

2015
WINDHAMMER PRIZE
FOR SHORT GAMEBOOK FICTION

Tower of Atrocities of Corruption of Obscenities

AN ENTRY IN THE 2015 WINDHAMMER PRIZE FOR
SHORT GAMEBOOK FICTION

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by Chan Sing Goh

Your march to the warlock's tower has taken you a week, or is it two weeks? You could not recall; the scorching desert has turned what was supposed to be days into a long stretch of endless sunlight. The only numbers you could remember are: the amount of savage barbarians you slew to get here, the litres of water you have left in your water skin, and the total worth of treasures rumoured to be hoarded by the warlock.

The monsters spawned forth by the warlock's foul sorcery would raid the innocent people and steal their valuables to expand their dark master's hoard. With that sudden realization, you quickly halt and pray for forgiveness for such greedy thoughts. After all, you are not some bandit or raider looking to loot the warlock's treasure. No! You are a noble hero, blessed by the king to rid this land of the warlock's evil. After you slay him, you will return the treasure back to the people and then peace and prosperity will once more fill the land for the righteous.

Your destination, the tower, is made of two yellow walls of sixty feet in height and 10 feet apart from each other. In between the walls are protrusions of cubes painted in red, green, and brown; you think these are the tower's rooms. The dark clouds looming on top of the tower provides a much needed reprieve from the sunlight that is stinging your skin; especially your thighs, chafed by the swing motion of your sword cover caused by the long march. It was rumoured that many have tried to enter the gates blocking the entrance and many have died. The survivors' testaments talk of various things like bottomless pit-traps, or a poison-coated gate, or monsters which drop from the dark clouds, or even spontaneous body explosions will befall on the would-be intruder; no one has ever managed to enter the tower. But none of it shall deter you, your righteous noble cause and the king's blessing will shield you from any of the warlock's magic tricks. But even so, you cannot help yourself but to feel a chill running up your spine the moment you stand in front of the black stone gates decorated with some sort of glyphs that seems to be emitting energy; undoubtedly the warlock's own handiwork.

With a deep exhale, you push the chill back and courage for the innocents begin to strengthen your mental fortitude. "Warlock!" you shout while pointing your sword at the gate. "You have stained the land with your evil for too long. Cowering in your tower cannot protect you forever. I, the king's champion, have come to give you a good swording. I challenge you almighty warlock! If you are truly powerful, you will face me instead of using your monsters or magic tricks! Open the gate, and I will come to you!" Your challenge was greeted with silence by the uncaring gates still sealed shut. But just when you are about to turn back, the gate slowly slides open to reveal a stairway leading upwards.

You try to figure out why. Is it because he is amused by your bravado? Or maybe he figures you challenging enough? Or maybe he wants to make an example out of you who so boldly challenged him? Whatever the case, his hubris will not last long. You ready your amour, weapon, and tools like water canister, and flint, and tinder. Now nothing can stand between you and holy vengeance. This evil will be purged from the lands!

1

If you have the codeword MIRAGE or ROCK turn to 69. Otherwise, read on.

The air in the tower is cold which is typical of any place where evil energy flows freely. This welcoming (though uneasy) change from the scorching desert hastens your ascent of the spiral stairs as you dash through the cool air flowing past the crevices in your leather armour.

After a few minutes, the stairs ends with a wooden door just big enough for a human to fit through. On top of the door, you notice a stone slab with an etching that reads 'Within dwells Akadi, Prime Evil of the East. Turn back. Death and despair await those foolish enough to enter.' You laugh. If the warlock wants to instil fear in a hero such as you, he will have to do better than a simple 'keep out' sign.

A quick examination reveals that to open the door, you will just have to push it.

What will you do?

- Ready your sword and push the door. - 53
- Examine the door closer - 25
- If you have the codeword KARN, turn to 58

2

THE END

- Go back to the start - 1

3

You dick! What did I tell you huh? Why couldn't you just listen? I have spent the last thousands of years plotting and waiting for this moment and I am not about to let some idiotic fool put all my plans into the gutter. You are going to... to...

6

You dick, what did I say huh?

Okay this can still work, just ignore the pale, motionless, and dried up body sitting on a stone throne that has replaced the pile of black substance. Don't ask why just ignore it. I know the black robes and the helmet with plenty of spiky bits makes the body look evil but just ignore it.

Now turn your head back and go back to the treasure room to pick up the magic sword. Then, we can start the story over.

- Okay, I'll just pretend all this never happened and go pick up the sword - 1
- If you have the codeword LIME, you can stab it with your steel sword - 60
- I have this "Used Underwear", and I will rub it on the corpse's face – 84
- I'm going to pick up the magic sword and stab the body:
 - If you have the codeword TENSE – 3
 - Otherwise - 37

7

You make me sad, but can't say I blame you. My promises may not mean much to you but I am a law abiding person. Well... actually... since I'm a tyrant, I make the law, but I still will abide them.

Not to worry, I have the perfect way to put things into perspective. Here are the two options that are available to you:

- a) You break the seal, and there is a possibility of me making you powerful and rich or making you die horribly.
- b) You don't break the seal, I get frustrated and I kill you, horribly.
 - Okay you win, I'll break the seal - 13
 - Er, still no! I'm just gonna leave this tower with my treasure. So long sucka! - 92

8

Ah, see that would be the honourable choice. After all, they are soldiers, they accepted that death is an occupational hazard when they took on the job. However, after the carriage ran through the soldiers, it is still not going to stop. It is going to keep running over more innocent people and killing them until it becomes exhausted. See if the soldiers were the ones spared, they could have killed the horse preventing more deaths.

You picked the honourable choice but the end result was not exactly what you imagined. That is what I'm trying to tell you, sometimes just because your actions are honourable does not mean the outcome will be good.

So, back to the story, you have the sword and there are more treasures awaiting for you. What will your choice be?

- You make sense. Fine! I'll stab the sword into the corpse - 34
- You dare mock my code of honour? I challenge you narrator to a fight to the death! - 89

9

Slowly, you extend your hand towards the sword. As your leather glove and the iron meet, you close your eyes and move your head back in anticipation of an explosion. However, you are greeted with a soft and inviting warm sensation that radiates from the sword and pierces the leather. You slide your hands upwards along the blade and the warm glow grows more intense as if the sword is calling to you wrap your hands on the grip and pull out the blade.

Record the codeword: TENSE

What do you want to do next?

- Pull out the sword - 19
- Lick the blade - 71

10

"Wot kind of sick arse are you?" the doorknob barks back at you as your fingers slide down the bronze pointy nose. "Right, if yoos into dis sorta stuff, I's cool wiv it coz I's doorknob. But er da unicorn hates da touchy-feely stuff. Every time some gitz sees a unicorn, the first thing theys does is ta touch the horn, ta see if its real; ova da years that giv da unicorn a bad case of contact dermatitis and syphilis so it kinda as a no-no fer people touching it, especially is horn."

Record the codeword JARC.

After you are done feeling the doorknob, you remove your hands from it. What will you do now?

- Strike the doorknob and open the door - 30
- Wait and see what happens - 88

11

I am very baffled by you at this point. I just spent four passages and that equates to 825 words to tell you that there is nothing wrong with the door. Honestly, that is rather tedious work just to get you to go past the first obstacle.

Now, you are the king's champion right? Because people do not become champions by being cowards. Unless of course in your kingdom, "the king's champion" is just a euphemism for "Sacrificial Pawn". But if that is so, why did you not run? You could have escape your fate by running away into the desert. So what is it that brought you here in this tower? Was it loyalty? Was it vengeance? Was it greed?

But whatever the case is, here you are, standing in front of the door, too scared to even open it.

Sigh

Wait but if...

If the door really is that troublesome, I think I know how to make it work. Yes, I think this little change will make the story better suited to your peculiarity.

Now record the codeword: ROCK and let's take it from the top again shall we?

- Back to the beginning - 1

12

A feeling of uneasiness sinks in as you scan the four dark, cold, stone walls surrounding the room. The foul air stings your nostrils; death itself have come to taunt you, come to play with its latest prey.

A chilling wind blows into the room and stirs the cobwebs which have covered the walls. Your nerves tingle, your muscles shiver, your skin oozes cold sweat, you have never felt such fear before. This must be the focal point of the evil energies that permeates the tower's air. The piles of gold treasure you see laid beyond the door glimmers in, hold on.

Er, there is not supposed to be any gold in the sword room! Let me just check the plot summary.

Let's see, open door, see sword, pulls sword out, go to the... oh dear, this is embarrassing but, we seem to have jumped too far!

Er, spoiler alert! Just pretend you did not read anything in this passage, we can still make the story work!

Now, take any scrap piece of paper and record the codeword: MIRTH

- Go back to the start - 1

13

Yes! Yes! Oh YES! I can feel the magic chain that had strap my soul to this cursed chair for a millennium finally lifting and now I can drift freely in the tower! Sweet freedom! Now that my powers are unbound, I can finally create an unstoppable army upon all the kingdoms of this land. Then, the age of Akadi, Prime Evil of the East shall begin. Muahahahahahaha!

But wait, my body is already rotted beyond salvage. I need a new body to house my soul; a fitting, strong body like *grins* a king's champion's body.

- If you have the codeword DOOM, go to - 23
- Otherwise, go to - 24

14

Ha! You think I haven't thought that this will happen? If so then sorry to disappoint you, but as you can clearly see, all this was planned, ingeniously planned, by me.

But why are you trying to ruin the story? Does this give you an excitement because you can claim you have broken the game, that you have broken me?

Anyways the last laugh is with me. So just take a moment to savour how smart and insightful this story is and how all gamebooks should aspire to be like this one you are reading now.

As punishment, remove all of your talents. Then, we can restart the story in a clean slate. You can try to go to that pervious passage if you want all of your talents back.

- Back to the beginning - 1

15

FINE!

fine!

fine.

Let us get this farce over quick.

Roll 3 six-sided dice.

- If you got triple 1s, go to - 61

Otherwise, the creature is dead. Yay. *rolls eyes* Now, either:

- Stab the corpse with the magic sword. - 34
- Take the jewelleries from the corpse - 21

16

"Oh no you did not just do that!" the unicorn says to you before turning his back on you. The last thing you remember is a teddy bear tattooed horse butt before a pair of hooves hit you in the head cracking your skull

THE END

- Turn to - 20

17

The torches attached on the walls light up when you step past the door, you have entered a room which is well furnished with a king-sized bed covered with purple linen; the lack of dust and spider webs suggests that this room has been recently used. On your left you see a wooden table and on it, a book titled "Evil Tyranny for Idiots" and a bottle of pills with a label which reads "Willow Bark Elixir".

Wait, hold on, why is there a bottle of pills? That is a stroke preventer and I don't recall having put those in this story. Let me check the plot summary again.

Hmmm... Well, that's not right according to how I arrange the pages you should be in... Wait I see what happened, that whole extra narrative fiasco has caused me to rewrite my narration multiple times and how I have messed up my story's plot line. We seem to be lost in the story, and this place, well, let's just say you are not supposed to be here.

Okay, tell you what, if we restart the story again, there is a risk of us getting lost again. So I'm going to tell you which pages to flip to as to minimize further story derailment by needless exploration.

Passage 1

Passage 53

Passage 19

Passage 83

Passage 34

Got it? Now let's start again. Remove the codeword MIRTH.

- Back to the top - 1

18

How you did you get that magic bag? I clearly did not include this item in the story. Let me try to recall... Nope, I just cannot remember including a magic bag anywhere in this tower.

But anyhow, now that you have one and you put the magic sword into the bag, I think I should explain

the pseudo-physics of how this bag works in detail so you know why this unexpected usage is throwing a giant wrench in the story's plot.

See, the bag is actually a portal to an extra-dimension. So, this bag has unlimited space, because this bag allows you to put things in another dimension. In this extra-dimension, magic does not work, so the sword's magic will fade away and once the magic is completely drained, the sword will be powerless forever. Then, how are you going to stab the warlock?

So please put your hand in the bag and take out the sword.

- Okay, I'll take out the sword - 57
- I don't need to touch the sword, I'll just invert the bag inside-out - 78

19

With every step you take closer to the sword, you can feel an aura of warmth around you increasing in intensity. When your fingers and the obsidian grip touch, the light that illuminates the sword gets brighter and you can feel an energy of righteous might surge into your arms. You can tell this sword is very heavily imbued with holy magic; a flame of righteousness in a sea of vile darkness.

You pull out the sword and the blade slides off smoothly like a knife stabbed into butter. Once the blade leaves the rock, you notice that the light immediately disappears and the sword starts to illuminate in a faint yellow glow. You are not sure what this sword does, but if there is anything here that can kill the warlock, it is this sword, you are certain of it. You tuck your old sword away, and hold the magic sword. Then suddenly, a hidden door reveals itself by sliding open and presents you with a corridor that goes to your left and right. On the wall you see a sign made of wood written in common tongue and in ink that says: "Left to the Warlock's Room. Right to the Toilets."

So where will you go now?

- Turn left - 83
- Turn right - 27

20

So, what do you think of this sillier version of the story? I actually quite like it; now anything silly you'll do I can just as easily railroad you back into the story's plot with an easily conjured whimsical explanation. If you liked it, you can stick to the silly version and retry, or you can return to the original version where it is dark and serious.

- Stay with the silly version - 58
- Back to the original version. Remove the codeword KARN - 1

21

These valuables were probably stolen from innocent civilians in the kingdom! Removing them before you puncture his heart (if he has any) is probably a good idea; who knows what will happen, if the body immolates after the stab then that will be quite a waste of perfectly sellable treasures, ahem, I mean a senseless destruction of an innocent's hard labour. You remove all the jewelleries around the warlock's corpse and stashed them into your back-pack.

It's quite a haul, there is probably enough gold in there to buy a castle, or food enough to feed a million for a month, or a thousand for a month if you are feeling generous enough to give more than a typical

your mind. You will not be able to control your body, but you can still see through your eyes and bear witness to the evil deeds I am about to commit. Or if you wish, I can put your soul into an illusion so you can live in whatever fantasies you desire.

I promised that I will make you rich and powerful right? Well I mean to keep to that promise. Muahahahaha!

THE END

25

There is no urgency, so why throw caution in the air? A dead warlock now and a dead warlock ten minutes later is the same. Besides, if the warlock supposedly added traps to the gate just now, he will probably do the same to this door as well. Good thinking.

Your eyes scan for every possible hidden traps but found none. Your mind tries to feel for any evil magic but detected none. As far as you know, this really is an ordinary door, plain-ol' simple non-trapped door, like the ones you'd probably see every day.

So, what will you do now?

- Ready your sword and open the door - 53
- Search again, just to be sure. - 73

26

That cool air is still caressing my skin underneath in my armour. That is the only thing I can sense for the room is instantly filled with total darkness the moment the warlock met his doom.

But wait, I can feel my head and my eyes, but by the gods, the feeling is painful like trying to move a leg after it has been paralyzed for too long. I feel the cool air also caressing it but it is slowly withdrawing out of my eyes like an evil curse has been lifted. Slowly, the darkness evaporates into thin air and light fills my eyes once more. I can clearly examine the entire chamber, and memories of my quest to rid the kingdom of the warlock rings in my head.

I gaze at the corpse sitting on a throne of black iron and dark stone with a sword stabbed into his chest. The dead body is slowly crumbling into dust and fading into the air. Yes, against all odds I slew the warlock! That wretched villain casted a vile spell to trick my senses but I could see through the deception.

Then, a glimmer of light catches my eyes, and I stand in awe at the amount of treasure that is piled behind the evil throne. This wealth will feed many mouths, build many facilities, and restore the kingdom to its former glory. Transporting this much gold away from this dank and foul-smelling chamber in the tower will take time, but it will be worth it for the people need not live in fear any longer and happier times await all in the kingdom.

Fast forward 5 years.

Peace and prosperity, these are the two words to describe this new age in the kingdom's history. The markets are filled with merchants peddling riches from faraway lands, the fields are coloured with plentiful agriculture of various colours, the king's soldiers patrol the kingdom in their handsome new armours, and the people are happy knowing that they are safe and their future is bright.

The king has given me various titles and the princess' hand in marriage. I accepted his generous gifts and

live a happy life. However, I am honour-bound to my duty. Though the warlock is dead and the crumbling tower now serves as a reminder that good always triumph over evil, I cannot shake off the feeling that evil will always exist, waiting to strike again once we let our guard down. I only hope that the warlock is truly gone and his death was not another illusion.

THE END

27

Foul odours stings your nostrils when you reach the end of the corridor, which turns out to be a very spacious room with black and badly torn cloth strips hanging along the room's walls. In the middle of the room you see a pile of black substance that looks like it came from a living thing and the foul smell seems to be emanating from it. The room's ceiling high and you notice that there are no form of ventilation in this room which explains why the smell is so bad.

What will you do next?

- Turn back to the Warlock's Room - 83
- Poke the black pile - 49
- If you have the codeword ROCK or MIRAGE - 91

28

Tsk tsk, I am still inside your head controlling what illusions you will be seeing. So now I'm going to make the only thing you see is pitch black darkness.

There! Now finding my body is gonna be a tad difficult now since that...

Whoa whoa.

You just stepped on a pile of manure there. That's gross. Now as I was saying, since I control what you can see, I too can make you die in... Oh watch out!

THUMP! CRANK! PLONK! TWNAG! DONG!

Ha! You just fell down the stairs! You should have seen yourself! You though there was going to be a flat surface and then you went rolling down like a bolder. Hey, I could keep you as my entertainment while waiting for another champion to come! Watch out! There's a monster behind you!

SWING!

Fooled you! Now my wait is going to be so much more fun with you around.

THE END

29

What, oh, boo! That was not cool at all.

I don't know if your kingdom is a place where it is okay to talk badly of mothers. But from where I come from, we respect mothers, our own and each other, so much that even evil people love their mommas.

Oh, now the momentum to the climax of the story has just been ruined.

Tell you what, let's rewind this story a little bit so that you can choose the better insult.

- Go back to - 52

game.

"The sword! You are a king's champion too? I used to be one too!" it says.

How absurd, a former player and the current player are now talking to each other. There must be some sort of tear in the fabric of reality happening now.

"Do you hear the voices inside your head too? It's an illusion! The warlock is playing tricks on your mind as it did on mine."

I can feel you screaming 'what...' in your mind in which I join you.

WHAAaaaaat???... Come on, you gonna trust that thing over me? I did nothing but help you reach the ending where you slay the warlock. I'm on your side, really I am. In fact, do you know why that champion ended up like this? It is because he could not bear to leave the treasure unguarded to go find help. Such greed is unbecoming of a king's champion, he is not noble, unlike you. Go on deliver a merciful end to this pitiful shadow of a champion.

- Yes, this pitiful creature deserves a quick end - 90
- Ha, I now see through your lies narrator. I challenge you to a duel - 89

34

As your sword stabs into the body, it creates a forceful click akin to a padlock unlocking. A black sphere of energy expands from the corpse which flows over your armour and covers your skin with cold air as it fills the room. Then, all of a sudden, the sphere disappears and the room once again returns to being silent and eerie. The corpse by now has been burned to ashes by the black energy and you can see it slowly crumbling into dust.

As you ponder what happened, the wall in front of you slides open slowly with a loud rumbling sound which causes some of the long undisturbed rocks at the wall to fall. The beam of light shines from the slowly widening slit to reveal treasure! So much treasure that it can fill an entire chamber in the king's castle.

You take what your bag can carry and walk back to report to the king. Strangely your return journey seems shorter than you remember. Perhaps smiting the warlock has removed some dark magic slowing your journey towards the tower.

Upon reaching the castle gates, they open with fanfare music playing as crowds cheer for their hero. News travels fast around here. The royal guard in their handsome shiny armour stands into attention as the gates open. You walk along the path the royal guard has cleared for you and it leads to the king and the angelic princess; her skin as flawless as marble, her long hair which dances slightly with the wind as shiny as gold, and her hazel eyes as kind as an angel which looks at you admiration. Her smile gives a spring in your step as you walk on.

Once you have reached, you kneel before the king. "I have chosen my champion well for he truly is the noblest of them all. He has accomplished a feat where so many before him have failed. Not only that, after gaining access to the gold, he did not run away with it, he comes back to share his victory with us! For this, we are all eternally grateful," says the king. "We will march to the tower and reclaim what treasures the vanquished warlock has stolen from us. As a token of my gratitude, I give you my lovely daughter's hand in marriage." With that announcement, the crowd goes ecstatic cheering even louder.

Fast forward 5 years.

The land has grown prosperous, now everyone in the kingdom have enough food, a roof over their heads, and access to free education and healthcare. They build a statue of you in your honour and your name will live down the years in glory. You and the princess have two amazing children and you all lived

happily ever after. All according to plan.

THE END

35

But... but... That's not right, you are supposed to be a righteous man, that's why you got the king's blessing right? But if you are saying that you only want gold for yourself, which must mean...

Oh no, this won't work at all. My story requires the hero to be the paragon of righteousness! I designed the gate at the entrance to destroy all who would try to enter the tower unless the man has the king's blessing because I thought having the king's blessing is equivalent to being righteous. But now I see that his blessing has been cheapened somewhat.

Champions like you only come once in a year, and you blew it! Now my story is useless! Oh, what am I to do with you?

- Tell me why you want me to stab the corpse so bad - 40
- I'm sorry, I'll stab the corpse okay? - 80
- Well, sucks to be you. I'm out - 92

36

You walk into the door and find yourself in a room of which its description is not important to the story. In the room you notice a sword stabbed into a rock of which its design is also not important to the story. What will you do next?

- Burn the rock - 96
- Ask the rock nicely to give the sword - 95
- Pull out the sword - 57

37

No! Why! Did I not just tell you not to? Huh?! Now I... I... I feel, absolutely fine. But you just stabbed me with the magic sword; I should be dead. Maybe the spirits decided you are unworthy after all and powered down the sword's power?

Well whatever the case, Phew, I almost died! Hahaha! What do I do with you now O noble hero? I told you to ignore it but you dare disobey me. Since I am clear that you are beyond control, you are now of no use to me. I'll just wait until a next champion who will come and claim the sword. You however, I am going to make you suffer a thousand years' worth of pain in these few months. Once I am done, you are going to wish you have never been born.

THE END

- Back to the start - 1

38

Oh, not this business again! *Sigh* I would tell you that the sword looks ordinary, and the rock (despite having magical incantations on it) also look ordinary; but I have a strange feeling it is not enough for you. Perhaps in your mind you are expecting a massive explosion the moment you touch the sword.

Wait... But maybe.

Yes, I think I now understand the problem. The problem is not you, the problem is the choices, yes! That makes sense. After all, if the only choices I gave you were do something or to check it first, any rational person would choose to check and be cautious first; only then will that person consider doing it. Ah, then the fault is mine, my choices are not creative enough. Good work, think we have discovered something very important here!

So, I have changed the story slightly and hope this is sufficient for you to enjoy it this time. Remove the codeword ROCK.

•Go to - 59

39

Wait, that's the same thing as me making you the king! Instead of using me to bully the kingdom into submission, you are going to use me to indirectly bully the kingdom into submission. But okay, your terms are acceptable.

Fast forward 5 years.

Kingdom is safe from Akkadi's monsters as long as you are around. The king gives you the princess' hand in marriage because he dares not do anything that will cross you. When the king dies and his will states that his son takes over the kingdom, you objected the will and changed it so it says you get to be the next king. Is that illegal? Of course it is! But the supreme-judge insists that because you are such a good guy he's going to let you do that. Awesome!

During the coronation ceremony, you and your emotionally distant wife sit on the throne while rows of ministers, priests, nobles, royal family, and commoners sing hymns to your glory; some of the more popular ones are "God save the king, for he is so holy", "Our king is totally the good guy and we love him", and "We'll do whatever you say king, please don't let us die."

Not the best ending I had in mind, but I'll give you a nod and say: 'Not bad, not bad.'

THE END

40

Oh why not, you are not going to leave this tower alive anyways. Let me prepare my villainous monologue.

Ahem.

You see, all this is just an illusion you see. That corpse over there, is actually a trapping seal that is keeping me locked in this tower for ages.

In the days of old, a few heroes managed to drive me into this place. They could not kill me outright because my spirit was just too strong, so they set up a magical trap which binds me to this place for all eternity in hopes that my spirit's strength will drain slowly over thousands of years until it is weak enough to be destroyed. But of course, by then the heroes will be long dead and their deeds forgotten, so they placed the sword capable of destroying me in the tower, hoping someday a brave noble hero will come and finish the task.

However, while those heroes are setting up the trap-spell, I secretly modified it so that the sword can also be used to unlock the trap! So I waited until the time is right and sent monsters to attack the kingdoms nearby, hoping that a noble champion will come forth and I can mind control him to open the trap's seal.

But all this means nothing now; you clearly are not the righteous hero who can activate the sword's powers, what use are you to me? This story is ruined.

- Make me equally powerful and I'll stab the trap's seal - 43
- Well, I am going to find your real corpse and stab it! - 28

41

"Intruders! Get away from my treasure!" a voice echoes back and forth the stone walls. "Get back all these shinies is mine!" You look around but the voice seems to be coming from everywhere.

Huh, that's weird, I don't recall adding any characters in this room.

Then out of nowhere, a...

Oh my, what is that thing? Duck!

Nice! That thing just appeared from the columns and it was lunging straight for your head. Quick! draw your sword just in case it wants to attack again.

"Curses! Curses!" it is crying out in agony, probably at that failed lunge just now. It is unarmed and wearing only a strip of cloth covering its lower body. Now that it is on the ground it has nowhere to run, I say you kill it now; it is not part of the planned story and may interfere with the plot.

- You are right, let's kill it before it kills me - 90
- Wait, I want to talk to it - 33

42

No, this is not a fight. Trying to kill a weak and frail creature which has no means of hitting you back hardly counts as a fight because you have a 99.5% chance of winning by my calculation. Sure there is that 0.5% chance of failing, but I consider that possibility small enough to be negligible.

So, can we progress back to the story?

So, there is a corpse covered with jewelleries chained to the stone.

What will you do now?

- Stab the corpse with the magic sword - 34
- Remove the jewelleries from the corpse - 21
- No, I still want to roll for that 99.5% success rate, just to be fair - 15

43

Haha, you are starting to think like me, an evil warlock. But alas, you trying to strike a deal with me for your own personal gain is not righteous at all; the sword will only work if it is wielded by a soul that is noble and selfless, the white-iron on the blade simply will deactivate the magic. I can feel it now, the magic slowly fading away from the sword.

- If you have the codeword LYNN - 47
- Otherwise, go to - 45

44

"Son of a...." the unicorn screams when you land a downward slash on its back. The unicorn collapses into the ground, and rainbow coloured blood spurts out from its wound. "Why would you do that jackass?" it continues to scream at you.

You ignore the screams and continue hacking it with your steel sword until the unicorn's corpse is split into two.

"What the el?" the doorknob says. Just as you turn to meet it, its face becomes frightened. "Ahhhh... dun kill me boss! If yooz wanna enter troo dis ere door. I's lets you kay?" With that the door unlocks and swings open; you enter.

Record the codeword LIME on a piece of scrap paper.

- Step into the room - 36

45

Oh well, you are useless to me now. I could kill you and wait for another king's champion in a few years, but oh the wait will be so boring. I had fun designing this illusionary maze for you. In fact it is the most fun I had for a decades! Must be because I haven't had anyone to talk to.

Opps, I just realised, where are my manners. I just spent so much time in your head that I did not even properly ask more about you. Where are you from? How did you become the king's champion? Do you have a family? and if a rabbit and a naked mole rat are lock in a battle to the death, who would you bet on winning?

Tell you what, you stay in this tower, I'll get my monsters to steal some food and tea and we can keep each other entertained. When a new king's champion comes, only then I'll kill you. This will be such fun! For me at least.

Record the codeword: DOOM

THE END

46

If you have the codeword TARKIN, turn to 31. Otherwise, read on:

Okay, I think we got off the wrong foot here because I'm having a feeling that you are purposely trying to mess with the story. But why? I have a nice story written for you, there is even a part in here which you marry the princess, be adored as a hero, and live happily ever after. Isn't this what you wanted? Because, you can have all that if you just let the story proceed normally.

You might be asking yourself if I wanted you to pick the obvious 'correct' answer to reach the 'perfect' ending why not I make this into some uncreative and linear short-story. Well, sadly that is not how we are going to do it. I want you to feel like you made it to that ending, like you deserved that ending. I think that makes the reading experience richer, don't you?

So what am I to do with you?

How about this, I am going to assume you were just trying to toy with the story and see what would happen, and as you can see, we will reach an impasse where I cannot progress with the story but have no proper ending to conclude it. So let us try this again and take it from the top. Just as a warning, record the codeword TARKIN on scrap of paper. This time, try to make the sensible choice; it's not hard really for I wrote it in such a way that the obviously sensible choice is the 'correct' choice.

- Back to the beginning - 1

47

Wait what did you say? Cover the sword with a piece of cloth, and then stab the trap seal. Thats, well, thats, well, brilliant! Absolutely brilliant! If you block the light reaching the blade, the white-iron will not have any energy for the good spirits to try and surpress the blade's magic. This sound like it will actually work!

Stab the sword into the trap's seal now, and I will, er I will, give you all the treasures in the tower and make you the new king once I send my monsters to massacre the entire royal family.

- Stab sword into trap seal - 13
- Wait, I don't think this deal works for me - 82

48

Oh my! You would willingly choose the death of two defenceless old ladies over two soldiers? How shameful. But as it turns out, the moment the carriage runs over the poor old grannies, the two soldiers are alerted to the threat and quickly killed the crazy horse with their crossbows before it can trample over anything or anyone else.

Good work. See? You picked a sensible choice. Sure it was dishonourable, but all that means little to the lives you just saved. What I am trying to say is, sometime sacrificing honour for common-sense yields outcomes that benefits most people.

So, back to the story, you have the sword and there are more treasures awaiting for you. What will your choice be?

- You make sense. Fine! I'll stab the sword into the corpse - 34
- I have already decided, now don't change it anymore you scum. - 92

49

I really wish you did not chose that, now I have to explain in detail what a giant pile of foul smelling black matter in the middle of a lavatory is.

Erm..... Well..... Ahem..... Okay, I can't.

That is a pile of manure, a giant pile of stinking manure three times your height. You don't know which animal it came from, but you know that it probably has been here for a while. So stop poking at it with your sword; it is very unhygienic and honestly a little disrespectful of the magic sword.

So what will you do next?

- Turn back to the Warlock's Room - 83
- Burn the pile of manure - 65

50

Aw, you are so close to your objective, why go looking for trouble? But I suppose a hero needs to do heroic deeds, otherwise one can't call himself a hero. Right let me think of a suitable opponent in your struggle against evil, erm, let's see... Something with claws, yes that would be evil, with wings? No, an ability to fly in small indoors is of no point. Sharp teeth? Something that people will fear? A beast so dastardly evil it has caused millions of death? Yes, yes, yes. I got it!

Before you can move any closer to the corpse, smoke start to burst in front of you and it thins off to reveal the warlock's mighty guardian, a Rat! And not just any rat, this one is a huge, monstrous, fiendish giant dire rat that is as tall as you! You can feel an aura of fear emanating from it, truly fitting for a powerful warlock's guardian.

You raise your magical sword and prepare to fight it. The fiendish giant dire rat charges you with its claw extended to slice you into shreds, but you manage to parry every strike; its last strike however misses you and hits the wall and will not dislodge. It then uses its mouth to bite you but its current predicament limits the teeth's reach. You swing your sword and slice off its long protruding incisors. It squeaks in pain but it adds strength to its body which finally manages to pull out its claws. Then it crouches. Then, with the stored kinetic energy in its legs, it pounces towards you with its arms extended. Fortunately, you anticipated this and dodge aside leaving it diving into a pile of rubble. Before it has a chance to recover, you stab your sword into its spine and the beast collapses to the ground. You notice that it is still breathing although unable to move its limbs. With two hands, you stab the sword into its heart and delivering it the mercy of death.

- Haha! Now I'm satisfied. Time to stab to corpse. - 34
- That's not what I mean. I want to roll some dice for this battle - 93

51

Why are you doing this? I'm scratching my head here thinking what else I can add to the description of a sword in a rock. But if you insist, I can try to meet your challenge.

Erm, hmmm... I could, the sword is coloured dull metal? No no no, that was implied what I said the sword is made of iron. How about, er, the rock is hard when you touch it? That is just silly then, everyone knows what a rock feels like. The rock is a metamorphic rock? Yes, this works, this definitely helps build the environment and the setting. Yes, I'll talk about the rock's constitution.

Ahem.

As you examine closer, you notice very thin streams of brown, black, and grey of varying darkness run throughout the surface. It seems this rock was shaped into what it is now. You are not sure if the shaper was nature, gods, or old civilizations with geomancy powers that are long forgotten. As your eyes trails a stream of pure obsidian black, you realise that it leads to the swords blade, just like all the other streams. It looks like the sword is the source of this rock's constitution.

There, and I dare say I'm quite impressed with myself with that. Silly, I almost thought I could not crack up some creativity! Well go on, challenge me to describe the rock some more!

- Pull out the sword - 19
- Examine the rock closer - 64

52

Oh, hot damn. We are tossing insults in here! Alright, the warlock made quite an impressive taunt there, let's see if you can do better, what will you trash-talk him with?

- "Your mother was a hamster, and your father smelt of elderberries." - 29
- "Then I would not notice because you are such a huge asshole, your farts are silent." - 100

53

You enter into a room made of large grey stone slabs stacked and glued together with some sort of hardened grey pulp which you have not seen before. There seems to be nothing of note in the room save for a sword with its blade stabbed into a rock. A beam of light that shines through the only glass window in this room illuminates the sword. You move close and notice an inscription scribed on the rock.

- If you have the talent 'Spell-scribing' – 56. Otherwise, read on.

You cannot make out the words but as you move closer, they start to morph in front of your very eyes into something you are familiar with. It says, "This light is Akadi's bane, only the most noble and honourable may wield it". What will you do?

- Pull out the sword - 19
- Examine the sword - 5
- If you have the codeword MIRTH - 17

54

Oh really? That gold will only keep a few thousands full for a week. In the long term of things, that will accomplish nothing. Kind of like creating an easily curable disease; sure when you release it, the population will panic and some of them will die, but after a while, they'll find the cure and then everything will return to normal. So if you really want to create real lasting change, you'll need more gold, and there is a lot of that in this room now.

- Who cares about these peasants, I got what I need - 35
- Greed is unbecoming of a hero. I will take only what is needed to restore the kingdom. - 62
- Just how am I supposed to carry this many treasure out of this tower? - 32

55

Okay, alright, I'd have to pause the adventure for now.

It's clear that the story is getting too ridiculous and I can't run on a story like that. But it seems to me that you would prefer the story to slide towards the ridiculous side of the scale and thus find the current story too serious for your enjoyment.

If that is so, I could alter the story just a little to make it cooler, funnier, and more, oh what is that peasant slang, "awesome"? Yes, I think you will find this more agreeable. So, record the codeword KARN on a piece of scrap paper and let's try from the start again

- Back to the start - 1

56

The strange symbols on the rock may look like gibberish to a normal human but your trained eyes can read them well, you can see the under-workings of magic infused in this very rock. It says:

```
Function MacroSwordInRock()
On Error GoTo Macro1_Err
```

With CodeContextObject

If (.Distancebetweenplayer&rock < 10) Then

 MagicSymbolTransformation=Yes, 10s

 MagicGlow=Yes, green

 MagicSoundEffect=Yes, twinkling

 MsgBox "This light is Akadi's bane, only the most noble and honourable may wield it",
vbOKOnly, "Rock Inscription"

If (.PlayerHandOnBladeStroking = -1) Then

 MagicSymbolTransformation=No

 MagicGlow=No

 MagicSoundEffect=No

 SmiteAkadiAbility=On

End If

End With

Macro1_Exit:

 Exit Function

Macro1_Err:

 MsgBox Error\$

 Resume Macro1_Exit

End Function

If you did not understand it, it doesn't matter, because as you come closer, the symbols start to morph in front of your very eyes into something you are familiar with. It says, "This light is Akadi's bane, only the most noble and honourable may wield it". What will you do?

- Pull out the sword. - 19
- Examine the sword - 5

57

When you grip the magic sword, massive holy energy surge up your arm. You know this because the energy also makes a typical surging sound while it surges like this: "WRRRRRRYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!" At the end of it you hear loud "Ding!" telling you that surge process is completed and you are now 100% filled up.

Then, a wall slides open which reveals a hidden room and in the middle of it you see an old man lying on a slab of rock. As you move closer the old man with a pale and wrinkled face turns his head to face you. "I am Akadi the warlock of this tower muahahaha!" he says to you with an outrageous accent. You notice that

the old man is draped in dark silk robes, his face is covered with a long black beard (typical of spell-casters), and his metal helmet is full of pointy spikes so you know he is definitely evil. Strangely, he does not get up from the stone slab; it is as if he is paralysed neck down.

"Are you the one who is supposed to kill me?" the old warlock continues. "Go and boil your bottoms, son of a silly person. I blow my nose at you, so-called Champion! You empty-headed animal food-trough wiper! I fart in your general direction." What a rude rude man, you should totally stick the magic sword into his chest and probably multiple times more after for, eh-hem, assurance.

- Stab the magic sword in his chest and stab it hard - 34
- Taunt back at the warlock - 52

58

"Oi! Wot yooz doin ere?" a voice utters out from nowhere, you look around and find only the cold and uncaring stone walls. "Oi! Down here! Look at the doorknob ya grot," a bronze knob carved into a shape of a goblin attach to the door says to you.

"Dis eres da warlock's tower! Dis da centa of all evilz and yooz came here willingly; Yous av a deathwish? Ha! I's like your guts o hero! Tells ya wot if, you kill da warlock I can escape from dis bronze prison, so Imma helps ya. Just wait fora lil tick."

What will you do next?

- Wait and see that happens next - 88
- Slice off the doorknob and open the door - 30
- Touch the doorknob - 10

59

You enter into a room made of large grey stone slabs stacked and glued together with some sort of hardened grey pulp which you have not seen before. There seems to be nothing of note in the room save for a sword with its blade stabbed into a rock in the middle. A beam of light that shines through the only glass window in this room illuminates the sword. You move close and notice an inscription scribed on the rock.

You cannot make out the words but as you move closer, they start to morph in front of your very eyes into something you are familiar with. It says, "This light is Akadi's bane, only the most noble and honourable may wield it". What will you do?

- Pull out the sword - 19
- Rub the sword's blade with your hand - 9

60

Phew! That was close. You are one stubborn champion you know that? But, you have foolishly stabbed my body with an ordinary steel sword. Confused? Worry not I will monologue the explanation. All this done in accordance to the standards set by "Evil Tyranny for Idiots".

Ahem.

I am the warlock Akadi, prime evil of the east. In the days of old, a few heroes managed to drive me into this place. They could not kill me outright because my spirit was just too strong, so they set up a magical

trap which binds me to this place for all eternity in hopes that my spirit's strength will drain slowly over thousands of years until it is weak enough to be destroyed. But of course, by then the heroes will be dead and their deeds forgotten, so they placed the sword capable of destroying me in the tower, hoping someday a brave noble hero will come and finish the task. However, in the final seconds of my binding, I have secretly alter the binding spell so that the magic sword will not only be able to end my life, it can also end my imprisonment.

So I have sent monsters hoping to lure the most heroic and noble of them all to come to this tower. When I saw you, with the king's blessing, challenging me in the main gates, I knew you are the perfect one to pull that magic sword out. The moment you stepped into the tower, you have been under my spell, this whole game is an illusion created by me, to make you unwittingly release me.

Unfortunately you are so bad at making choices that we ended up in this heap of magnificent mess. Now that you are obviously of no use now, I will....

I will...

What is this?

I feel... faint. Wait, was that steel sword stained with Super Syphilis infested blood? Aw, you bastard! Not Super Syphilis! It the only disease so potent that even unicorn's blood can't cure it!

Curses, mega-curses! Now I am doomed to die in three months. Damn you! Celebrate! Go enjoy your success in ridding the world from an unimaginable evil with what little time you have left because once I am done with you, you will wish you have never been born.

THE END

61

Wow, just, wow. I have never seen someone fail that miserably. Please feel free to blame it on the dice if it makes you feel better.

So, I guess... er... When you swing your sword, the horror of having to face a harmless foe causes your arms to weaken; the sword instead caresses the creature's skin.

So the creature is, well, looks like it took that opportunity to flee towards the entrance and most likely, it is heading out of the tower. I could give you the option of chasing it down, but I have very limited passages to build the story on. So, I'm going to put an impenetrable door made of "Railroad-ium" at that passage and end this non-sense now.

So, there is a corpse covered with jewelleries chained to the stone.

What will you do now?

- Stab the corpse with the magic sword - 34
- Take the jewelleries from the corpse - 21

62

Okay, it seems you are a stickler for your code of honour. I'm sure the value of abstinence from greed makes you feel all pure and holy, but you are sacrificing too much common sense for this.

Think I should educate you the flaw in your belief. To illustrate the point that sometimes the end justifies the means, let's do a little case study.

Now, let's say you are driving a carriage and the horse is out of control. You have no way of stopping it

and two paths are in front of you for you to steer the carriage into. Path A stands a pair of elderly women in their 80s while Path B stands a pair of soldiers armed with crossbows which could kill the horse should you choose Path A. The carriage is big and bulky so which ever path you choose, all those standing on it will die. So which path will you steer the pain-train into?

- Path A - 48
- Path B - 8
- Why don't I just steer the carriage out of both the paths. If besides those two paths, there is no place for the horses to gallop on, I'll just jump before the carriage goes out of the path. - 94

63

After mounting on the unicorn's back, it gallops out of the room and into the air; its hooves are magically stepping on air! So magical are the hooves that it leaves a trail of rainbow. "Hang on tight jackass," the unicorn says to you before picking up speed and ramming into a wall.

"Yooz gitz just arrived!" you hear. After the rainbow cloud and heart shaped marshmallows settle down, you see the goblin doorknob on what seems to be the other side of the previous door. "Yooz coulda just walk through the door."

"This is not about making sense knobby, this is about looking heroically cool," the unicorn replies.

In the middle of the room is a rock with a sword stabbed in it. The unicorn lowers its head to aim its horn at the sword, then it zaps pinkish energy at the stone causing the sword to dislodge from the rock and float straight to you. "Take the sword jackass, this is the only weapon that can kill the warlock. Only a noble hero such as you can wield it. Think closely, the sword has some magic super glue on the hilt so that once you wield it, your hands will be permanently stuck to it until you kill the warlock."

You try to think if there is any way to store the sword without touching it but the bag you carry is too small to fit it.

- I accept, I will take the sword - 57
- No way I am touching this sword - 87
- (If you have the 'Magic Bag' you can choose this option.) I'm going to use the magic bag to keep the sword - 18

64

While you fix your sight on the rock's surface, a small glint of light catches your eyes; it appears that tiny specks of white-iron lay scattered along the blade reflecting the sunlight. You remember old childhood tales of magic-infused iron which can capture the soul of a recently deceased when placed near its corpse. They say that the colour of the metal changes as the soul infuses into the metal's elemental energies. If the soul is evil, it turns black, and the opposite holds true for good souls. They even say that light gives white-iron its magic and the light that dances off white-irons are actually projections of those souls, honour-bound to carry its duties of protection even beyond death. If that is true, then it seems there are thousands of souls infused into the sword's metal and the rock's surface, protecting both of them from the evil that surrounds this place.

Is this not exciting? I can feel the story slowly coming back to life. Maybe I should use that bit of information there to foreshadow something you'll encounter in the future. This story has gotten more and more brilliant! I bet I can do more. Challenge me to describe the room!

Take a scrap piece of paper and record the codeword LYNN

- Pull out the sword - 19
- Examine the room - 12

65

Ah-ha! Got you!

I told you this room has no ventilation and the pile of manure has been sitting there for a while; this room is filled with methane!

You take out some tinder and place them on the pile, then you take out your flint and strike it against a flat piece of steel. After a few strikes, a few red and glowing flakes fall from the steel. Instantly the flakes grow into fireballs that keeps expanding until it consumes you and the entire room. The intense heat singes your skin not protected by the armour. However before you can feel your body turning into char, a huge forceful and invisible wave hits you in the chest shattering your bones and flesh killing you in an instant.

THE END

You seem very insistent in staying in the lavatory with a pile of manure in it and I have a problem with that because I have to narrate whatever things you wish to do in this room with detail and style; I shudder at the thought of it.

However, it seems evident to me that you would do silly things in hopes that you can see silly things happen in the story. I think I can change the story a little to suit your taste better. Record the codeword: KARN in a sheet of paper. Not to worry, you are not really dead, we are going to stop all this nonsense and restart the story.

- Back to the start - 1

66

Perfect! The magic bag now appears tied to your waist. The bag looks big enough to swallow any amount of treasure regardless of size. So what will you do now?

- Stab the corpse - 34
- Invert the bag inside out - 22

67

Fine, if that is how you want it, then that is how it will be.

You immediately walk back out of the tower and back to the desert. After a few weeks and a few dismembered barbarian's heads, you reach the kingdom. With the king's approval, you amass a large team of labourers to march across the desert so that's a few more dismembered barbarian's heads rolling in the sand.

The labourers all wait outside the tower for you to clear the way. So you did the same thing you did before and ended up in the room with a corpse tied to a slab in the middle. Nothing has changed except you aged a little and the warlock's patience is wearing thin.

Sigh Record the codeword: FARM on a piece of scrap paper.

Are you happy now? So please can we now finish the story?

- Okay, guess nothing to do but stab the corpse - 34
- How can I be sure that the labourers will not steal the treasures? I must transport it all by myself. - 85

68

What are you doing?

No.

No!

NO!!!

...

Are you kidding me now? Did you just throw the magic sword, the vital plot device, into a room that you have no idea what it is? That has got to be the dumbest thing I have seen. Now that I have sealed the passageway, I can't restart the story with the sword stuck there because that is an area I cannot manipulate.

Inhales deeply

Exhales deeply

Okay, here is how we are going to resolve this, I am going to remove all unnecessary "layers" from the room so that will also remove the door blocking the passageway, you are going to go inside the passageway and retrieve the sword back into this room. Listen carefully, this is important, DO NOT LOOK BACK. Just trust me, it will ruin the story and you wouldn't want that.

- Okay I'll do as you say and restart the story - 1
- Now that you told me not to look back, guess I will look back. - 6

69

The air in the tower is cool which is typical of any place where evil energy flows freely. This welcoming (though uneasy) change from the scorching desert hastens your ascent of the spiral stairs as you dash through the cool air flowing past the crevices in your leather armour.

If you have the codeword KARN turn to 58. Otherwise, read on.

After a few minutes, the stairs ends with an entrance to a room. And you... wait, hold on.

Hmmm, thought there is supposed to be a door here. Did someone remove it without me knowing?

Oh well, it matters not, this story can go on even without doors. So since there is nothing blocking the path, guess there is nothing left to do but enter into the room.

- Okay - 53

70

Wow, that is an even worse idea. I am now giving you the chance to have absolute power subjected to only one person and you instead are going to trade all that so you can be subjected to even more people? Why? Having the people's adoration is good and all but it comes with an obligation to follow what they except of a hero, so that means non-cool things like kowtowing to the king, being ready to fight each time the peasantry screams help, and not being able to have fun because you need to adhere to hero's code of conduct strictly. All these will be part of everyday life; you will be a slave to public-relations! On the other

hand, having the people fear you just means you get to do whatever you want as long as the reason for that fear (i.e. risk of my wrath) exists.

So come on, seriously, take the previous offer.

- Okay, I accept, I'll break the seal now - 13
- To be adored is indeed my deepest desires - 79
- Ah, you see, I still can do whatever I want because if the kingdom goes against my wish, I can just stop 'protecting' them from the monsters that you will send. - 39

71

As you wrap your hands around the grip, and prepare to pull out the sword, you, wait...

Wha...

You...

Really? Licking the blade? Come on! Do you know how silly you will look?

Granted that I put that option there for you to choose, but I only did it because I need to give at least two choices. I didn't think you would actually choose that. And what do you hope to accomplish with this, hmm? Or are you just trying to do stupid things in an effort to make the story ridiculous enough for your?

Oh, but my ranting won't change anything, we are here now so might as well get on with it.

Ahem, so as you stick your tongue out and slowly let it caress the sword's blade (careful not to let the edge cut it), you taste dirt, cobwebs, and rust. The feeling of cold hard metal rubbing on your tongue overwhelms your senses. But after a few minutes of licking, nothing of note as happened except the sword is now drenched in saliva and you are at a higher risk of getting tetanus.

I hope you are not male because that sounded homo-erotic.

So what will you do next?

- Pull out the sword - 19
- Warm the cold sword by taking off your armour and hugging it - 55

72

Arrrrrrrrggggggghhhhhhhhh!!!!!! Why Why Why? Is my story not good enough for your highness? Huh?! I'm trying my best here and you are testing my patience with every choice you make! I really feel like going over and choke you with my bear hands. I have waited so long for this day, and by so long I mean thousands of years. Do you know how emotionally invested in a masterplan when you spend months and months planning for it? Hmm? Now I am seeing it all burn up in flames, all because you an IQ of a sack of potatoes.

I can't stand this anymore! I am going to make it hell for you... you... ARGH! My brain! It hurts so bad! The stress from all of this is giving me a stroke! I will, I I I..... *thumps*

- Go to - 26

73

Quite the paranoid one aren't you? But I never seen anyone this paranoid before. Are you really that unconvinced with your own perceptive skills? You just stared at it for ten minutes, then to ease your

suspensions, your next brilliant plan is to stare at it some more.

Now granted that when facing the unknown, caution is a virtue; but this is just ridiculous! I mean, I'm sure the king had sent you to smoke out some thieves' den or an assassins' hideout before, and those places are probably peppered with traps and hidden enemies. Did you also stare at the entrance for ten minutes only to decide to stare at it again? Do you think the bad guys will note how cautious you are and decide that you are not to be messed with?

Well, I can't proceed with the story like this; I have put more challenges inside there that requires you to make riskier decisions than opening a simple wooden door. I'm sure your paranoia will stall the story like the old wizard friend of mine who has a stammer; you should have seen him reciting the incantation for a summon monster spell, it was painful.

But back to the situation at hand. Please tell me, what is bothering you? How can I make this story work for you?

- A choice to smash the door open. - 76
- A choice to get special trap-detecting ability. - 74

74

Did you have any Talents? Be honest! If yes go to 14. Otherwise, read on:

Well, I suppose it takes a little skill to be able to detect traps. After all, you are a king's champion; I'm sure he chose you because you are an individual of many talents.

All right, I'm going to give you a set of talents to choose from. Now take a scrap of paper and write "talents", then write 1 and 2 below it in point form so it should look like this:

TALENT

- 1.
- 2.

Now choose two talents from the list below:

1) Trap-sense.

Your keen vision and training in trap-works allows you to see any mechanical or magical traps in an instant and with utmost certainty. Not only that, you are able to disable any forms of traps in under a minute. As an added bonus, you can also see enemies that are hidden. If you are afraid of being ambushed, this skill allows you to return the favour with interest.

2) Sword-throwing

Your habits of tomfoolery with a weapon meant for melee combat has now allowed you to throw your sword like a javelin and stab your enemies from afar. In fact, you are so skilled that you can actually aim the organs you want to pierce. Very useful against enemies who will avoid going to close combat with you at all cost.

3) Spell-scripting

Your studies will arcane scrolls has allowed to you understand the symbols used in magic scrolls and power runes. Since you are not a wizard, you can't cast any magic but can read out inscriptions. Very useful in any situations in which you have to deal with a magic-user.

Picked two already? Good. Now we can progress with the story. Do you have the Talent "Trap-sense"?

- If yes - 86
- If no - 46

75

Hmmm.... You seem to have a problem in simple arithmetic. But not a problem, I not mad, I am thinking happy thoughts now, happy thoughts, remember your blood pressure.

Deep exhale

Now back to you, no worries we can work this out. Let me illustrate the math problem in a way that even 5 year-olds can understand.

Let's pretend that "Combat Abilities" are the number of swords a person has, to win a fight you need to have more swords than your opponent. So you have 10 swords. Let's pretend that "I" is a sword.

You:IIIIIIIIII

The bad guy has only 2 swords.

Bad Guy: II

Now roll a 6-sided die and that is the amount of swords you have found; draw that many swords in your side. Roll another 6-sided die and draw that many swords for the Bad Guy. Count how many swords you have and how many swords the bad guy has.

So now, who has more swords, who won?

- If you put it that way, guess I won and bad guy is dead. Time to stab the corpse - 34
- Yeah... I still lost the fight - 46

76

Oh, want to get all action and dangerous do we? Why push open the door? That is what the enemies will be expecting. Smash it through! Not only will you catch them off guard, you will also look very cool.

I like the way you think champion!

Eh hem.

You raise your leg and aim it at that thin sheet of wood. With a forceful stomp, the door immediately flies forward into the room and lands with a satisfying thump. The dust that had gathered undisturbed on the door's surface stirs awake, forming a cloud that stretches from where you stand to where the door landed. Then, you walk into the room slowly with a stoic face that says 'this is nothing compared to other badass things I have done'.

You look cool, very very cool.

Unfortunately there is nobody in the room to bear witness to such a dramatic entry, what a shame.

Record the codeword: MIRAGE

- Go in and see what is in the room - 53

77

"Aw son of a, you told him I has syphilis? Not cool!" the unicorn says while glaring at the doorknob.

"Hey, I's wantz to warn im not to touch yer over-sensitive horn. But da heros being stupid, syphilis don't go traveling to anover like dat," the doorknob replies.

"No, the hero is right! I got it by someone touching my horn; I got super syphilis! Fine! Fine! See that sheet of leather on the floor? Go get it and put the leather sheet on my back and then you ride on it. Come on, I don't have all day jackass," the unicorn beckons you.

What will you do now?

- Ride on the unicorn - 63
- Slay the pink disease-infested beast - 44

78

Wait! What?

No! Don't do that!

Darn it, now you just created a black hole, good work genius! Okay I prepared a dispel magic the moment you told me you had a magic bag. I don't know why I did that but I recall something going very bad the last time someone used this thing. I'm going to cast it immediately and the black hole will be gone before it can swallow anything.

Done, and not a moment too soon; none of your body parts is consumed by it, that is good. So now we can proceed with the story!

Wait, where is the magic sword?

Oh,

Oh!

OH!

The black hole swallowed the magic bag, so now the magic sword is forever lost in the vastness of the extra-dimensions; I can't restart the story without the magic sword! How could one person mess-up my story so bad? How? HOW?! Now I'm going to be stuck in the tower forever!

Sigh *Clap, clap, clap*

GAME OVER, you win, 100% victory. I'm beaten at my own game! My fate is sealed, my end is nigh. Savour your victory champion, it will be short lived, and an eternity of suffering in my hands awaits you.

THE END

79

Er, okay, I'll do that, so I guess we have a deal now. So you go open the seal, I'll send my monsters to terrorise the kingdom just enough, and then you show up like a badass overpowered hero to banish them. Cool by me.

Fast forward 5 years.

After years of banishing fake threats, the king bestow upon you the title "Lord Hero the Most Awesome, Master Paragon of Light, Protector of the Realms, Angel of Vengeance, Warlockpawner, and Dragonslayer 2000 for he slew 2000 dragons and counting". Best of all, his highness gives you his daughter's hand in

marriage. However, the years have weighed heavily on the old king's frail body; one day he had a feeling he was about to die and thus names his son the next king. (Aw, you thought you'll get to be the king.) So as the years go by, your descendant's royal blood gets diluted to the point that they become commoners with a trivia fact that they are related to royalty.

Good for you, good for you, *clap... clap... clap....*

But all this matters little because the moment you die, my monsters are going to make everyone there bow to me.

THE END

80

What? Is that kindness and empathy I sense? Hmmm, I can manage with that. There is enough of heroic qualities left in you to make this story work! Thank you, thank you very much, it means very much to me. Quick, stab the magic sword into the corpse!

- Ok, I'll do just that - 34

81

Okay, you could, but I just told you that thing is unarmed and not wearing anything but a smelly old cloth. So, when you search the body of the creature you find nothing useful. Surprise, surprise.

But if it makes you feel any better, you could keep the smelly old cloth. If you want to, write on a piece of scrap paper that you obtained a "Used Underwear", you freak.

So, there is a corpse covered with jewelleries chained to the stone.

What will you do now?

- Stab the magic sword into the corpse - 34
- Take the jewelleries from the corpse - 21

82

What? You get to be the most powerful, well, second most powerful, man in the kingdom with an unimaginable wealth. What more do you want?

- I want the princess alive - 4
- The deal is okay, I just don't trust overly powerful evil warlocks. - 7

83

At the end of the corridor, you reach a room with two rows of columns made of old marble sprinkled with pieces of white-iron on your left and on your right. In the middle of the room lies a block of stone with a corpse on it.

The room slowly gets warmer and the eerie feeling of dread crawls back into the corpse; you can feel the power of the sword is suppressing the warlock's magic.

You move closer and find that the corpse is covered with a silk robe of the finest quality and magnificent gold and diamond jewelleries hangs around the withered arms and head. The corpse of bones and dried leathery skin appears to be chained to the stone with its chest laid flat on the stone's top surface. Around its

neck you see a small metal chain with a tag and etched on it are the words "Here lies the warlock, stab sword into chest, get treasure later."

What will you do now?

- If you have the codeword LILL, go to – 41. Otherwise:
- Stab the magic sword into the chest - 34
- Take the jewelleries - 21

84

Oh my, I totally forgot you kept that thing in your backpack all this while. But why are you taking it out now?

Wait, what? What are you doing?

No! NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

Aw, damn it! *Pffft* Why did you do that? *Pffft* That was so disgusting.

Got that freakish fetish out of your system? Good! Now that you had your fun put that thing away you sick, sick, bastard.

- Go to - 46

85

Okay, your immense greed is clouding your common sense. In fact, I find you stopping the whole story just because the details are not polished very annoying. So, I going to prematurely stop this story and give you a reward and punishment.

You are magically teleported to a room filled with treasures beyond your wildest imagination. Gold, silver, jewels all piled up until it fills the entire room which is as big as a king's bedroom. Your eyes glow with excitement and wonderment as if the treasure has cast an enchantment on you. Alas, the room has no escape, but that is of no consequence to you because this room makes you so happy you do not actually want to leave. So you live out the rest of your life guarding the treasure.

Record the codeword LILL on a scrap piece of paper.

- Go back to the start - 1

86

You scan the door with your super-sharp eyes, and you found absolutely no traps on this door. In fact you are so sure of it that you can guarantee that there is 0% chance (with a 100% confidence interval of 0% to 0%) of traps, or hidden enemies behind or beyond that door. This is beyond all doubt, just a hinged piece of thin wooden plank (with no traps at all) blocking the passage to a room with no living things. Even I am so convinced at your observation that I am willing to wager all my treasures to bet that if you open that door, nothing harmful will surprise you. That is how certain things are; no traps, no ambush, plain simple wooden door leading to a room with no one inside.

So what will you do?

- Ready your sword and open the door - 53
- Check just a bit more - 11

87

The unicorn looks at the goblin doorknob. "I knew this jackass is a waste of time!" it says. Then it turns around to kick your head with its hind legs. The last thing you remember is a teddy bear tattoo on the pink horse butt before a pair of hooves hit you in the head, cracking your skull.

THE END

•Go to - 20

88

Suddenly, you feel tremors and to your left a crack forms on the wall, then the wall bursts open explosively with a cloud of rainbows and heart-shaped marshmallows. "If you called me just to scratch your nose again I will shish-kebab you!" a fabulous pink coloured unicorn says while he steps out of the rubble. "Who is this human?"

"Dis eres a hero and he's gonna give da warlock da stabbings!" the doorknob replies. "Give im a lift to da warlock straight so wes both can be free."

"Rheeeeehehehehehe," the unicorn laughs. "This jackass is going to kill the warlock? You are harder to believe then my rainbow flavoured poop."

"But he's got da king's blessing n all he did. Wait, yer poop tastes lyk rainbow? Wots dat even mean?"

"That's not the point knobby!" the unicorn says with his sapphire but bloodshot eyes.

"What yooz got to lose? If he succeeds, we free; if he lose, just say he forced ya to do it. Da warlock aint gonna expect a pink unicorn wiv a teddybear tattooed on his arse to fight back against a king's champion.

The unicorn sighs. "Alright jackass, up you go," he beckons you.

- If you wish to ride on the unicorn - 63
- If you wish to touch his horn - 16
- If you have the codeword JARC, you can choose not to sit - 77

89

.....

.....

I don't think you understand your role in this story. See, you are a character; I am a narrator that tells what happens in the story. What I do is I tell the character (that means you) what is happening right in front your eyes. You are not supposed to know I exist at all, technically at least.

But I suppose it is a little bit my fault, I only crossed the fourth wall and commented on your actions because some of the choices you made are very damaging to the story I had in mind. In doing so, I gave you the impression that I, the narrator, have some sort of sentience for you to interact with.

But still, trying to kill the narrator? That's a new one. Since my words ultimately decide what happens next, I could just narrate you losing the challenge. But then again, I gave you the power to make choices in this gamebook, so you too get a say on what happens next. Hmmm, our opposing wants seems to have created a narrative paradox.

But enough of that intellectual jibber-jabber, just to hammer in the idea that killing the narrator is a bad idea, go on, stab your sword into my formless chest. I won't fight back.

- Taste my steel, worm! Aaaaaaaaah! *Stab* - 2

90

The creature sees you trying to swing your sword and dodges your first swing by leaping away. However it tripped in its landing and you strike down the creature with your magic sword while it is recovering from the fall, killing it in an instant, nice!

The creature's body appears human except for the sunken eyes, balding hair, and the dry grey skin.

Well, nothing else do look at, back to the story.

So, there is a corpse covered with jewelleries chained to the stone.

What will you do now?

- Stab the magic sword into the corpse - 34
- Take the jewelleries from the corpse - 21
- No, no, back to the creature, I want to loot the body - 81
- No, no, not satisfied with this fight, I want to roll some dice - 42

91

A glimmer of light hits the wall behind you and catches your attention. You trace its origin to a passageway behind the pile of black substance and inside it is a room filled with treasures. Gold cutleries, glittering jewelleries, coins and bars of precious metal, and much more.

WAIT!

Oh dear, something is terribly wrong with the story.

You were not supposed to see this, there should be a concealed door blocking the passageway. Why is it gone? Well, no worries, I will correct this problem now. Remove the codeword ROCK and MIRAGE if you have them. Erm, just pretend you did not see any of this and we will just restart the story.

- Back to the top - 1
- I have the talent "Sword-throwing" and I'm going to throw the magic sword into the passageway full of treasures. - 68

92

Where do you think you are going? No one leaves the tower without my permission. If it takes another few years of waiting for a more proper king's champion to appear again, so be it. I have no use of you anymore. So here is how this story is going to end for you, I will let you run for your life a bit, then I am going to cast a spell that inserts nightmares into your head. This will slowly claw away your sanity and one day, you will willingly take your own life just to end the torment. I will very much love to hear that mouth of yours which just mocked me scream in futile horror.

THE END

Take a scarp piece of paper and record the codeword: DOOM

- Back to the top to restart the game - 1

93

Really? I find dice rolling to be the most boring thing a gamebook can do. Of course it adds randomness which in turn makes this story re-playable and not to mention giving the thrills of beating against impossible odds. But, it really sucks because it pulls you away from the action at hand. Think about it, let's say a 7 legged cyborg-crocodile-monster clad in armour made of uranium carrying a giant axe with the words "Now your blood is cold too!" painted with blood now blocks your path; *roll* *roll* *rub eraser on paper* *roll*; he is dead now.

However, this game is about you having fun. So if you want it, I grant it.

First you ought to have some numbers to show your combat ability, so let's call this number "Combat Ability". Here is how to get yours:

- 1) Roll a 6-sided die
- 2) Take the number from step 1 and multiply that by 4
- 3) Now subtract the total by 6
- 4) If you ended up with a negative value, then add 2 to the number.
- 5) Now divide that number by 6.02214×10^{23}
- 6) Now choose a number that is larger than 9 but smaller than 11

Done? Great! Now the number you got at step 6 is your "Combat Ability". Write that on a piece of scrap paper.

Back to the story, the fiendish giant dire rat charges at you and it has a combat ability of 2. So roll a 6-sided die and add the result with your combat ability; this is your score. Then roll another 6-sided die and add that result to the rat's combat ability; that is the rat's score. If your score is higher than the rat you win.

- If you win, the fiendish giant dire rat is dead and you proceed to stab your sword into the corpse tied onto the stone - 34
- If you lost - 75

94

Hmm, you don't seem to understand what I am trying to illustrate with the case study. You just dodged the lesson I was about to give. But, it is a viable choice; I always admire people who are able to think out of the box. So for this lesson you get a B+ *pats on your back*

And here is your report card.

Name: King's Champion

Occupation: King's Champion

Class: Ethics 101 for King's Champion

Comments:

This student has showed great ability to find non-conventional but equally effective solutions to problems. He veers towards pragmatism when faced with conundrum and such an outlook will ensure that he will endure all challenges thrown at him. He will be successful in life and definitely will not decline free treasures just because honour demands it.

Signed,

The Narrator

So, back to the story, you have the sword and there are more treasures awaiting for you. What will your choice be?

- You make sense. Fine! I'll stab the sword into the corpse - 34
- I have already decided, now don't change it anymore you scum. - 92

95

Once you finish your question, the rock begins to transform and two eyes and a mouth appears on the side facing you. "How sweet of you dearie; not many people ask a furniture's permission, these hooligans just come and take whatever is on the table and etcetera. They don't know that we inanimate objects also have feelings," the rock replies you in a soft elderly voice. "Well if you want the sword, don't let me stop you, come and take it."

- Pull out the sword - 57

96

You gather what flammable materials you can find in this room and pile them at the rock, then with flint and tinder, you set the pile alight. An amusing move I might add because rocks do not burn or melt in fire. But this rock is not a normal rock, this rock is enchanted! So with no further explanation except "because magic", the rock explodes in a fantastical display of light and sounds. After that you find that the rock did not shatter off like what you expect explosions to do, it merely crumbles and in the middle of the crumbles, the magic sword lays unharmed.

- Take the sword - 57

97

Okay, okay, erm I guess the only logical way to move all the treasure is to get some labourers and guards to carry the treasure back to the kingdom over a course of a few months. But here's the tricky part, how do you get them to come here? You are in a cursed dessert and the only way for you to go get anyone's help is if you spend a few weeks to march back to the kingdom. Asking a barbarian to deliver a message will never work because your snobbish kingdom shuns these vagabonds. However, they are inherent risks going back to the kingdom as you are leaving the treasure unprotected for a few weeks; the barbarians might come and loot the treasure. On the other hand, everyone generally avoids coming to the tower and they still will because no one will know that you slayed the warlock, even if some are adventurous enough to come here, they are barbarians, they lack the technology to move such huge masses at such a short period of time, so worse comes to worse, you lose a small percentage of the treasure which probably matters little in the long run.

Does leaving the treasure temporarily sound good to you?

- Okay, sounds good. Time to stab the corpse - 34
- No! I must have all of my treasures. - 67

98

Hey, what are you doing? The warlock is right there, a few steps away! All you have to do is drive the sword into the soft corpse over there and you'll win the game and we can reach the happy ending in this story. It's real easy, the warlock won't even fight back because it's chained. Come on, we are so close! Why? What is your problem now?

- I have enough treasure - 54
- This is too easy, I want a boss fight - 50

99

Well, honestly I have run out of ways to describe it. In summary, crude looking sword in cube-ish rock; looks like sword will come out if you pull it.

If I give you the option of examining it again, it will probably lead you to a page with no words at all because I really have nothing more to say of it. But I must still give you an alternate choice to pulling out the sword because this is how gamebooks work. A gamebook with no choices is just plain old book. So I will repeat the choice again, if you really do select examining the sword again, you are going to put me in a very difficult position.

- Pull out the sword - 19
- Examine the sword again - 51

100

Aw snap! That is a brutally sweet comeback! High-five!

The warlock widens his glare as his brain is trying to comprehend the wittiness coming out of your mouth. Good job, your insults have stunned the warlock!

Now would be a perfect time to stab the warlock, and might I suggest saying the line 'Don't worry, I'll help you create a new tighter asshole" while you do it.

- Sounds awesome! I'll do just that - 34