

*Behind the
Throne*

By Kieran Coghlan

Introduction

YOU are Giles Trebuchet. You were born in Nice in 1628. Your father was a successful fishmonger and wanted you to follow into the family business, but you yearned for adventure and perhaps a spot of daring-do. When you turned eighteen, you bid your family a fond farewell and travelled north to Paris, hoping to enlist in the King's Musketeers. You impressed the heroic Lieutenant de Batz with your skill and resourcefulness and he recommended to the venerable Captain Oloron that you join the musketeers. You have been a proud member for two long years and had your fair share of adventure. But you are about to embark on your greatest adventure yet!

The Rules

How to Use this Book

A cursory glance through the book will reveal that reading it in order makes no sense. The book is divided into numbered sections. After reading through these rules and filling out your Adventure Sheet, you should read the section marked "Background" before moving on to section 1. From then on you should follow instructions in the text as to which section to turn to next. You will also need 2 dice to play this adventure.

Your Adventure Sheet

You will find your Adventure Sheet on Page 4. There are boxes for keeping track of your four attributes, a box to record any items you may find on your adventure and another box for recording notes.

Your Attributes

You have 4 attribute scores: Agility, Marksmanship, Swashbuckling and Vitality.

AGILITY: Your Agility score reflects your speed, fitness and reaction time. To calculate your Agility score, roll one die and add 3 to the result. Enter the total in the Agility box in your adventure sheet.

MARKSMANSHIP: Your Marksmanship score reflects your accuracy with firearms. To calculate your Marksmanship score, roll one die and add 3 to the result. Enter the total in the Marksmanship box in your adventure sheet.

SWASHBUCKLING: Your Swashbuckling score reflects your finesse with the blade. To calculate your Swashbuckling score, roll one die and add 3 to the result. Enter the total in the Swashbuckling box in your adventure sheet.

VITALITY: Your Vitality score is a measure of how healthy you are. Unlike your other attributes, your Vitality score will decrease as you are wounded. If it ever reaches 0, your character has died. You must stop reading the adventure immediately and start

again with a new character. To calculate your Vitality score, roll one die and add 10 to the result. Enter the total in the Vitality box in your adventure sheet.

Testing your Attributes

At times throughout your adventure, you will be asked to test your Agility, Marksmanship or Swashbuckling. To do so roll 2 dice and compare the total to the relevant attribute. If you roll less than or equal to your attribute score, you have been successful. Otherwise, you have been unsuccessful and must pay the consequences.

Your Equipment

You start off with a fine steel rapier and a musket with some ammunition. You should record these items, and any others you may acquire on your travels, in the items box on your adventure sheet.

Now Begin

That is all you need to know to enjoy *Behind the Throne*. Now turn to the Background section and begin your adventure!

ADVENTURE SHEET

Agility

Marksmanship

Swashbuckling

Vitality

Items

Notes

BACKGROUND

You step into Cardinal Mazarin's chambers with trepidation. Although this is not the first time you have been to The Louvre, it is the first time you have ever been summoned before one so high. With the king still in his infancy and his mother incapable of rule, Mazarin is practically the ruler of all France! You look around the ornately decorated room. While his predecessor, Cardinal Richelieu, kept his chambers simplistic and practical, Mazarin surrounds himself with gaudy trinkets and ostentatious furniture - it is no wonder that he has earned the hatred of the people of France.

Mazarin looks up from his desk as you approach. 'Ah so you are the one Lieutenant de Batz recommended?' he says, speaking French with his heavy Italian accent.

'Yes, your eminence,' you reply. 'But Monsieur de Batz did not explain the nature of the mission.'

'That is because he does not know it,' replies the cardinal. 'Due to the nature of this mission I am informing only those who need to know of its true nature. At present that is only you and me. Tell me what do you know of the Fronde?'

'That some of the people are unhappy with the taxes you have forced on the Parliament of Paris.'

'The taxes *I* have forced?' interrupts the cardinal. 'All has been in the king's name for the king's benefit.'

'Of course, your Eminence,' you say diplomatically. 'At any rate some of the people seem to be moving into a revolutionary force against yourself . . . and the king of course.'

'Indeed,' says the cardinal, stroking his beard. 'To be honest, I care little about the actions of the rabble. What concerns me is that some of the nobles, the Prince de Conti being the main one, have spoken openly in favour of the Frondeurs' cause. They care no more about these "unfair" taxes than I do, but they see the situation as an opportunity to seize more power for themselves.'

'You think they plan open rebellion?' you ask.

'No,' says Mazarin, shaking his head. 'They are too smart for that. They know the Prince de Condé is ever loyal to the crown and would not dare to stand up against him. But if they could get the king away from my influence they might convince him to side with them. And I think I know when they plan to strike: His Majesty is due to make a tour of the country. I have tried to convince him to postpone it, but you know how headstrong His Majesty can be. I have at least convinced his brother to remain in Paris so at least we have an heir if the plotters would be so foolish as to assassinate the king.'

You start. The young king is beloved by all and it is hard to contemplate anyone even considering such an action.

‘I don’t think it likely,’ continues Mazarin. ‘But I do think an attempted kidnap is very likely – which is where you fit in. I want you to accompany the king’s escort. Should the plotters try anything, protect the king at whatever cost. Should he be captured you must recover him. You will find I will not be ungrateful for this service.’

What can you say? It is a rare occurrence indeed to get an opportunity to prove yourself to the cardinal and the king and you do not hesitate in agreeing to the mission.

‘Excellent,’ says Mazarin. ‘You leave tomorrow.’

Now turn to 1.

1

You ride at the head of the king's escort; twenty cavalry-men armed with muskets and rapiers surrounding the king's gilded carriage. Next to you rides Lieutenant Lambert, nominally in charge of King Louis' protection, but under secret orders to defer to you if an emergency should arise. So far there has been no need though as the towns you have visited up until now have received His Majesty warmly and there has been no hint of unrest or dissident activity. Perhaps the cardinal's fears were misplaced?

It is late in the afternoon and you are not far from the town of Noisy, the next stop on the king's tour. The road ahead enters a narrow gorge and immediately thoughts of ambush rush through your mind. You voice your concerns to Lambert, suggesting you avoid the gorge and head to Noisy cross-country, but Lambert shakes his head.

'His Majesty's carriage will never be able to go cross-county,' he says with a sneer.

'Well, then we could give the king one of our horses and have the carriage brought into town later,' you reply.

'And have His Majesty enter Noisy like a common soldier? I think not!'

'You were told to defer to me in an - '

'In an emergency, yes,' he snarls. 'But this is not an emergency. We go through the gorge.'

You nod resignedly and drop back amongst the other soldiers, determined to keep a wary eye out as you enter the gorge. The sides of the gorge are steeply sloped and covered in boulders and rubble - a whole army could hide up there!

You are nearing the far end of the gorge when Lambert turns round to look at you with a smug grin on his face.

'You see monsieur; there was nothing to worry about-'

He has no time to finish his sentence as a musketball smashes into his head and he tumbles from his saddle, dead before he even hits the ground. You look up in alarm to see several snipers emerging from the rocks on the slope to the right. Taking charge immediately, you yell for the soldiers to return fire. More snipers emerge, but instead of firing on you, they take several shots at the king's carriage, splintering the ornate framework.

'Surround the carriage! Protect the king!' you command, but the men are panicking and are slow to react.

Suddenly, the door of the carriage is thrown open as one of the king's bodyguards comes running, out clutching his head, bloodied by a lucky musket shot. He takes a few faltering steps before collapsing to the ground. The sound of hoofbeats from the left-hand side of the gorge causes you to spin round and you see several horsemen armed with pistols bounding down the steep slope towards the open carriage door - they plan to seize the king! You raise

your musket and take aim at the nearest horseman. *Test your Marksmanship*. If you are successful, turn to 49. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 16.

2

You manage to parry a wild slash from the first horseman and before the second horseman can strike a blow, you thrust your sword point into his eye and he gives a great howl of pain, but before you can withdraw your sword, the first horseman plunges his rapier between your ribs (lose 5 Vitality points). Giving a growl of rage, you bring your elbow smashing into the horseman's skull and he tumbles from his mount. As he falls, he slashes out wildly with his rapier and cuts into the back of your horse's leg. Your horse collapses and you are forced to throw yourself to safety, landing in a heavy forward roll. You shakily rise to your feet and look out at the carnage being wrought. Turn to 24.

3

The lead swordsman jabs at your side, drawing blood (lose 2 Vitality points). The two of them force you back away from the top of the stairs towards the balcony. They work well as a team, one feigning while the other gets in close to stab. Soon they have you pressed up against the rail of the balcony and look set for the kill. They move apart, seeking to flank you. Realizing you must do something drastic or be killed, you discard your rapier and, grabbing one of them by the folds of his clothes, you lift him up and throw him over the balcony and you hear a sickening crunch as he hits the church floor below. Unfortunately, the other swordsman seems to think this is a good idea and kicks you hard in the back sending you tumbling over the rail to land on the floor with a thump (lose 5 Vitality points). You are in immense pain and can barely move. The fallen swordsman lies next to you, his neck broken. You hear the sound of the other swordsman coming down the stairs towards you and you try to get to your feet but you are in too much agony. Then you spot a pistol hanging from the belt of the dead swordsman. You stretch your arm and unhook the pistol from the belt just as the other swordsman reaches the bottom of the stairs and advances on you. You take aim and fire. *Test your Marksmanship*. If you are successful, turn to 12. Otherwise, turn to 79.

4

A particularly raucous laugh directs you to where two men are sitting. One you recognize immediately - it is the huge man whom you saw abducting the king! The man sitting next to him is similar looking, except he is even larger and has a thick waxed moustache. The two of them seem to be really enjoying themselves - no doubt they are celebrating the success of the ambush. This could be just the lead you're looking for. If you wish to confront them, turn to 72. If you would rather try your luck elsewhere, you may visit either the barracks (turn to 54) or the church (turn to 26) providing you have not visited them already.

5

A man opens the door. On seeing you, he starts and reaches for a heavy cudgel on his belt. Quickly you grab a piece of brick lying on the floor and fling it at his head. It strikes him on the temple with a thud and he collapses to the ground. Rising to your feet, you inspect his body and find he is out cold, blood oozing from his head. You may take his cudgel if you wish. You decide not to stay here any longer and head downstairs. Turn to 74.

6

You slam the door closed before anyone got a good look at your face, but you had best make yourself scarce fast. Return to 29 and choose another door.

7

You race back to the stable, determined to catch up with Rosnay and the king. *Test your Agility*. If you succeed, turn to 56. If not, turn to 51.

8

As soon as you can free your hands you spring on the lanky torturer's back and bring both your fists smashing into the back of his head. He collapses into a heap. Without wasting any time to search him, you grab your equipment and rush out the door.

You find yourself at the bottom of a wooden staircase. A door faces you. Figuring that the stairs will take you out of the kidnapper's base, you try the door and open it slowly. Turn to 29.

9

The door opens into some sort of lounge. Soldiers are relaxing on couches and talking boisterously in corners. The priest you saw earlier is reclining on a couch in the centre of the room and you see him turning to look at who has opened the door! Hurriedly, you close the door. *Test your Agility*. If you are successful, turn to 6. Otherwise, turn to 39.

10

It all happens so quickly. You hear the shot go off, see the muzzle of the carbine light up, then your shoulder explodes into pain as the shot tears through it. The room goes blurry and starts to spin and you collapse into darkness. Lose 5 Vitality points then turn to 48.

11

The men eye you suspiciously, but they allow you to leave. Return to 29 and choose another door.

12

Your bullet thuds into his chest. He looks at you in stunned silence for a second before coughing up blood and toppling backwards to the floor. You have no time for complacency however as you hear footsteps coming from the direction of the confessional. Someone must have heard your gunshot! Quickly, you try to rise to your feet. *Test your Agility*. If you are successful, turn to 68. Otherwise, turn to 76.

13

Rosnay is on you with incredible speed. His swordplay is a flurry of death and it is all you can do to keep him at bay. A vicious swipe knocks your rapier from your hand and before you know what is happening, he drives his rapier through your chest.

'Almost too easy,' he grumbles. And it is the last thing you ever hear.

14

You spin round on one heel and fire in one swift motion. The bullet flies straight into your adversary's head before he even has time to take aim. He topples backwards, his pistol falling from his dead fingers. The crowd are silent for several minutes and then one of them yells out.

'He killed Francois! Get him!'

As one, the mob move towards you, armed with bottles, cudgels and knife. You back away, reaching for the hilt of your sword. You are prepared to sell your life dearly! Just as the mob are about to close in on you, a voice rings out loud and clear 'Stop!'

The crowd turns to look at a handsome man with flowing dark hair and a thin, waxed moustache. He is dressed as a priest, but he is by far the most exquisitely dressed priest you have ever seen.

'I saw the whole duel,' he continues in a soft but commanding voice. 'This man fought with honour and shall not be harmed.'

The mob nod along and then begin to disperse. Whoever this priest is he certainly commands a lot of respect in this town. He walks over to you.

'I wish to have words with you,' he says. 'Please follow me to my church.'

With that he walks off towards the church. Somewhat suspiciously you follow the priest inside. Turn to 38.

15

You race on, leaving Noisy behind you. You find a small hotel a few miles outside the town and pass the night peacefully. You spend the next few days lying low, keeping an ear out for news. You soon hear that King Louis has agreed to limit the power of the Cardinal in favour of the Prince de Conti. The Fronde soon disappears once Mazarin has fallen from power and certain parliamentary rights are granted. Allibert contacts you soon and arranges for you to leave the king's musketeers and serve in the Duc de Beaufort's personal guard. Things look good in France.

Unfortunately, the nobles chose a poor puppet in Louis XIV. Fed up with being a figurehead, the ambitious monarch gathered dissatisfied nobles to him and together they concocted

evidence that Conti plotted to seize the crown. Conti is denounced an enemy of the state and all his supporters branded traitors. You sell your life dearly when de Batz leads his musketeers into the Duc de Beaufort's estate to arrest him.

16

Your shot flies harmlessly over the nearest horseman's head. He and one of his companions draw their rapiers and charge their horses towards you. Discarding your musket, you draw your sword in readiness to meet them. *Test your Swashbuckling*. If you are successful, turn to 80. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 2.

17

As you stumble outside you are suddenly surrounded by musketeers and de Batz saunters up to you.

'I had thought you dead when I saw the ambush,' he says. 'But not only do you still live but you have the king with you. But why is His Majesty blindfolded?'

You start as you realize you have forgotten to take Louis' blindfold off. Quickly you set him down and untie the blindfold.

'About time,' he says angrily. 'I should have you flogged for this, but I suppose you did help to deliver me from those goons. Did you see their faces?'

'They were wearing masks, highness,' you answer quickly, remembering your vow. De Batz gives you a knowing look but says nothing.

'Indeed,' says the king. 'Well, shall we continue with my tour then?'

De Batz looks at the king in astonishment. 'You mean his highness does not wish to return to Paris?'

'I will not hide just because some peasants tried to kidnap me,' says the young king firmly. 'And if anyone else tries such a thing, you two will be there to protect me.'

Turn to 84.

18

The Hotel Rouge is just down the street from the town square and you have no trouble finding the stables. You take a cautious peek inside, but it appears to be empty, bar a couple of horses. You step inside and a couple of minutes quick searching reveals the trapdoor. With a great amount of strength, you heave the trapdoor open and peer down a dark staircase. You are just about to descend when a massive weight hits the back of your head and you lose consciousness. Lose 2 Vitality points and turn to 48.

19

You take a seat at the table and one of the men begins dealing the cards. You take a look at your hand and try to resist grinning - you have a virtually unbeatable hand! Just then the door opens and you give a gulp of horror as the priest you saw earlier enters. He stares at you in wide-eyed amazement for a second before drawing his pistol and levelling it at you.

'How dumb do you have to be to stop to play cards while sneaking through an enemy's base?' he says incredulously.

As you are being dragged to a cell by the two men you can't help but feel he has a point.

20

You leap upon the huge man's back and he drops the king in surprise. With a grunt, he throws you from his back on to the hard ground and tries to run you through with his rapier. You are too quick for him however. You roll away from his rushed sword-thrust and then, in one fluid motion, you pull forth your sword and thrust it hilt-deep into your opponent's massive belly. He gives a short gasp then crumples on top of you as you desperately try to withdraw your sword. As you struggle, you observe the king has risen to his feet and is running along the gorge towards Noisy. You shout encouragement, but already you can see horsemen closing in on his fleeing form. The king is about to be captured! You renew your struggle to get free of your opponent's corpse, but a heavy grinding noise causes you to cease your efforts and look up in alarm. Three huge cannons have been positioned at the top of the left slope and are now pointing down at you! The first cannon is fired and a ball smashes into the last small group of the king's guard. A second blast goes flying over your head into the carriage, shattering it. One piece of debris crashes on your head and you black out. Lose 2 Vitality points and record the codeword 'brethren' on your adventure sheet before turning to 81.

21

The beadle follows you to the exit, keeping his carbine firmly aimed at your head the entire time. Once you step through the door, he closes it behind you and you hear the clunk of a heavy bar being slid across it. You will not be able to enter the church again. Providing you have not visited them already, you may go to the barracks (turn to 54) or the public house (turn to 41).

22

The priest fights like one well-versed in martial ways. He virtually dances about the room as he lashes out repeatedly with his epee at blinding speed. You find you cannot match his pace and are put on the defensive as you try to knock his blows away from you, hoping he'll tire soon. Unfortunately, he has the energy of someone half his age and he manages to knock your rapier out of your hands before pivoting on his heel and thrusting his rapier into your heart. The last thing you see is a look of disappointment on the priest's face.

23

You climb up the short wooden staircase to one of the galleries. A quick look among the pews brings up nothing of interest and judging by the thin layer of dust coating them; it looks like no-one has been up here in a while. You are about to go back down when you hear the creak of the confessional door opening downstairs. You peer over the balcony, expecting to see the priest re-emerging, but instead two armed soldiers step out - clearly there's more to this confessional than meets the eye. One of the soldiers stays by the confessional while the other goes into the sacristy. After a couple of minutes, he re-emerges shaking his head. The other man says something you can't make out and then begins yelling for someone called Jules. They begin looking about the church and by chance one of them looks up and spots you staring down at them! He gives a cry of alarm and the two of them rush towards the stairs with their rapiers drawn. If you head to the stairs to meet them, turn to 75, If you would rather climb over the balcony and drop to the floor below, hoping to bypass them, turn to 78.

24

All around you, your comrades are dying and you are at a loss as to who to help first, when a huge man, incredible in terms of height and girth, reaches the bottom of the slope, dismounts and charges into the carriage with his rapier drawn. You hear sounds of a brief scuffle, then the scream of a dying man and then the large man bounds out of the carriage, his bloodied rapier clutched in his left-hand and King Louis XIV slung over his right shoulder! You give a scream of primal fury and dash after this would-be abductor. *Test your Agility.* If you are successful, turn to 20. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 28.

25

'You can run if you want,' you reply, pulling the papers from your jerkin. 'You may even get away - for a while. But once Cardinal Mazarin sees these documents, you'll be hunted down like dogs then hanged for high treason.'

The two conspirators gulp. 'What would you propose?' ventures the priest, who you assume must be Abbé Allibert.

'An exchange,' you reply. 'The king for the documents and my vow of silence.'

The two look at each other and nod. The grey-haired man sets the king on his feet and tells him gently to walk down the stairs. The king, still blindfolded, leans on the wall for support as he carefully descends towards you.

When the king is about half-way down the grey-haired man yells out for you to throw him the documents. A man of your word, you toss the papers to him then rush forward to grab the king pulling him back into the complex. You half expect them to give chase but they seem to be as honourable as you are and they give no pursuit. You return to the stairs a couple of minutes later and see they are deserted. Wasting no time you bound up the stairs, race through the church and return to the town square with the king hanging on to your back. Turn to 17.

26

You push open a heavy wooden door and enter the church. It is surprisingly richly decorated for the church of such a small town - someone must be making large donations to the church. Apart from that, there seems nothing out of the ordinary. You are about to go up to one of the galleries and search around there, when a man dressed as a beadle with a very irritated expression on his face hurries out of the sacristy and strides towards you.

'What are you doing here?' he shrieks. 'The church is closed at this time.'

'I thought the church was always open to the common man in search of guidance?' you tease. He looks at you sceptically. 'You don't look like you're looking for guidance. More likely you're looking for chalices to steal!'

'Actually I'm looking for a holy man,' you reply. 'Known as the Dark Priest. Ever heard of him?'

'No-one with such an outlandish name works here,' replies the beadle without blinking. 'Now get out before I throw you out.'

You agree to leave and walk slowly to the exit while watching the beadle return to the sacristy.

If you wish to leave the church, you may do so and visit either the barracks (turn to 54) or the public house (turn to 41), providing you haven't visited either already. If, on the other hand you would prefer to stay in the church to snoop around some more, turn to 37.

27

You keep a brisk pace and reach Noisy about an hour later just as the sun has begun to set in the west. The town is picturesque and looks like a run-of-the-mill sleepy French town - certainly not the kind of place you would expect a conspiracy against the crown to be brewing, yet you are positive that this is where the king must have been taken to.

You enter the cobbled town square and consider where to begin your investigation. Noisy has a sizeable barracks and you have no doubt that the soldiers stationed there would be loyal to the king and would aid you in your search, providing you can convince them of what occurred. Across the square is a large church. Since the dying ambusher referred to a Dark Priest, it is possible he was being literal. Perhaps you can find out more about him at this church? Alternatively, you can hear the hubbub of a nearby public house to your left. Such places are often useful for picking up local rumour and gossip. To try your luck at the barracks, turn to 54. To investigate the church, turn to 26. To pay a visit to the public house, turn to 41.

28

You are almost upon him when you stumble on a loose rock and come crashing to the ground, twisting your ankle in the process (lose 1 Vitality point). You watch in vain as the huge man clambers up the slope with the king - you have allowed Louis XIV to be captured! You

struggle to rise to your feet, but a heavy grinding noise causes you to cease your efforts and look up in alarm. Three huge cannons have been positioned at the top of the left slope and are now pointing down at you! The first cannon is fired and a ball smashes into the last small group of the king's guard. A second blast goes flying over your head into the carriage, shattering it. One piece of debris crashes on your head and you black out. Lose 2 Vitality points before turning to 81.

29

You find yourself at the end of a stone corridor. There are four doors, apart from the one you entered by, two on the left-hand wall and two on the right. Oil lamps, suspended from the ceiling, light the corridor dimly. You know the king could be behind any of these doors and your heart is beginning to beat very fast. Which door will you try?

First on the left?

Turn to 52.

Second on the left?

Turn to 71.

First on the right?

Turn to 43.

Second on the right?

Turn to 9.

30

A heavy blow from behind suddenly knocks you to the floor (lose 1 Vitality point). The pub goes silent and you pick yourself up to face the man that struck you. He is gigantic and wears a thick, waxed moustache and an expression of abject hatred.

'You!' he bellows, his face purple with indignation. 'You killed my brother! You gutted him like a pig! But I offer you a more honourable death.'

He throws a loaded pistol into your hands.

'Outside! You and I are going to have a duel to avenge my brother's death!'

This man must be the brother of the huge man who you killed as he tried to take the king. This brute must have seen it all and therefore he could be able to give you a lead as to the king's location. However, fighting a duel with him is hardly likely to give you any information. If you wish to accept his challenge, turn to 53. If you would rather decline, turn to 47.

31

For a man of the cloth, the priest is a vicious opponent. Your forehead is drenched with sweat as you parry his many thrusts and try to find an opening. The priest attempts a particularly wild swipe at your legs, and as you rush to block the blow he spins on one foot and brings his epee up into your side (lose 4 Vitality points). You cry in pain and a red mist descends over your eyes as you lash out with your fist, smashing it into the priest's nose and sending him tumbling over the desk. Rather than wait for him to leap to his feet or cry for help, you rush from the sacristy, barging past the stunned form of the beadle as you race down the aisle,

throw open the church door and re-enter the town square. You decide you'll need to get some help fast and head for the barracks. Turn to 35.

32

The lead swordsman's first attack is an obvious lunge and you have no problem sweeping it aside with your rapier. You then kick out at his chest sending him tumbling down the stairs into his companion. The two collapse to the bottom in a heap. Before they have time to recover, you rush down the stairs and put both to the sword. You decide to investigate the confessional. Turn to 34.

33

You find de Batz standing outside the barracks. He has convinced the local garrison to help him and is trying to plan a thorough search of the town. When he sees you, he stops what he's doing and hails you. Quickly you blurt out your tale. De Batz nods and quickly leads a group of soldiers to follow Rosnay into the alleyways while ordering another group to surround the town.

Unfortunately, there just aren't enough soldiers to stop Rosnay slipping through. He delivers the king to the princes and the time of Mazarin's power is soon at an end. You have failed in your mission.

34

You open the door gingerly, peering inside. The confessional is empty, but you do see some wooden stairs leading down a stone corridor, lit by lamps along the wall. Suspicious, you follow the stairs down. There is a small landing half-way down with a door in the left-hand wall. If you wish to try this door, turn to 40. If you would rather continue down the stairs, you can see another two doors at the bottom. To keep on going down, turn to 74.

35

A corpulent desk sergeant greets your garbled tale with a cynical look, but he agrees to let you see his commanding officer. Unfortunately, his superior seems even more sceptical than the sergeant was.

'You expect me to march into the church and put Abbé Allibert under arrest for high treason? Are you insane?'

'Perhaps,' you reply. 'But if I am babbling nonsense and you arrest the priest, the worst you will endure is a bit of a public disgrace. But if you do nothing and I'm telling the truth, well, let's just say the headsman's axe might be in your near future.'

He puts his flabby hand to his neck. 'Your subtle way with words has swayed me,' he grumbles. 'Come on, let's go.'

He leads a group of soldiers into the church, finding no-one but the beadle who protests that the Abbé is no longer here and they have no right to ransack a house of God. The captain ignores him and orders a thorough search of the building. Eventually a hidden staircase is found and you excitedly follow it down to an underground complex. Your heart sinks though when a long search of the complex reveals no king nor anything else for that matter.

'Well it looks like you were right,' says the captain. 'But with no king and no incriminating evidence, there is nothing that can be done.'

You hang your head resignedly. You have failed in your mission.

36

As soon as you insert the ring into the indentation, the door swings open with a creak. The room on the other side is small and dark and seems to be some sort of storeroom for papers. You grab a few bundles of documents but it is too dark to read them in here. You take them back out into the corridor and flick through them. You smile to yourself when you see they are letters detailing the king's route on his tour and how well protected he will be. The letters seem to be from someone called the Rosnay to someone called the Abbé Allibert. Perhaps that is the priest you saw earlier? You pocket the papers (note them down on your adventure sheet), glad to have found some incriminating evidence. Return to 29 and choose another door to open.

37

You don't want to risk sneaking into the sacristy and bumping into the beadle again and you think the galleries would be too exposed so you try a small door in the corner of the church. You are surprised to find it unlocked, but are disappointed when all you find on the other side is a small store-room for candles, spare robes, tapers and the like. You decide to make a quick search anyway and you are shifting a pile of table-cloths aside when you hear the click of a rifle being cocked behind you. You turn slowly to find the beadle holding a carbine and aiming it straight at your head!

'You were asked to leave,' he says, in a stern voice.

If you agree to leave, turn to 21. If you want to try and rush him before he can fire, turn to 45.

38

You follow the priest into the church. He leads you down the aisle towards the sacristy at the rear of the church. He takes a slender key out of his pocket and unlocks the sacristy door, ushering you in. You step through the door into an office of sorts. A beadle hurries towards you with an angry look on his face, but the priest silences him with a hand gesture. The beadle hurries out while the priest motions for you to sit at a small table. You do so and the priest takes a seat opposite you.

'I think I know who you are,' he says after a few moments. 'I believe you are trying to rescue the king.'

You start in alarm and reach for your rapier, but he motions for you to stop.

'There's no need for that,' he says irritably. 'You are right in thinking I have His Majesty, but you are wrong if you think I mean him any harm. Quite the opposite in fact.'

You look puzzled, but do not venture any opinion.

'Do you think he is better off with the cardinal?' the priest continues in his soft voice. 'Mazarin uses him as a figurehead and turns Louis XIV's own people against him by installing extreme taxes and unfair parliamentary measures in the king's name. The princes see this and would try to end the country's strife by having the king limit Mazarin and Anne of Austria's power and increase their own. It is the only thing that will stop France being overrun by rebellion.'

'And kidnap is the best way to accomplish this?' you ask.

'It is regrettable,' he replies smoothly. 'But a necessary measure I feel. In a few days, the king will be safely with the princes and Mazarin will have no choice but to grant concessions to the people and to the aristocracy.'

'Why are you telling me all this?' you ask suspiciously.

'Because I saw your duel. You seem capable, honourable and resourceful. Exactly the kind of person the Fronde needs. I'm asking you to join us.'

If you agree to join the Frondeurs, at least for the time being, turn to 62. If you would rather draw your rapier and attack the priest, turn to 65.

39

You hurriedly slam the door closed, but too late! You hear cries of alarm from behind the door - you have been recognized! You race back down the corridor, but a door on your left is thrown open and two guards rush out and leap upon you, wrestling you to the ground. Soon you are surrounded by an angry mob. Your weapons are confiscated and you are led away to a small cell. You have failed in your mission.

40

The door is not locked and opens easily. Unfortunately, all that is on the other side is a small pantry. There are boxes of stale biscuits, bread and jars of jam. A glint catches your eye and you stoop over to find a gold ring lying on the floor. Inspecting the ring, you see that it is carved with the shape of a rose. Intrigued, you slip the ring in your pocket. You are about to leave the room, when you hear faint murmurings coming through the floorboards from the floor below. If you wish to put your ear to the floor and listen to what they are saying, turn to 59. If you would rather leave the pantry before you are discovered and head down the stairs, turn to 74.

41

As you enter the public house your nose is assaulted by the stench of pipe-smoke and your ears are assailed by the boisterous laughter of braggarts and the shrill shrieks of tavern wenches. You blink in the dim, smoky light and survey the occupants of the bar. If you have the codeword 'brethren', turn to 30. If not, turn to 4.

42

You spin round on your heel and take aim, but your opponent is faster. Before you even squeeze the trigger, his bullet flies from his gun striking you in the heart, killing you instantaneously. You crumple to the ground, the crowd cheering as your breath leaves your body.

43

The door opens with a creak and your heart jumps as you see two guards sitting at a table inside. The two are playing cards, and they turn to look at you as you enter.

'You a new recruit?' quizzes one, his eyebrows furrowed.

'That's right,' you say, trying to stifle a sigh of relief.

'You want into the game?' asks the other.

Will you accept his invitation (turn to 19) or decline and excuse yourself from the room (turn to 11).

44

Sure enough you find the king in the town square, surrounded by musketeers and deep in conversation with de Batz. One of the musketeers recognizes you and leads you through the gathering crowd to the lieutenant of the king's musketeers.

'I thought you might be dead when I saw the remains of the ambush,' says de Batz wryly, 'but I am greatly pleased to see you still alive. Am I right in guessing you are responsible for His Majesty's escape?'

'Indeed you are Lieutenant,' replies the king for you. 'I slipped off my blindfold before making my mistake and saw this man bravely taking on my kidnapper. He should be commended.'

You blush, slightly embarrassed that the king of all France is heaping praises upon you.

De Batz leads you aside. 'You have done well indeed,' he says. 'But I have a favour to ask of you'

'Yes?' you say hesitantly.

'Did you find out anything about the king's abductors?'

'Yes, I learned a few names. The main conspirator was ...'

De Batz raises a hand to stop you talking. 'I do not wish to know,' he says. 'And I would ask that you tell the cardinal nothing.'

'And why would you ask this?' you ask suspiciously.

'Let's just say political ideals may change like the wind, but friendship endures.'

Before you can ask what he means by this, you are interrupted by the king sauntering up to you.

'Are we ready to leave?' he demands. 'I wish to continue my tour.'

De Batz looks at the king in astonishment. 'You mean his highness does not wish to return to Paris?'

'I will not hide just because some peasants tried to kidnap me,' says the young king firmly. 'And if anyone else tries such a thing, you two will be there to protect me.'

Turn to 84.

45

The beadle was not expecting you to make such a foolhardy moves and he fumbles to get a shot off as you spring on him. *Test your Agility*. If you are successful, turn to 69. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 10.

46

Suddenly, the door flies open knocking you hard into the wall (lose 2 Vitality points). A grey-haired man runs past with the king slung over his shoulder. He throws open the far door and runs round the corner. Quickly, you give chase. Turn to 73.

47

The clientele begin booing when you refuse the challenge. They begin to taunt you and declare you a coward. One is even so bold as to throw a rotten tomato at you!

'Begone coward!' yells the moustached man. 'It saddens me to think that my brother was killed by a dishonourable cur such as you.'

You decide to beat a hasty retreat and return to the town square. Next you could try either the barracks (turn to 54) or the church (turn to 26) providing you have not visited them already.

48

You awaken with a pounding head. As your blurred vision clears, you see you are sitting at a wooden table with two men facing you. You are in a plain stone room, lit by a lantern that hangs from the ceiling. The room's sole door is behind the men opposite you and you can see your equipment stacked in the corner of the room. You wriggle slightly in your chair, finding your arms are tied behind it. Looking at the men opposite you see one is a handsome man with long, flowing dark hair and a thin moustache. He is dressed like a priest and he has a very superior look on his face. The man next to him is tall and rangy with a bald head a face plastered with scars. A large gold-earring hangs from one of his ears.

'Well, it appears our friend has awakened, Jacques,' says the priest. The other man grins evilly in response.

'We know why you're here,' the priest says. 'You're after the king. But what we don't know is who you're working for. Tell us, and I may convince Jacques here to go easy on you.'

Jacques cracks his knuckles and begins to chuckle in a low voice.

If you agree to reveal the details of your mission, turn to 82. If you are prepared to face the worst and say nothing, turn to 55.

49

Your shot smashes into the knee of the leading horse causing horse and rider to tumble down the slope. What's more, the rider behind is unable to slow his mount and he crashes into the tumbling horse, falling headfirst down the slope. You give a smile of grim satisfaction, but you cannot afford to be complacent. A stray musket ball strikes your horse in the flank and you leap from the saddle before you are crushed. You manage to land safely, when a huge man, incredible in terms of height and girth, reaches the bottom of the slope, dismounts and charges into the carriage with his rapier drawn. You hear sounds of a brief scuffle, then the scream of a dying man and then the large man bounds out of the carriage, his bloodied rapier clutched in his left-hand and King Louis XIV slung over his right shoulder! You give a scream of primal fury and dash after this would-be abductor. *Test your Agility*. If you are successful, turn to 20. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 28.

50

As soon as you can free your hands you spring on the lanky torturer's back. He shoves you off with a shrug and pulls forth his sword. As you struggle to your feet, he thrusts four feet of cold steel into your chest.

'Look what you've made me do,' he grumbles. But you are beyond hearing...

51

You race back to the alleyway Rosnay took, but there is no sign of him now. This section of the town is a veritable maze of alleyways, lanes and back-streets and he could be anywhere now. No doubt the king will soon be in the hands of the princes. You have failed in your mission.

52

The door opens into a small antechamber. On the opposite side is another door and, resting against the door is a guard who appears to be fast asleep. He is snoring gently and has a contented expression on his face. You tiptoe up to him. If you have a cudgel, turn to 64. If not, turn to 70.

53

You are followed by a crowd of excited onlookers into the town square. There you stand back to back with your opponent, raising your pistols.

'Take five paces then turn and fire!' he growls.

One of the crowd gives the command to start and you begin pacing away from your opponent, your heart going a mile a minute. Finally you take your fifth pace, turn around and fire!

Test your Marksmanship. If you are successful, turn to 14. If not, turn to 42.

54

A corpulent desk sergeant looks at you disinterestedly as you enter the barracks. You explain about how the king has been kidnapped, but he does not seem inclined to believe you. Since you are no longer dressed as a musketeer he seems to think you are nothing more than a troublemaker or a raving lunatic. Eventually he can stand no more of you and agrees to let you see his commanding officer. Your hopes are raised until you are shown in to the commander's office and see he looks even more disinterested and lazy than the sergeant. He seems to take everything you say as a big joke and every time he laughs he sends a spray of spittle into your face. It's only when you tell him how displeased Cardinal Mazarin will be with him if he allows the king to be captured that his face falls. He orders a thorough search of the whole town, having his men knock at every door and demand entry. Unfortunately, all this does is alert the conspirators and give them a chance to escape and no sign of the king or his abductors is found. You have failed in your mission.

55

The priest nods to the bald-headed goon and looks away. The man rises from his chair, grinning from ear to ear. He grabs your face in his calloused hands and, as you try to struggle, he puts his thumbs on your eyes and begins to squeeze. It is the most incredible pain you have ever felt in your life and you cannot help but scream (lose 3 Vitality points). At the edge of your hearing you hear the priest talking in his soft voice.

'Are you ready to talk yet?' he asks.

Will you reply 'Yes' (turn to 82) or will you stay resolute and risk being tortured to death (turn to 67).

56

You race back to the alleyway Rosnay took. You spot him disappearing round a corner and give chase. He is not a young man and he has to carry the burden of a struggling monarch, so you have no trouble in catching up to him. You command him to halt. He sets the king down then spins round with his rapier drawn.

'I knew Allibert was many things, but I never thought him a fool,' he says, his voice menacing. 'Yet fool he was to put his trust in you.'

'What can I say,' you reply cockily, pulling forth your own sword. 'I have a way with people.'

'See what good it does you in Hell!' yells Rosnay, rushing towards you.

Test your Swashbuckling. If you are successful, turn to 58. Otherwise, turn to 13.

57

The guard is groggy and no match for your skill. You knock a clumsy thrust aside then thrust your own rapier into his chest. He stares at you with a look of pure astonishment in his eyes before crumpling to the floor, dead. You drag him away from the door then reach out to turn the handle. Turn to 46.

58

Rosnay may not be in his first flush of youth, but the man fights like a demon. It takes all your skill and expertise just to keep him at bay and even then a few lucky lunges have found their mark and you are bleeding from several small wounds (lose 2 Vitality points). On the other hands he seems to be barely sweating let alone bleeding. This does not look like a fight you can win. Eventually he slows his onslaught and drops back, eyeing you wearily, his breathing becoming heavy.

'You fight well,' he rasps. 'I have not had a duel such as this in many a long year. It will be almost a shame to put you to the sword.'

You are about to make a half-hearted retort when you see something that makes you smile: the king has gone!

'Perhaps you should have paid less attention to me and more to His Majesty,' you gloat. 'It seems he has given you the slip.'

Rosnay spins round in alarm, aghast that he has let the king slip through his fingers. He turns to you again with a look of rage. You steady yourself, waiting for him to attack again, but his features soften and he begins to laugh.

'It seems Louis XIV isn't as helpless as some would believe,' he chuckles. 'Farewell Trebuchet. I dare say we will meet again.'

With that, he turns and races down an alleyway. You decide it best just to let him go and head to the town square, confident that that is where the king would go. Turn to 44.

59

You lie against the floor and try to make out what the murmured voices are saying. Your heart leaps for joy when you recognize one of them as the voice of the king!

'I demand you take this blindfold off!' says the king, his voice surprisingly strong and unwavering despite his situation.

'I am afraid I cannot do that, highness. Such an action would be unwise on my part,' replies a man's voice.

'What are you planning then? Ransom? Murder?'

'Nothing like that, sire,' replies the mysterious voice. 'In fact I act out of your, and France's, best interests.'

'I find that hard to believe. What do you plan to do with me then?'

'I am simply to deliver you to the princes, who wish to keep you away from the machinations of Cardinal Mazarin.'

'Princes?' asks the king suspiciously. 'Which princes?'

'I think I had best keep that to myself for the meantime, sire,' reassures the voice.

Before you can hear any more, you are startled to hear the door behind you creaking open. *Test your Agility*. If you are successful, turn to 5. Otherwise, turn to 63.

60

The men rise with a roar, sending their table flying. You pull forth your rapier and parry a merciless overhead strike by the larger of the two, just as the smaller one thrusts towards your midriff. You swipe your sword down and manage to knock his blow aside, but now the larger one tries a thrust to your heart. Again you parry, but you are slowly being forced back into the corner of the inn. Despite being slightly inebriated, the two men fight like a well-oiled machine, each thrust and feint used to support the other as they close in on you in a whirlwind of death. Finally, one of them manages to catch you off guard and stabs you in the side and

before you can recover, the other sends his sword-point straight into your throat. You die gurgling on your own blood.

61

Despite his grogginess, the guard surprises you by catching you in the side with a savage thrust of his rapier (lose 3 Vitality point). Suppressing a scream of pain, you bring your own rapier into his stomach. He collapses to the ground, moaning in agony. Quickly you bring your sword-point down through the back of his throat, silencing him forever. Unsure of whether you did that as an act of mercy or just to shut him up, you move his body away from the door then reach out to turn the handle. Turn to 46.

62

The priest smiles. 'Excellent,' he says. 'I am expecting an ally by the name of Rosnay to arrive to escort the king to the princes soon.' He extends his hand in friendship. 'I am the Abbé Allibert by the way'

'Giles Trebuchet,' you reply, shaking his hand firmly. 'I take it you are the Dark Priest?'

Allibert smiles. 'Yes. A friend of mine joked that it reflected my alter-ego as a dabbler in politics. I thought it had a ring to it so I decided to use it as a pseudonym - not a very subtle one though.

'Anyway,' he continues, rising to his feet. 'Follow me and I shall show you to His Majesty.'

You rise from your chair and follow Allibert out of the sacristy, down a hidden staircase into an underground complex. Turn to 83.

63

A man opens the door. On seeing you, he starts and reaches for a heavy cudgel on his belt. You struggle to your feet to draw your sword, but before you can pull yourself up, he brings his cudgel down hard on your head. You crumble to the ground, quite unconscious. Lose 2 Vitality points then turn to 48.

64

You pull out your cudgel and smack him over the top of the head. He stops snoring and slides down the wall, unconscious. You drag him away from the door then reach out to turn the handle. Turn to 46.

65

You jump to your feet, sword in hand.

'I say "nay", priest. Your scheming ends here!'

The priest sighs heavily and rises to his feet. He draws a slender epee and twirls it effortlessly in his hands.

'So be it,' he says.

Test your Swashbuckling. If you are successful, turn to 31. Otherwise, turn to 22.

66

Quick as lightning, you kick their table towards them, winding them both. Before they can recover you bring the pommel of your rapier down on the larger of the two, laying him out cold. The other fumbles for his sword, but as he pulls it free you place your own sword-point on his throat.

'I think you had best talk' you say sternly.

'Alright,' he blubbers. 'The stables next to the Hotel Rouge. There's a trapdoor in one of the stalls there. They're keeping him down there.'

You nod and back away towards the exit from the tavern. The man watches you with rueful eyes and several of the tavern's patrons mutter to themselves, but none dares to make a move on you - not after seeing how you handle yourself. Finally, you reach the town square again. If you wish to seek out the Hotel Rouge, turn to 18. Alternatively, you can try the barracks (turn to 54) or the church (turn to 26), providing you haven't tried them already.

67

The bald goon slaps you hard round the face with the back of his hand (lose 2 Vitality points), but you still refuse to talk.

The priest sighs. 'Enough of this,' he says. 'I have important matters to attend to.' He rises from his seat.

'Jacques,' he commands. 'Watch our guest until I return. Do not harm him.' With that he strides out of the room, closing the door behind him.

Jacques turns to you and gives an ugly grin before slapping you across the face again (lose another 2 Vitality points). Seizing your opportunity, you let your head go limp and play dead. Jacques is clearly startled - he was told not to harm you and now he thinks he's accidentally killed you! He loosens your bonds and tries to get you to sit up straight. *Test your Agility.* If you are successful, turn to 8. Otherwise, turn to 50.

68

You struggle to your feet and hobble over to a pillar, scurrying behind it just as the door to the confessional is thrown open and four surly looking men, armed with rapiers, burst out. They give gasps of horror when they see the dead bodies of their comrades and rush forward to inspect them. Seizing your opportunity, you tiptoe past them and sneak into the confessional. The small room is empty, but you do see some wooden stairs leading down a stone corridor, lit by lamps along the wall. Hurriedly you follow the stairs down. There is a small landing half-way down with a door in the left-hand wall. If you wish to try this door, turn to 40. If you would rather continue down the stairs, you can see another two doors at the bottom. To keep on going down, turn to 74.

69

Before he can fire, you shove him to the ground and he bangs his head hard on the wall, knocking himself out in the process. You check his pulse to see if he's still alive and he seems to be alright - you would hate to be responsible for the death of a man of God, even if he was particularly irritating. You hide his carbine behind a few boxes of candles and leave the store-room.

You are about to go up to investigate one of the galleries when you spot a priest walking down the aisle of the church. You duck behind a pillar and peer round to see what he is up to. He is unusually handsome for a priest and has long flowing black hair and a thin, waxed moustache. You watch as he opens the door to the confessional and steps inside, closing the door behind him. You wait in your hiding place for a couple of minutes more, but he does not emerge again. If you wish to enter the confessional, turn to 34. If you would rather go up to one of the galleries, turn to 23.

70

You cannot bring yourself to kill a man in cold blood so you shake him roughly by the shoulder and he gives a yelp of alarm as he reaches for his sword, just as you pull forth your own. *Test your Swashbuckling*. If you are successful, turn to 57. Otherwise, turn to 61.

71

You try the handle on the door, but it is locked. You cannot spot any keyhole, but you do see a small indentation in the shape of a rose in the wall next to it. If you have a ring, turn to 36. If not, there is no way to open this door. Return to 29 and pick a door you have not already tried.

72

You feel no need for subtlety and boldly stride towards the laughing pair with your hand on the hilt of your rapier. They turn to look at you with bleary eyes.

'What have you done with the king, you blackguards?!' you demand.

They look at each other, nod and then reach for their blades. *Test your Swashbuckling*. If you are successful, turn to 66. If not, turn to 60.

73

You reach the bottom of a wooden staircase and see your quarry waiting at the top, the king still slung over his shoulder. He is deep in conversation with the priest you saw earlier. Neither one seems to have noticed you yet.

'I have just heard de Batz has arrived in town with a detachment of musketeers,' mutters the priest. 'They are searching for the king!'

'Curses,' replies the grey-haired man. 'I do not fancy making a dash through the town square with the king of France upon my back and the keen eyes of de Batz on the look out for him!'

'Never fear,' reassures the priest. 'There is another way out of here. Follow me.'

They turn and freeze in their tracks when they see you waiting at the foot of the stairs with your rapier drawn.

'I think I'll be taking the king,' you say.

The two of them look at each other and begin to chuckle.

'You think you are strong enough to take both of us on at once?' laughs the priest, pulling forth a slim epee.

'Perhaps not,' you reply sternly. 'But I can delay you while making enough noise to bring the musketeers down upon you.'

The two of them stop laughing. 'Maybe we should run through the town square after all,' says the grey-haired man hesitantly.

If you have some incriminating documents, turn to 25. If not, turn to 77.

74

You reach the bottom of the stairs. There is a wooden door to either of side of you. The one in the right is stout-looking and after trying the handle you find that it is locked. You try the left door instead and the handle turns. You step through to the corridor beyond. Turn to 29.

75

You reach the top of the stairs, gripping your rapier firmly in your hands. The two men climb the stairs cautiously towards you. *Test your Swashbuckling*. If you are successful, turn to 32. Otherwise, turn to 3.

76

You struggle to rise to your feet, but you cannot rise any further than a sitting position. You gulp as the confessional door is thrown open with a bang and four surly looking men, armed

with rapiers, burst out. They look horrified when they see the dead bodies of their fallen comrades, but horror turns to anger when they see you feebly trying to get to your feet. One of them advances on you, hate reflected in his eyes, his sword pointed towards your throat. 'You will pay for what you have done,' he sneers.

You stare at the point of his sword, transfixed by the sight of it. You don't even notice one of the other men circling around you before he brings a heavy cudgel smashing down upon your head. You slide into unconsciousness. Deduct 2 Vitality points then turn to 48.

77

There is nothing you can say to get them to stop. They rush out the door, slamming it closed behind them. You bound up the stairs after them, but you find the door jammed shut. You knock on the door with both fists, bellowing at the top of your lungs. Eventually the door is thrown open by a musketeer who had decided to make a search of the church. Once you explain who you are, he leads you into the town square to de Batz. De Batz is pleased to see you - he thought you had died in the ambush, but unfortunately it appears the conspirators have given him the slip. The king will soon be in the hands of the princes. You have failed in your mission.

78

You wait until the men have reached the stairs then clamber over the balcony. Unfortunately, the gallery has not been tended in a while and the wooden rail is quite rotted. It gives way as soon as you put any pressure on it and you tumble to the church floor below, striking your head hard (lose 3 Vitality points). Your vision blurs and the last thing you see before you lose consciousness is the two men advancing on you. Turn to 48.

79

Your shot skims past the oncoming guard's ear. Before you have a chance to do anything else, he brings his booted foot smashing into your face (lose 2 Vitality points). You collapse to the ground and your vision dims as you slip into unconsciousness. Turn to 48.

80

Your blade clashes with the first horseman's with such force that his sword flies from his hands. The second horseman thrusts the point of his blade at your face, but you duck and thrust up with your rapier, your sword ripping through your opponent's throat and coming out the other end. The first horseman leaps on top of you and knocks you from your saddle to the ground, but you grab hold of his shoulders and twist in such a way that you pin him to the ground. Before he has time to struggle, you grab a nearby rock and crack his skull open with a heavy blow. Recovering your sword you rise to your feet once more. Turn to 24.

81

Your head is throbbing as you regain consciousness, but you manage to open your eyes and stand to your feet. All around you are the dead, both men and horses lie in pools of their own blood. Remnants of the king's carriage are scattered across the battlefield. There is no sign of the king or the cannons. You sift through the rocks and bodies, trying to find any survivors. You about to give up hope when you hear a low groan and you find one of the ambushers lying against a boulder. Blood is flowing out of his stomach and he is surely dying. You draw your rapier and point it at his throat and demand to know what has become of the king. He looks at you with blinking, unfocused eyes and then gives a dry chuckle.

'You're too late, fool,' he rasps. 'By now the Dark Priest has the king.'

'What are you talking about, man? Who is this Dark Priest?' you demand, but the man just closes his eyes and his laboured breathing ceases.

You sheathe your sword and deliberate what to do now. The nearest town is Noisy and you suspect that that is where the king will have been taken to. You discard your clothing and your bulky musket and pull on one of the ambusher's woollen jerkins to help you blend in and set off to Noisy in hopes of finding the king and this mysterious Dark Priest. Turn to 27.

82

You blurt out the whole tale - how Cardinal Mazarin had tasked you to protect the king and to recover him at all costs if he were taken. The priest smiles in response.

'There, that wasn't so hard, was it?' he says in his soft, patronizing voice. 'Mazarin chose poorly it seems. I'm afraid the king will be safely delivered to the princes and Mazarin's reign will soon be at an end. Now I am afraid we must leave you. You will be released in a few days, once this whole affair is over.'

With that, he and his bald-headed companion rise from their seats and leave the room, locking the door behind them. You hang your head in shame - you have failed in your mission.

83

Allibert leads you through the complex, nodding at a few guards he passes. He throws open a door to reveal a small room containing the king, blindfolded and tied to a chair!

'Who's there?' Louis demands, his voice strong and imperious, despite his situation.

'Your Majesty,' replies Allibert. 'You will be pleased to hear that you will soon be delivered to the princes and this whole unpleasantness will be at an end.'

Before he can continue, the door is thrown open violently, and a man in his late fifties with long grey hair and a vicious scar on his left cheek, bursts into the room.

'I must speak with you quickly,' he says to Allibert. Allibert nods and beckons for you to follow then into the antechamber.

'Who's this?' asks the new arrival, looking at you suspiciously.

'This is Giles Trebuchet, a new recruit to the cause' replies Allibert. 'Trebuchet, this is Rosnay. He will be escorting the king to his new residence.'

'Perhaps not,' says Rosnay gravely. 'De Batz has just arrived in the town with a detachment of the king's musketeers. They are searching the town for the king!'

'Zounds!' cries Allibert, slapping his thigh. 'Had I known de Batz would be in the area, I never would have embarked on this mission.'

You say nothing. Mazarin must have sent de Batz to follow the king's escort just in case you failed.

'Never mind,' continues Allibert. 'We should still be able to make our escape with the king if we move quickly.'

Rosnay nods and goes back into the king's room, returning a few seconds later with the king gagged and slung over his shoulder.

'Follow me,' says Allibert and he leads the two of you into a brightly lit room, filled with soldiers languishing on couches, looking bored. Allibert runs up to one of them and tells him to cover your escape should the musketeers find the complex. Then he leads you to a staircase at the back of the room and motions you to follow up the stairs.

The three of you emerge into a smelly stables and you are forced to hold your nose. The king grumbles through his gag.

'We should split up here,' says Allibert. 'Trebuchet, make yourself scarce and I shall contact you soon.'

The three of you nod, then rush out of the stables, scattering among the alleyways. You know Rosnay will soon bring the king to the princes if you don't do something quickly. You could double-back and try to catch up with him before he can make good his escape (turn to 7). Or you could head to the town square and ask de Batz to aid you in tracking him down (turn to 33). Alternatively, if Allibert has convinced you that the Frondeurs are in the right, you could let Rosnay go and keep running away (turn to 15).

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A month later you are standing in Mazarin's chambers having briefed him on your mission. 'I suppose you did well,' he says at length. 'Though it would have been better if you had stopped the king getting captured in the first place. And why did you not bring him straight back to Paris?'

'The king was insistent, your Eminence,' you reply.

'Indeed,' says the cardinal, stroking his beard. 'Perhaps he wouldn't have been as easy to control as the princes thought. Very well, you may go.'

You are surprised at such brusque treatment. 'Is there no reward, your Eminence?'

'For doing your duty to France?!' he replies angrily. 'You did no more than any citizen should. You think France has so much money to spare?'

You gaze at the opulence displayed in the cardinal's chambers. 'I guess not,' you reply then turn to go.

'Before you leave,' says Mazarin. 'Did you learn the identities of any of the conspirators?'

'I'm afraid not,' you say firmly before striding out of the chamber with a smile on your face.