

ALWEN'S RUN

A gamebook adventure in two pages.
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Introduction

For Alwen'Besson the message had always been his life. From the moment that he had dug his way out of the dry earth of Gorgoroth he had been trained as a Messenger, and in that role had given everything he had to his duty. Such was the reputation of Alwen amongst the Masters of House Besson that he had risen above all others to find favour as the personal Messenger of his Dominus. It was a position he took pride in, for there was little that any Morg could look to with pride, and unlike most of his kind he took his responsibilities very seriously indeed. There came a day however, when a crue of Hresh Scouts captured him in the foothills of the Hadaras Mountains and with no regard for his mission decided to have some fun. Throwing him into an abandoned mineshaft they laughed as he fell; his small, emaciated body tumbling into the darkness. Such should have been his end, but for Alwen it was only the beginning of a legendary adventure, one that would forever be known amongst the Morg of Arborell as Alwen's Run.

Game Objective:

In this adventure you play the part of Alwen'Besson, your objective to find a way out of the Nest you have been thrown into and in doing so return safely to the world above.

Character Generation:

The Morg of the Oera'dim are small creatures of aggressive disposition, created to toil as slave-labourers and farmworkers in the empire of the Trel'sara. Very quickly the Masters of the ancient world found that these diminutive slaves had an unexpected talent as messengers, and the quickest and brightest of their number were thereafter indentured to that duty. Morg have no real combat effectiveness unless arrayed in great numbers. As individuals Morg rely instead on speed, stealth and agility to find their way. In this micro-gamebook these attributes are yours to determine. Spread 25 character points between the four Stealth, Agility, Speed and Endurance attributes listed below, but keep those points within the ranges given in brackets.

Stealth (3 – 5): _____ Speed (3 – 5) _____
Agility (3 – 5): _____ Endurance (10 – 20): _____

(These character attributes should be recorded on a separate sheet, along with any items found and your Pursuit Status line which is explained below.)

Combat Resolution:

In this adventure Alwen'Besson does not fight. The creatures and dangers that he encounters are too powerful for him to stand against alone. Instead it will be his cunning and his ability to move quickly that will see him through. Weapons have no value for him, although he does carry a small dagger that may prove of use.

Testing Attributes:

In the course of this adventure you will be required to test most of the character attributes listed above. To do so requires the roll of a 1d6 and a comparison of the number rolled with the value of the attribute tested. If you roll a number that is either equal to or less than the value of the attribute being tested then you have been successful and the section references on page 2 will tell you what you must do next. If you are not successful the section references will also inform you of where your fate lies.

Your Pursuit Status:

For the duration of your journey below ground you will be hunted. On a separate sheet of paper write the numbers 1 to 12 in a line. This is your Pursuit Status and to begin you should place a circle around the 1. You will find as you progress through this adventure that some of the section references will require you to circle the next number on your Pursuit Status. You will also be required to circle the next number of your Pursuit Status if you throw a 1 for any reason during your Run to safety, or after any time that you rest. This Pursuit Status is an indication of how close your pursuers are getting, and if at any point in your adventure you circle the number 12 then you have been caught and your Run will be over. If this occurs turn to section 30 of the accompanying section references to determine your fate.

Restoring Endurance:

In the course of this adventure you will lose endurance points as you fall foul of traps, natural hazards or the unwelcome attentions of the denizens that can be found below ground. If at any time your endurance falls to zero then you will have died. Luckily Morg have the capacity to eat practically anything and as Alwen negotiates the crumbling passages below ground he will find much that can restore endurance. The section references on page two of this adventure will outline what can be eaten and how many points can be restored. It must be noted however, that your Endurance attribute can never exceed its initial maximum value.

Playing Alwen's Run:

Alwen's Run is a solitaire adventure divided into game turns, each turn comprising two distinct phases. The first is a movement phase that allows a player to move 10 grid squares in any direction (including diagonally) on the map opposite. Starting at the grid square numbered 1 you can freely traverse the tunnels and chambers of the Nest but you must always finish your movement on another numbered square. The second phase is to read and action the section reference that corresponds to the number you have landed upon. The section reference might outline an encounter, a natural hazard, some type of challenge or require you to circle the next number on your Pursuit Status. You will not know what it is you have found however, until you read the section reference. Your adventure will continue until you are either caught, or you find your way out of the Nest and return to the world above. If you can do this your Run will have been a success and your adventure will be complete.

THE NEST

Begin your run upon the grid numbered 1 below. Please note that you can only move a maximum of 10 grid spaces (including diagonally) per turn and each move must end on a numbered grid square.



Please note that you must circle the next number on your Pursuit Status any time you roll a 1 during the course of your adventure, or take rest for any reason.

Sections

Using these Section References:

These section references correspond to numbered grid squares found upon the map provided on the first page of this adventure, and in most cases should only be read once. The exception to this are section numbers enclosed within brackets (). These sections must be actioned no matter how many times they are landed upon. All of the numbered grids can however, be used as end of turn way-points as many times as is necessary. It should be noted that if a numbered grid blocks any way forward the player must land on that grid before continuing.

1: In a plume of desiccated roots and insect husks you hit the bottom of the shaft, your fall into its depths slowed by crumbling nets of old roots and thick spider-like webbing. Battered by the fall you have no time to rest and take stock of your injuries. Rolling away from your landing point you scramble for the walls of what appears to be a small chamber as a deluge of dry earth and broken plant-life follows your descent. In a roiling cloud of dust and grit the shaft above collapses in upon itself, leaving you alone within a chamber now almost filled with debris. Dragging yourself from the edges of the dirt-heap you look about and see only one exit. It is an open archway in the southern wall of the chamber.

(2): An Arachnari! From out of the shadows the huge creature rushes towards you, black limbs reaching out as it attempts to draw you into its grasp. Test your Speed attribute. If you are successful the huge monster is not fast enough and you escape its clutches, running into the darkness. If you fail take -1 from your endurance then test your Stealth attribute. In this case if you succeed you use the shadows instead to hide until the monster moves on. (Circle the next number on your Pursuit Status to account for the delay) If you fail this Stealth test you cannot avoid the Arachnari and you should turn to section 15 to determine your fate.

3: Running into a dark chamber you find an Arachnari food store. Within this room you discover a collection of small animals and birds, all paralysed and barely alive. You find here a few morsels that you can eat. (Roll 1d6. This is the amount of endurance points you can restore if needed.) Once you have finished move on.

(4): Suddenly the air about you fowls, a choking gas exuding from cracks in the floor. Placing your hand over your mouth you run from the source of the gases. Test your Speed attribute. If you are successful you escape with only a shortness of breath and -1 to your endurance points. If you fail the test you stagger out of the corrupted air, though not quick enough and lose 3 endurance points in the process. When you have recovered your breath you continue on.

(5): Beneath the ground shifts, your footing no longer firm as you stand upon a floor comprised mostly of desiccated roots and crumbling earth. Your feet sink into this dusty mire but you can move forward nonetheless. Circle the next number on your Pursuit Status line before continuing.

6: You look up at the old ventilation shaft and see a way out. Crumbling and unstable it may be but it is a way to the surface and you take it. Carefully you leave the tunnels and passages of the Arachnari Nest behind and climb up into the shaft, tentatively finding your way back to the surface. When you finally reach the top, you haul yourself out onto a patch of wet grass and recover your breath. When you have recovered enough you brush yourself down and look to the surrounding mountains. You have survived the Nest but you have a message to deliver and you have been delayed far too long. It is time to move on...

(7): You have found a dark corner and it seems a safe hiding point. If you wish you may rest here for a while and restore 1 endurance point if necessary. If you do not need to rest you can move on. The choice is yours.

(8): Ahead you see a rock fall that has blocked the entire passageway. It does not take long to determine that there is no way forward here.

9: In the quiet you pause for a moment and listen. In the silence you can hear nothing and move on.

10: Moving into the chamber you sense a brooding malice about you. In the dark you can see neatly ordered lines of eggs, and identify within the shadows at least three Arachnari tending to the young. You have stumbled into an Egg Nursery and you must get out quietly. Test your Stealth attribute. If you are successful you exit the chamber undetected. If you fail at least one of the Arachnari sees you and calls an alarm. If this is your fate you turn and run for your life. (Circle the next two numbers on your Pursuit Status line to account for the alarm.)

11: You have found the nest's Royal Chamber and it is occupied. From the shadows an enormous Arachnari Queen lumbers towards you. If you are to evade this monster you will have to move quickly. Test your Speed and Agility attributes. If you succeed with both then you get away from the Queen and run into the shadows. If you fail either of the tests turn to section 15.

12: Ahead the ground is covered in a sparse matting of roots. These are Oer'daaki roots and you know you cannot touch any of them. To do so will awaken the plant to your presence and its unwanted attentions. Test your Stealth and Agility. If you pass both tests you successfully move away from the roots and can continue with your search for an exit. If you fail either of these tests turn to section 22.

13: You come a halt and listen intently. From out of the shadows you hear sounds of pursuit though most are still some distance behind. You decide to move on quickly.

(14): Ahead there lies a rift in the ground, a huge crack that you must jump if you

are to continue in this direction. If you wish to attempt the jump test your Agility attribute. If you are successful you clear the gap and make it to the other side. In this circumstance the number 14 on the other side of the rift should be disregarded. If you fail this test you do not clear the rift and instead hit its edges. If this occurs take -1 from your endurance then test your Agility attribute once again. If you are successful you find a hold upon the lip of the rift and drag yourself out. If you fail this test again you will plummet into the darkness and your Run will be over.

15: From the shadows the huge creature finds a purchase upon your flesh, drawing you close as you struggle to escape its clutches. In the shadows you fight desperately but the monster cannot be deterred. With one venomous bite it paralyses you, before dragging you to the nearest food chamber. In this life your mission is over. It must now be to the next that you will have look for better luck and greater success.

(16): Ahead lies flooded ground, the area covered in pools of water and treacherous mud pits. If you wish to go forward into the flooded ground circle the next number on your Pursuit Status and take 1 point from your endurance before continuing.

(17): In the roof overhead you find what appears to be a ventilation shaft reaching upwards for some distance. This could be a way out. Roll 1d6. If you roll a 5 or higher turn to section 6. If you roll any other number turn to section 24. If this is the third time you have found such a shaft do not roll a die. You have lingered too long within the nest and rather than finding an exit it is an Arachnari that has found you. Before you can react an immensely strong claw clamps down upon your shoulder. Turn to section 15.

(18): In the ground ahead you see the signs of a Sandlurker trap. Such predators ambush their prey from huge holes dug in the earth, but only attack if movement alerts them. Test your Stealth attribute. If you are successful you move away from the trap and can continue with your mission. If you fail the test turn to section 23.

19: From overhead water drips from cracks in the ceiling, forming shallow pools of stagnant liquid on the ground ahead. You can sense no danger here so you move on.

(20): In a shuddering fracture of ancient stone the floor beneath you collapses. Test your Agility attribute. If you are successful you leap to safety before the abyss can swallow you. If you fail this test then you have been lost to the rift and your mission is over. If you are to succeed you will need to try again.

21: You have found a clutch of lizard eggs. Each will restore 1 point of endurance when eaten. Roll 1d6 to determine how many you have found before continuing.

22: Carefully you move away from the roots but you are not cautious enough. Your foot brushes against one of the tendrils and that is all that is needed to seal your fate. Before you can take another step the roots come alive, grasping at your arms and legs and pulling you to the ground. In a writhing morass of root and vine you disappear, the life crushed from you, your mission over.

23: One footfall too heavy is all it takes to waken the hidden predator. In a spray of dust and debris the Sandlurker lunges from its lair, grasping at you with long sinuous tentacles that tighten ferociously about your body. With no way to fight the beast you are dragged into its lair and consumed. In this life your mission is over.

24: Carefully you look up into the shaft and discover it to be completely blocked. If you are to find a way out of this Arachnari nest it will have to be found elsewhere.

25: In front of you the ground is covered in a thick, slimy mud. It is not deep so you walk through it and continue on.

26: Quietly you run out into a large natural cavern and come to a halt. In the dark you can sense a huge open space and the presence of many large creatures moving within the shadows. Crouching down you listen intently, your senses keenly attuned to the dangers that move anonymously around you. This must be the nest's Royal Chamber, and if that is the case you will find here the Arachnari Queen. It is a monster you should avoid if you can.

27: In the wall you find the entry to a shaft that angles upwards. For a moment you hope it might be a way out, but you find instead a solid pile of debris that blocks any way forward. Add 1 to your Pursuit Status and continue your search.

(28): In the shadows you take a moment to rest. Add +1 to your endurance if needed, then circle the next number on your Pursuit Status and move on.

29: At a four-way junction you stop and listen. In the distance you can hear movement, the furtive silence punctuated by muffled scraping sounds and the dull thud of heavy impacts. At all sides you can hear the evidence of large creatures moving in your direction. Looking at the ground you see a strange figure-eight shaped impression in the dust. It is the fresh pad-print of an Arachnari, and it is all the proof you need that you have been thrown into an active Nest. In the halls and passages about you there could be hundreds of the large spider-like monsters and if you are to survive you will have to outsmart them all.

30: At the run you desperately search for a way out of the nest. Behind you there echoes the unmistakable sounds of Arachnari on the hunt and in the dark corridors you move with purpose, looking for a shaft or tunnel, anything that might take you to the surface and safety. It is a search that ends when a long chitinous arm slams into your chest, toppling you backwards onto a dusty floor. Before you can regain your feet an Arachnari looms over you, its huge black bulk pressing down upon you as it sinks its fangs deep into your shoulder. You feel its poison as a spreading numbness that quickly paralyses you, stripping the life from your emaciated body before all goes dark. In this life your mission is over, your message one that must now be delivered by another Morg at another time.