimea, oh, what she would do to experiment. It would be too much. Only when the time is right. Great danger, great sacrifice, only then are the beans brought out. Only a few elders know, and their children if they have been told. Now you do." She stows the pod somewhere on her person and she leans back. "Now you know. You are this village, this village is you." She nods. "Go."

Gain the keyword Archetype and return to 63.

65:

Before you start, you may apply Seeker's Balm or Dust of the Messenger's Blessing to yourself--if you have them, of course! You may only apply one at a time, and it will last for the rest of your cave adventure. This will use up the item, so you must remove it from your inventory. However, if you give up midway, the item will wear off and will have no effect if you return...

You climb down the rope into the dark cave. There are knots tied along its length, making the descent easy for the most part. The flickering torch throws curious shadows over the irregular rock formations forming the sides of the shaft. Soon you come to a small flat space, almost like a landing. However, you discover that the cave makes a jog to the right, over some spiky rock formations, then continues downward.

If you want to climb over the rocks and continue, it will be tricky; it will take 2 Energy, unless you applied Balm or Dust, in which case it will take 1 Energy. To continue onward, spend the appropriate amount of Energy and turn to 78. If you want to give up, you can climb back up (without spending Energy) and return to 25.

66:

"Oh, well." Radost looks you over. "There is something, kind of a messy job. I can't really pay much. Come on..."

He shows you to a dusty storeroom, then an even more dusty storeroom behind that. "Back here..." Radost lights a candle and takes you to the darkest part of the room.

Something gleams back there. Many somethings. Tiny eyes shine at you in the dark, and hairy legs scuttle. "Spiders," Radost says, voice resigned. "I don't know where they came from. They're tougher than regular spiders, like something made them grow. I don't get it. They do bite, but luckily it doesn't do much more than sting." He shows you his hand, covered with small marks that have almost healed over. "If you can clear them out, I'll pay you."

It will take some Energy to kill spiders. If you would like to, and you have Energy to spare, turn to 72.

Otherwise, return to 95.

67:

"An interesting combination," Saimea says. "The stone is solid, utterly so, and the web smells of capture. The fire of the crow can be tamed. Mm. All right, let us get to distillation."

The red crow leg is boiled, mashed, filtered, boiled again, separated, all to yield a tiny bit of paste. This is rolled in spiderwebs, then the gem dust--and a glowing sphere is formed! "How about that," Saimea says, holding the tiny creation between thumb and forefinger. "It actually worked. This will glow permanently; well, it will probably dim after a few years, but it's cute, isn't it? Here." She twists a bit of wire into a gem setting to make it easier to carry the thing, as it glows with a light that shifts between green, red and yellow.

Your alchemy has consumed 1 red crow leg and 1 ant's peridot, so remove them from your inventory (you always have enough spiderwebs). Add 1 Everglow Pebble to your inventory, gain the keyword Aurora and return to 5.

68:

The center of town is a grassy field that has been worn down by generations of children playing. Dirt paths wind their way around the field, marking out connections between different parts of town. In the very center of the field is an old stone statue of a great bird.

From here there are many places you can go:

The general store, on the west of the square: 95

The forest to the south: 63  
 The fields to the east: 93  
 The blacksmith, on the north of the square: 87  
 The town council, on the south of the square: 15  
 The doctor, on the east of the square: 88  
 Up the river, to the north: 10  
 The barren plains to the west: 91  
 A ranch to the southwest: 39  
 The bar: 19  
 A small house near a tree: 59  
 Examine the statue in more detail: 36  
 Saimea's shack: 35

69:

On the edge of the barren field you find a young girl squatting in the dirt. She wears an assortment of ragged white furs, putting you in mind of a tiger cub. She is digging at the ground, engrossed enough to be startled when you call out. She doesn't run, though, instead regarding you with curiosity. "I'm Albina," she says. "Magic stuff? Well there ARE pretty rocks. What do you think?" She shows you something.

Examining the object, you find it to be a tiny stone, not even as large as a pea. It's rough, but it's a pretty green color--it might even be a gem. "Ants bring them up," Albina says. "They never used to, but recently they've been digging them out of the ground and putting them in their anthills. Big ants." Albina slips the stone back into a pocket. You look around, but can see no more of the gems; the girl grins as she notices your action. "I collect them. I took them all. Do you want some more? I could trade."

Gain the keyword Acquire and turn to 34.

70:

"Curious," Saimea murmurs, examining your finds. "Bladderwort, a carnivorous water-dwelling plant...and peridot, a gem mined by insects." She looks up at the roof of her cottage while rolling the tiny gem in her palm. "The wort would eat the insects, obviously. Perhaps something along the lines of betrayal? Oh, and the stone is torn from the earth. Oho, oho. Grind it. Grind everything together!"

As directed, you make a strange mush from the wort and gem powder, with a few other things thrown in by Saimea. "An unusual concoction," the alchemist says, scraping it onto a scrap of leather. "It smells of determination and tenacity. Also somewhat of vengeance, but personally, I dislike encouraging such things. You see now that alchemy has its own moral dilemmas. In any case, it could be used as potion or ointment..." She trails off into inaudible muttering as she begins cleaning her tools.

Your alchemy has consumed 1 bladderwort and 1 ant's peridot, so remove them from your inventory. Gain 1 Seeker's Balm (D5) and the keyword Assiduous, then return to 5.

71:

I'm sorry, you must have made a mistake. There shouldn't be any way to get to this section. Why don't you return to 68?

72:

You pick up an old broom, its bristles already matted with webs and spider guts. Then, steeling yourself, you dive into the fray.

The spiders are difficult to kill. They can scurry and jump with startling speed, often landing on your body and biting before leaping away. Eventually you get tired.

Scrutinizing your handiwork, a curious feeling comes over you. The cobwebs collected in the corners of the room have a subtle glow to them. You can't shake the feeling that they are special in some way, so you gather them up. On your inventory sheet record many spiderwebs (A13). (There are so many spiderwebs that, no matter what you use them for, you will never run out! Of course, if you've done this before, there really isn't much difference between how many you've gathered last time and this time.)

Radost returns to the room and looks around, then he lets out a sigh. "That does help get a bit of weight off my shoulders." He gives you a couple coins, then he pats you companionably on the back. "Thanks."

Spend 1 Energy and gain 2 SC. Then, if you do not have the keyword Apport, turn to 82. Otherwise, return to 95.

73:

Saimea's brow furrows. "Hm," she mutters. "Were you even trying? At least you proved that you can do alchemy if pressed. I suppose...I suppose you can come back tomorrow. Then we'll start your training and see if you REALLY have what it takes to be an alchemist!"

You soon find yourself walking back to your parents' farm for the night. Well, Saimea didn't ever actually SAY you were her apprentice. But she DID say you could come back! And you DO have one or two actual potions to show off to your family. You're farther along than you were this morning!...Just keep reminding yourself of that.

THE END!

2 OF 5

74:

"Afternoon, young one," Nediljko says, taking a moment to rest on his shovel. You show him the seeds and tell him your story; he examines them, brow furrowed. "From the Empire?" he says. "Well I've always been a patriotic man. You're sure this woman had her bona fides? Well I could try planting them, I bet it won't be hard. I'd even give you a few coins for your trouble."

You may sell your seeds to Nediljko. You must give him the entire handful, and you will receive 2 coins; if you do this, gain the keyword Arable. Either way, once you are finished talking with Nediljko, you must return to 68.

75:

You meet Anatoly soon after entering the forest; the hunter is sitting on a rock, whittling a piece of wood. "Yeah, I suppose it's about time," he says, putting away his work and walking along with you.

You find three of the traps already occupied. "Two rabbits and a squirrel!" Anatoly says, delight obvious in his voice. "It's just like old times!" He quickly ends the struggling animals' lives.

"Thanks very much," Anatoly says. "Take this." He gives you 3 SC.

Gain the keyword Apprehend and turn to 33.

76:

Saimea stares at you. She continues looking at you for what seems quite a long time. Finally she grabs your backpack. "I can live with an apprentice who fails," she says. "But not one who doesn't even try. Just go away and find something more suited to your life." Ushering you out, she slams the door behind you.

You begin the long, lonely walk back to your parents' farm. You can already imagine the jeers of your siblings filling your ears. You're going to have to find something else to do. Of course, it's possible that if you come back tomorrow, Saimea may have forgotten you tried to apprentice yourself yesterday...

THE END!

1 OF 5

77:

Did you use a rope from your own inventory for that last bit? If so, you find that the way you had to tie it makes it impossible to retrieve. You must leave it behind...Unless you are carrying a Luck Stone, in which case when you get to the top you are luckily able to tug the rope away from the

other stalagmite! In that case, you can keep your rope.

Whatever happens, you are able to make it to the bottom of the adventurers' rope without spending any more Energy. Once you get there, the adventurers help haul you up, so you don't spend any Energy here either.

If you got the brass rod, turn to 4. If not, the adventurers keep bickering among themselves without paying you much heed; hand over your torch and return to 10.

78:

Fortunately for you, there's only one way to go. Unfortunately, you have come to the end of your rope, literally. The cave extends downward and ends; below, you can see glimmers of crystals and a pool of water. But you also catch sight of a golden gleam, which must be whatever the adventurers want you to find. It bounced quite far from the vertical shaft; to get to it, you'll have to climb down a slanted path studded with sharp crystalline stones.

Or, if you have obtained your own rope from somewhere--in other words, if you have a rope in your inventory--you may tie it to a stalagmite and lasso another one to make the path easy to climb; using a rope, it will take no Energy to climb down. Otherwise, if you cannot or do not wish to use a rope, but you applied Balm or Dust, it will take 1 Energy to climb down. Otherwise, with none of those preparations, it will take 2 Energy to scramble down over the rocks.

You can give up and go back, and the adventurers will pull you up; this will take no Energy and return you to 10. Otherwise, spend the appropriate amount of Energy and turn to 96.

79:

If you have the keyword Apprehend, turn immediately to 33. Otherwise, if you have the keyword Anticipate, turn immediately to 43. Otherwise, keep reading...

After hiking a ways into the forest, you spot the hunter; he's squatting down, fiddling with a bit of rope. Of course he's heard you coming, and he nods as you approach. "They send someone else to help me?" he asks. Upon your vague assent, he sits back and sighs. "Well. The name's Anatoly. I haven't been having much luck with my snares." He toys with the noose-like rope. "It's like the animals are getting clever, or slipperier. They grab the bait and whisk away like the wind. I need some more wire, I need something to really grab onto the animals...I don't suppose you have anything that might help?"

If you have a length of wire, AND you have Snarefriend Fiber or Yellow-Green Adhesive, and you wish to give such objects to Anatoly, turn to 89.

If you cannot or don't want to give the hunter anything, he shrugs. "Keep your eyes out, I suppose. I'm asking everyone." Return to 63.

80:

As you approach, the old woman finally does move, eyes focusing on you from within her withered face. "Hmmm? Who's that?" She raises a cane and pokes your belly. "Youngster? Too small, throw it back. Gotta cook a while longer." A cackle escapes her lips, then she stares at you. "Go away."

You must return to 63.

81:

The man wears a fur jacket, woven pants and a tall hat. Not expensive materials, but carefully tailored. He notices you and a smile lights up his mustachioed face. "Hello, my friend!" he says. "My name is Dalibor. Are you an inhabitant of this wonderful town? Excellent!"

You can't really get a word in edgewise, so you let him speak. "You have an excellent location here," Dalibor says. "A valley between mountains, natural protection and a wonderful river. You raise horses and grow oats for them in the spring. We have horses too, great powerful beasts. Yours are fine animals, though." He reaches out a hand toward a horse, then he stops; glancing back, you see Anna glaring in your direction.

Dalibor withdraws his hand and clears his throat. "Yes. As you have guessed, I represent the Free Men. We associate with many villages like yours, where farmers share the fruits of their labor. We could do so much for each other! We could build a fortress to protect roads coming in to your village. Not like that silly manor. And you could pasture more horses! Have your own fighting corps, your own sons and daughters riding your own horses, opposing all enemies of Free Men!" He pauses a moment, almost vibrating with passion.

You start to reply, but he raises his hands. "I know, I know. Big decisions. Listen. Let us pasture some of our horses on your land, and we will pay. That is all I ask, for my proposal to be heard by someone in the position to accept. No, merely to consider." He glances at Anna, then he shrugs.

Gain the keyword Agistor and return to 39.

82:

"Oh hey," Radost says, mumbling. "Would you mind taking a note to the bartender? I'll give you a tip." He presses a wax-sealed paper and some coins into your hand before you can respond. Seems a large 'tip', but who are you to complain?

Note that you have a letter. Gain 4 SC and the keyword Apport, and return to 95.

83:

"Odd," Saimea says, reviewing your finds. "The web and wort capture and consume, while the stone merely exists. However! The stone was taken from deep in the earth and brought to the surface. Strange, that. Stillness and stasis? Perhaps I have an idea..."

You are directed to cook down the spiderweb and plant bladder, forming an ash, which itself is cooked with the ground gemstone. "Good enough," Saimea says, tipping the stuff into a pouch. "I suspect this substance is very abrasive. Good for polishing and grinding, making sandpaper perhaps. Here you go, have fun."

Your alchemy has consumed 1 bladderwort and 1 ant's peridot, so remove them from your inventory (you always have enough spiderwebs). Add 1 Abrasion Dust to your inventory, gain the keyword Abrade and return to 5.

84:

Ognyan's eyes flick up to you as you approach. "Hm. The seventh child, eh?" He nods. "You better find an apprenticeship soon. You don't know how hard it is, organizing land use. It's just not fair for one family to have so many kids." He stretches for a moment, producing some startling cracking sounds, then he returns to his work. "Can't help you, I'm afraid. Best move along and get to it."

Return to 68.

85:

This looks like exactly the right occasion for your Firehand Dose! You unwrap the small piece of bread and eat it. The red mush is curiously tasteless, like lard, but you manage to eat the whole thing. Midway through you feel a strange sensation start in your chest and flow through your entire body, down to your fingers and toes. You can't quite decide if it feels warm or cool.

You kneel down and look into the furnace, spotting the aforementioned tongs. You reach forward and feel...nothing. You reach in further and suddenly smell smoke, so you withdraw your hand. It turns out your sleeve was starting to catch! Rolling up your sleeve, you stick your bare arm in the furnace. There is only a vague sensation of heat as you grab the tongs, pull them out and toss them on the floor, where they lay smoking. Your arm and hand are completely unharmed, but you shudder to think what would have happened if you tried that without protection.

Vesna looks over at you in surprise. "I'll be damned," she says. "That was kind of impressive. Well, just leave the tongs there, they'll cool off quick enough. Hm. I should probably reward you or something, shouldn't I? Let's see what we have here."

Vesna gives you 1 glass bottle (M6) (P1). Remove the Firehand Dose from your inventory, gain the keyword Aargh and return to 87.



86:

"HMMMMMMMMMMMM," Saimea says, looking over your treasures. "Hmmm. A red crow represents the sun, the peridot comes from the earth, the bladderwort is found in water. One eats, one flies, one merely exists." She rubs her forehead. "Hunger calls for energy which is provided; hunger is sated. All held in a matrix of stasis. I see now. The stone is an object from the dirt, the sand, the west, holding power which flows from the south..." Saimea takes a deep breath, then she lets it out in a long sigh. "All right. We melt and boil these down..."

You follow Saimea's instructions, grinding the leg and plant, combining them to a paste which you could swear is glowing slightly; this is then mixed with the ground gem, leaving a glittering dust. "It affords energy," Saimea says, sweeping the dust into a pouch. "In a rather flexible form." You may sprinkle the Energy Dust on yourself at any time (even now!), thereby consuming it, and it will restore 1 Energy to you. However, there may be another use for it.

Your alchemy has consumed 1 red crow leg, 1 bladderwort and 1 ant's peridot, so remove them from your inventory. Add 1 Energy Dust to your inventory, gain the keyword Apply and return to 5.

87:

You have only been in here once or twice, and your impression was always one of closeness, activity and heat. Nothing has changed. The blacksmith is a burly, barrel-chested woman with close-cut, dirty blonde hair; her name is Vesna. Her muscular bare arms gleam with sweat in the light of the forge.

When you arrive, Vesna is hammering something on the anvil; it looks like one of the innumerable tools that a farm town needs. She stops hammering and moves to a chair, taking up a wire brush and beginning to clean the object. Only then does she acknowledge you with a nod. "Welcome, youngster," she says. "Find an apprenticeship? No hard feelings about earlier, I hope." Listening to news of your apprenticeship, she nods. "Alchemy? Fair enough. Perhaps you'd be making something useful for a tradeswoman. I don't have much money to spare, but I do have a couple of little pieces I could trade..."

You may trade Abrasion Dust or Yellow-Green Adhesive, if you have them. For each item you give Vesna, she will give you 1 metal box (M2) (P1) in trade.

If you do not have the keyword Aargh, you may ask Vesna if she has any tasks that need accomplishing; turn to 12.

When you are done here, return to 68.

88:

The doctor's building is sturdy stone. Some call her 'midwife' and others 'witch', but all respect her. Bozidara is her name, and she sits in a rocking chair in front of a cheerily burning fire, with a large dog in her lap. "Oh! Hello." Her face crinkles in a smile under her white kerchief. "Anything wrong? No? Good. I would help if you needed it, but if not, I'll keep my attention on Hunter here."

If you have the keyword Assist, there's nothing more to do here, so turn immediately to 68. Otherwise turn to 94.

89:

Anatoly's eyes light up as you hand over the wire and your alchemical creation. "Oh, now this is interesting!" He carefully smears it on several snares. (Whichever item you chose to hand over--Snarefriend Fiber or Yellow-Green Adhesive--remove it from your inventory, along with the length of wire.) "All right then. What we're going to have to do is wait, all right?" After setting the snares, he steps over to you and gives you a companionable slap on the shoulder, pushing you toward the village. "Go on, I'll keep watch nearby; you come back a while later and see if we caught anything." Gain the keyword Anticipate and return to 63.

90:

Biserka will buy any item with a B stat, and she will give you a number of SC equal to it for each one. (For example, if you have two items with a B5 stat, you can sell one for 5 SC or both for 10 SC.)

Once you're finished, return to 19.

91:

If you have the keyword Acquire, turn to 34. Otherwise, turn to 69.

92:

With Mirna gone, the shop is quieter, though somehow lonelier. The items on the shelves are no more interesting than before. Return to 95.

93:

Actually, you don't feel like walking back to your family's house until you are sure about your apprenticeship. You're certain that none of the other farming families need assistance. The great

road out of the village curls around the fields like a lazy dragon, but it's too much of a trek to go that way today. You turn, intending to return to the village center, but then you notice a middle-aged farmer nearby, among the pastured cattle. Nediljko is his name, you recall, and he's uprooting some particularly stubborn weeds in preparation for winter rye planting. Seeing you, he gives a friendly nod, wiping his brow under the wide brim of his hat.

If you have found any seeds in your travels, you can show them to Nediljko by turning to 74. Otherwise, return to 68.

94:

Bozidara rubs the dog's side, and you see bandages applied to the creature's belly. "Gotta keep changing the dressing," she says. The furry gray beast seems too large for her lap, but she betrays no sign of discomfort. "What are you up to? Apprenticeship? Isn't that nice. I don't suppose you have encountered any sort of bandages?"

If you have a Red Bandage or Snarefriend Fiber, and you wish to hand them over, turn to 60. Otherwise return to 68.

95:

The general store serves as a clearing house for barrels, tools, clothing, all the things a farm town needs. During harvest time, of course, the town square is taken over by a larger market. The store is currently run by a young man named Radost, who has recently taken over from his father. He immediately notices you when you enter. "Come in, come in! I've got all sorts of stuff! Anything you need! If not I can get it!" His smile is wide and a bit anxious.

Radost is only interested in items with an M stat (M2, M10, etc.); this stat represents the item's price. He will sell items he has in stock for a number of SC equal to the item's M stat. He will buy any items for a number of SC equal to half the item's M stat, rounded down.

Here are the items Radost has in stock to sell:

Thick rope (M2) (P1), 1 in stock  
 Length of wire (M4), 1 in stock  
 Glass bottle (M6) (P1), 3 in stock  
 Torch (M3), 3 in stock

These are these only items Radost will ever have available; he will not restock. Radost will also sell back any items you sold him--for full price, of course!

If you would like to ask Radost about magic ingredients, and you have the keyword Avian, turn to 98; if you do not have that keyword, turn to 53.

If you would like to ask if he has any tasks that need doing, turn to 66. If you'd like to ask him how things are going in general, turn to 3.

If you want to browse the shop on your own, and you have the keyword Antic, turn to 92; if you do not have that keyword, turn to 58.

Otherwise, when you're done here, return to 68.

96:

In a small hollow studded with white-blue crystals, you spot a gleaming metal rod in a hole in the floor. You kneel down...and you're confronted with one more problem.

The rod has somehow fallen down among a crazy jumble of rocks and spikes. You're having a tough time figuring out how to fit your hand down there, especially since your only light source has a habit of burning you if you get too close to it.

If you have an Everglow Pebble, though, that makes it easy to illuminate and grab the rod. If you don't have this item, you will have to use stupid brute force-- spend 1 Energy to break enough of the rocks to get it. Of course, if you don't have an Everglow Pebble or enough Energy, you cannot get the item!

If you manage to get the rod, congratulations! Add 1 brass rod to your inventory.

When you're finished here, turn to 77.

97:

You mention that Saimea helped you brew a potion that may help. "Really?" Mirna says. "You want to feed my little one some strange medicine?" She gazes at her baby, then she finally lets out a long sigh. "The truth is, Saimea has assisted me before. If it were anyone else...well, it may be worth a shot."

She holds her baby out, and you carefully let one drop of Extract of Hunger fall onto his tongue. The baby's crying turns to sniveling, then he smacks his lips. He grabs for his mother's chest, and Mirna quickly takes him to her breast. The baby begins to nurse, his whimpering subsiding, his tears drying. After a few minutes Mirna gives you a grateful smile.

"That's astonishing," she says. "You must sell this potion to me. I see it may last a while."

Mirna buys 1 Extract of Hunger from you, giving you 3 SC. She won't take no for an answer. (However, even if you have more than one, she only buys one.)

"Thank you so much," Mirna says, standing and rewrapping her furs. "Our children need a lot of

help, until they can stand on their own. I'm glad you're willing to take some time for those most in need." So saying, she kisses you on the top of the head, then she carries her child out of the store.

Gain the keyword Antic and return to 95.

98:

Radost shakes his head. "I, ah, there's nothing other than the legs I can think of. Sorry."

Remember, Radost will only ever have three sets (of three legs each) for sale. For each set you buy, hand over 10 SC and record 3 red crow legs (A16) in your inventory. You may only buy a total of three sets over the entire story! (That would be a total of 30 SC for 9 legs.) Of course, you can buy one set, then come back later and buy two more, or any other suitable combination.

When you're finished, return to 95.

99:

"All this stuff?" Saimea clicks her tongue. "Dear me, you HAVE been busy. Let me see now. The signature of the legs is fire, the web air and stickiness, the wort water and voracity, the peridot earth and industry." She trails off into mumbling. "Let me see. Start the water boiling. Here's some acid..."

You grind things into paste, dissolve them in acid, boil them down and wet them again. Finally you are left with one bottle of murky liquid and a small shining lozenge of material. You drop the lozenge in the bottle.

BOOM!

Smoke fills the room. After several coughs, you run for the door--it's already open and Saimea is outside, taking deep breaths of the fresh air. "Sorry, apprentice," she says, slapping you on the shoulder. "Juggling all those magical signatures at once is difficult. I miscalculated somewhere. Still! This is definitely an important milestone in any alchemist's education. In fact, I would go so far as to say you deserve a reward." She presses a few coins into your hand, then she pats you on the back and returns to her hut.

Remove 1 bird leg, 1 bladderwort and 1 peridot from your inventory (you always have enough spiderwebs), but gain 3 SC. Gain the keyword Ashen and return to 5.

100:

"That was pretty amazing," Saimea says, blinking. "That's probably the most alchemy I've done in one day since...well, since ever! You really kept me on my toes!" Then her gaze focuses on you. "I

hope you were watching closely, and listening. Observation is key in alchemy. I understand it helps out in other areas of life, too." She rubs her hands together, a pensive look coming over her face. "Did it seem odd to you that there were all these unusual, magical things occurring in our single village? Like something was happening...lurking, beneath the surface?"

Then Saimea shakes her head. "Oh, I'm sure that doesn't matter to you. What matters is that I'm proud to say you're officially my apprentice! You have the most natural talent I think I've ever seen. Except in myself." A bit of mischief gleams in her eyes. "Regardless, I think you've found your true calling, and I hope you've enjoyed today as much as I have."

Congratulations, you're officially an Alchemist's Apprentice! You aren't going to be thrown out, forced to live on the street or become one of those crazy 'adventurers'!

THE END!  
5 OF 5 - BEST ENDING!