

UNDER THE BLOOD-RED MOUNTAIN

A Hero's Arc Gamebook



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Under the Blood-Red Mountain

You are the hero of this story, making decisions that will shape your fortunes. Unlike a conventional book, you don't read this sequentially - most numbered sections will provide you with a choice to make: depending on your choice, you will continue reading a different section.

There are 16 unique endings depending on the choices you make, but only a few of these are happy endings.

Creating Your Character

To begin, you will need to create your hero for this story. You have 80 points to distribute between your hit points and each of your attributes. For each attribute, choose a value between 3 and 13. Your health (starting hit points) will be 80 points minus double the sum of your attributes. Or choose from one of the following characters:

	Strength	Dexterity	Wisdom	Hit Points
Adventurer	10	10	10	20
Warrior	12	10	8	20
Thief	10	12	8	20
Wizard	8	10	12	20
Rogue	12	12	8	16
Druid	12	8	12	16
Monk	8	12	12	16
Ranger	12	12	12	8

Trait Checks

To play, you will need three six-sided dice (3d6), each visually distinguishable from the other (different color and/or size). Pick a color to represent strength (e.g., red), dexterity (e.g., green or white), and wisdom (e.g., blue or black).

A trait check requires you to roll the three dice and total them. If you roll a number equal to or below the specified trait, you pass, otherwise you fail. For instance, melee weapons require you to perform a strength check, ranged weapons like longbows a dexterity check, and magic weapons like staves a wisdom check. These checks aren't just for combat: you may need to roll a strength check to break open a door, a dexterity check to jump a chasm, or a wisdom check to perceive something hidden in your surroundings. So, if you have strength of 10, you will need to roll a 10 or under to pass a strength check.

Health Checks

In addition, sometimes you may be asked to take a health check. These will never kill you, but they will weaken you. Roll the three dice. If you roll your current hit points or less, then take one die (specified in the text) as damage. Note that health checks are opposite of trait checks: high rolls avoid harm.

Combat

If you have a ranged weapon (such as a short bow) or a mixed-use weapon (such as a spear or dagger) or a spell attack (such as a staff), you can use it prior to melee combat. Do a dexterity check, then deal damage if you were successful, using the dexterity die (unless otherwise specified).

For melee combat, the combatant with the highest dexterity attacks first (you win ties). To attack, roll the three dice. Players hit on the trait check required by their weapon (e.g., strength for swords, dexterity for bows, and wisdom for staffs); for monsters, the trait is specified with an asterisk (*). In case of a hit, you resolve damage according to your weapon, looking at the dice already rolled. If you have no weapon, or have only a dagger, the damage is the lowest die rolled; monsters score damage for the trait they checked, unless otherwise specified. If you are using a ranged weapon, the damage is the dexterity die; etc. If the monster exactly rolled their trait level, they get bonus damage, according to their weapon or innate ability.

If the monster missed, and has been wounded, and rolled its panic level or above, then it flees. The player may make one last ranged or spell attack, if they can, to try to kill the creature before it flees.

Subtract the damage from the hit points from the defender. Armor lets the defender treat one damage die roll as another. For instance, a pair of greaves reduces a roll of 2 to a roll of 1, resulting in one less damage. If the hit points fall to zero, the battle is over and the attacker wins.

HELLHOUND	STR 11*	DEX 7	WIS 5	HP 7	PNC 15+
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Special Attacks - Three types of special attacks may occur:

- On a roll of 3, the attacker pulls off a finesse move and immediately takes another turn.
- On a roll of 18, the attacker misses so poorly that they lose a turn while they seek to recover their concentration.
- If the attacking monster exactly rolls their attribute check, they achieve a special attack, typically causing more damage.

If your health drops to zero or less, you are almost unconscious and near death. Further instructions will typically be provided on another page.

Items

For some items, you will need to record the runes inscribed on the item. While you don't know the words in the many different languages of land, you do recognize the most common runes, the III of the fishfolk, the TLVX of the kobolds, the ZYNKHAF of the goblins, and the FVTHALKEM of the dwarves (which the gnomes call FVTHALKEMIZYNX). For instance, if you discover a sword with the runes ZAXAM, record that word: if it is useful later on, you will be asked if you have item ZAXAM.

The rune v is pronounced /w/ before a vowel, otherwise as /u/: MALVN, "goblin", is pronounced /mahl-oon/, while VAL, "strength", is pronounced /wahl/, and KVV, "ox", is pronounced /kvoo/. The rune x is pronounced /ks/, even at the start of a word.

Potions will let you change the results of one die at any time. You can use these after any of your character's rolls, including a combat roll. For instance, a dexterity potion lets you change the dexterity die; sometimes you will want to increase it, other times decrease it. Once you use a potion, cross it out. You start the game with a strength potion, a dexterity potion, and a wisdom potion. Deciding when to use these can mean the difference between life and undead.

Acknowledgements

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Credits

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Character Sheet

Name _____

STR	DEX	WIS	HP
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Current Health

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Weapons

<i>Runes</i>	<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Melee Check</i>	<i>Damage</i>
ZEAX	<i>dagger</i>	STR	Minimum roll

Armor

<i>Type:</i>	<i>greaves</i>	<i>gauntlet</i>	<i>shield</i>	<i>helmet</i>	<i>armor</i>
<i>Reduce:</i>	2 ->	3 ->	4 ->	5 ->	6 ->
<i>Runes:</i>					

Other Items

<i>Runes</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Effect</i>
TRVMV	Strength potion	Change your strength die to any number (one use)
VEXL	Dexterity potion	Change your dexterity die to any number (one use)
METI	Wisdom potion	Change your wisdom die to any number (one use)

The Story

1

Never far from your peripheral vision is the Blood-Red Mountain, its top crowned with crimson moss. When your master was young, she saw fire on the mountaintop from a dragon. The mountain has less pleasant memories for you.

You were but five summers old when a band of trolls came down from the mountain and slew your parents. The old mage took you in, and for her you've done the type of errands that she can't be bothered to use her magic for. You hope to one day journey and see the world, perhaps even going to the citadel of Pele. But for now you serve Master Wegyo, taking in what lessons she's willing to teach you, about everything from the mundane to the magical.

You were fetching a pail of water from the well for Master Wegyo's weekly bath, when you were struck in the head by a rock.



You wake in a cave, a goblin standing over you.

You'll have to fight. Fortunately, while the goblin took your spear, it did not find your dagger or your potions. You'll hit by doing a strength check (rolling equal to or below your strength) and will do damage on your lowest die.

GOBLIN	STR 10*	DEX 10	WIS 10	HP 7	PNC 12+
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The goblin hits on a 10 or less. On a 10, the goblin smashes you with its gauntlet, and you take its high roll as damage instead of its strength die. If the goblin rolls a 12 or higher, and has taken damage, it panics and flees - but it leaves your spear behind.

If you lose, [go to 33](#).

If you win, take up your spear. The goblin had carved the runes KVELH into your spear. Record on your inventory the rune and that the spear does STR damage, which means it does damage on your strength die. Then leave the room, and [go to 19](#).

2



This tomb is also a workshop. A skeletal mage stands back from the table it was studying and suddenly both of its bony fists glow blue.

SKELETAL MAGE	STR 8	DEX 8	WIS 12*	HP 14	PNC 16+
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The mage hits on a 12 or less and does damage on the wisdom die. On a 12, the mage sends a blue burst of lightning that stuns you, and you lose your next turn. If the mage rolls a 16 or higher, and has taken damage, it flees into the catacombs.

As when facing any undead opponent, you'll need high wisdom or a magical weapon, otherwise the mage takes your lowest die as damage.

If you lose, [go to 82](#).

If you win, you find a runic spell book on its desk, though you are unsure what it does. Record the runes HEVKVZ on your inventory.

Behind the desk there's another door, leading down a long passageway. One opening is barred, like a jail cell ([go to 7](#)). A closed door is at the end of the passage ([go to 48](#)).

3

The narrow alcove is empty but for a table with a parchment map. The map shows nothing of interest: the Blood-Red Mountain in the center, the location of the villages that surround it highlighted, including Woodside (not distinguished in any way from the other villages), the ranges of hills that stretch away from the mountain, including the Blackdown Hills.

The only exit is to return to the zombie antechamber. Already you can hear another zombie stirring. [Go to 27](#).

4

You search the desk and find quills and ink and parchment. You find a shelf full of cobwebs and moldy books. At last, you push a door back from the wall and see a set of keys hanging on a hook. One of the keys has the runes ZELA carved into it. (Record this on your inventory sheet.)

Grabbing the keys, you rush back down the passageway to your master's cell. Quickly trying each key, you find one that opens the door. Your master takes the keys from you and finds the one that opens her shackles. "Lead the way!" she says, grabbing a satchel that was next to the table she worked at.

You go back to the undead wizard's workshop and then descend into the catacombs.

"Wait," she whispers. "If we return home, the lich will dispatch her minions to recapture us. We will have to flee the area altogether."

"We can do that."

"But the lich plans to enslave all the humans who live around the Blood-Red Mountain," she says. "Yet we are not strong enough to fight the lich."

"We can raise the militia."

Where do you? The longest passage ends in a closed door ([go to 45](#)). The narrow descending passage, with dust and cobwebs, has a door on the left ([go to 91](#)) and a door on the right ([go to 54](#)). The broad stairway leads back up to the row of zombie coffins ([go to 62](#)).

5

With the first rays of morning, the skeletons begin slinking away, back down the hill. They are carrying your dead, the dead villagers, with them. The lich queen strides among them, her blood-red ruby extinguished.

Not until noon does anyone dare leave the hillfort to see the damage. Most of the cottages have been destroyed. The fields of grain have all burnt. None of the bodies of those who were killed remain.

Many are clinging to one another in despair and grief.

Before dusk falls, everyone has retreated back to the hillfort. No warning horns are sounded this evening, as no scouts remain alive outside the walls.

The lich queen resumes her attack. Only this night her army is bolstered by the zombie villagers who had defended these walls but the night before. In the morning, her army has grown large enough to encircle the hill, so that none may retreat.

Each night you lose friends and villagers to death, as they are compelled to jump from the fort, only for you to see them in undeath the next night.

On the seventh night you join their ranks, to march against the other villages.

6

You are completely engulfed in flames. You scream in agony and frantically try to extinguish the fire that is consuming you.

You light the treasures in the hoard for only a few minutes.

7

Behind the bars, you see a human woman working at a desk, casting some sort of spell on an arrow. A shackle around her left leg is locked to a chain that goes into an iron bolt mounted in the floor.

“Master Wegyo?” you whisper.

She turns in disbelief. "I thought you were dead!"

"It's a long story," you say.

"Quick, do you have the keys?" she asks.

"No, I haven't seen any keys," you say.

"One of the undead wizards has them," she says. "The keys are magical. My shackles and this door resist every counterspell I can come up with."

"I just fought one of the wizards," you say.

"Go and search its room for keys. Beware the lich queen. She can't be killed; she's hidden her life force somewhere else. Hurry!"

"Will this help?" you ask, holding out the spellbook you took from the undead wizard.

If you have item VAF, [go to 16](#). If you have item HEVKVZ, [go to 73](#).

8



You walk by the shore for a long time in the dim light that enters from outside, from across that pool. The water is still, but for the occasional ripple. Suddenly, you see splashing from the pool and a large fish breaching the water. It leaps out. In fact, it's not a fish, but a member of the fishfolk, clad in a loincloth and wielding a spear. It immediately attacks you.

FISHFOLK	STR 7*	DEX 10	WIS 8	HP 11	PNC 8+
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The fishfolk hits on a 7 or less. On a 7, it bites into you, and you take its strength die plus two additional points as damage. If the fishfolk rolls an 8 or higher, and has taken damage, it flees back into the pool, leaving its spear behind.

If you lose, [go to 37](#).

If you win, the fishfolk's spear, with the rune *i* inscribed on it, becomes yours. It does a strength die as damage. (Record this on your inventory.) You can go back to the crossroads ([go to 50](#)), or you can continue along the lakeside ([go to 58](#)).

9

You tell the kobold, "I have but recently escaped from the goblin's arena. The goblins bartered my master, a wizard of power, to the lich queen. How can I rescue my master?"

The kobold says, "The lich queen is no ally of ours. You will need to seek her phylactery. I will take you to our dragonlord. But you must offer her one of your treasures."

[Go to 97](#).

10

Rather than walk you right back to your prison cell, the guard takes you a different direction. He has forgotten to take your items from you.

You see all manner of creatures. Beasts like the hellhounds are locked in cages and growl at you as you walk past. Monsters like gnolls and crabmen ignore you from their cells; there will be a need to fight later.

Up ahead, you see a chimney-like shaft. But it comes down over a wooden table rather than a fireplace. A wooden box is being lowered through. Once it rests on the table, the guard opens the box. There is meat and better food than you've had. He offers you a hunk of meat.

If you take the meat, [go to 28](#). If you fight the guard, [go to 47](#).

11

Another guard rushes up. Taking in the scene at once, he sidesteps your attempt to parry and runs you through.

"Now you'll be on the menu," he says.

12

You cautiously enter the tunnel. It descends into darkness some way before there are eldritch lamps to light the way.

It broadens as it descends. You see one passage open up on the right, and another on the left.

If you have the item NEKLV, [go to 41](#).

If you wish to continue straight ahead, [go to 67](#). If you want to go left, [go to 36](#). If you want to go right, [go to 70](#).

13

With the first rays of morning, the skeletons begin marching away. They bear the body of the lich queen before them on a great metal litter, her blood-red ruby rod of power is beside her, emitting a soft rose light.

You are hailed as the hero of the day, but the sorrow outweighs any jubilation. You are in shock at the deaths of Presgwu and Master Wegyo.

Not until noon does anyone dare leave the hillfort to see the damage. Most of the cottages have been destroyed. The fields of grain have all burnt. None of the bodies of those who were killed remain.

Many villagers are clinging to one another in despair and grief. In shock, there is no consensus on what to do. Many eyes turn to you.

Looking across the villagers of Woodside, of Weixel, of Treb, you wish you had better words to offer. "The lich queen will rise again," you say. "She can only be killed if someone finds and destroys her phylactery. She will resume her assault on our villages." You conclude with "Only a fool farms a flooded field," repeating the old proverb.

Your words carry the day. Besides, none are willing to spend even another night in Woodside or the hillfort. You and the other refugees set off for the citadel of Pele, to start a new life.

14

You find it hard to move. You feel your muscles stiffening. You feel your whole body stiffening.

The medusa crosses to you and poses your arm with your weapon and moves your other arm into position.

You are now a statue.

15

The dragon says, "This is an unexceptional gift, but I will accept it. What riddle wouldst thou have me answer?"

You say, "How can I defeat the lich queen?"

The dragon says, "The lich has hidden her heart somewhere in this mountain."

You ask, "How may I find it?"

The dragon says, "Verily, the lich is heartless, but 'twas not always so. Once she wore her heart on her sleeve."

You say, "Thank you, oh noble wyrm, for this information."

The dragon says, "Tell thine people that true wisdom lies under the blood-red mountain. Whosoever bringest me a worthy bauble shall have thine babble answered."

You bow.

The dragon says, "If thee shall fight the lich, ye shall need all the aid ye can muster. Sslethisis, give our guest something for his head." The kobold bows, and leads you back out to the antechamber.

The kobold asks you to remain, then departs. After a few minutes she returns carrying an iron helmet, with the runes ZKEL inscribed in it. It can be used to reduce a damage die of 5 to 3. "The dwarves created this, to keep from being turned to stone," the kobold says. "It also shields the wearer from being mesmerized."

The kobold leads you through a secret passage back to the crossroads. [Go to 50.](#)

16

"Possibly," your master says. "Now hurry!"

You go back down the passageway to the workshop. You search the table and find glass bottles full of strange liquids. You find a shelf full of empty cages, which perhaps once contained rats or snakes or lizards. You search the walls but find nothing but empty hooks. There are no keys here.

You look down the passageway and see the closed door at the other end. Striding past your master in her cell, you go into the next room. [Go to 46.](#)

17



The skeletal archer creakily stands and fires above the wall. With nothing else for it, you begin running across the bridge as fast as you can, weaving back and forth haphazardly to dodge its arrows. Make three dexterity checks and take damage on the dexterity die for each you fail. If your health falls below 1, you topple and fall into the far left pit - [go to 65](#).

The archer's first close range attack is a dexterity check, hitting on 13 or less, doing damage on the dexterity die. From then on you must battle the skeletal archer hand to hand.

SKELETAL ARCHER	STR 8*	DEX 13	WIS 4	HP 13	PNC 15+
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In melee combat, the skeleton will pummel you with its bow, doing damage on the strength die. If the skeleton rolls a 15 or higher, and has taken damage, it flees.

The skeleton, like all the undead, only takes regular damage from magical weapons (those that hit on at least the wisdom die) or from magic users (your wisdom must be your highest attribute). If neither of those apply, then no matter what weapon you use, it does the lowest die as damage.

If the skeleton wins, it pushes you into the pit ([go to 65](#)).

If you win, and the skeleton hasn't fled, you can take its helmet and bow. The helmet, with the runes KELM inscribed in it, can be used to reduce a damage die of 5 to 4. The longbow, with the runes KVI inscribed on it, can be used prior to melee combat: it requires a dexterity check, and hits on the higher of the dexterity and strength dice (DEX | STR). (Record these on your inventory.) [Go to 2](#).

18

You carefully make your way back to your master's cottage. It has been burnt to the ground, and the timbers and thatch are still smoldering. One of your neighbors must have come to investigate the flames, but her body has fallen where she ran. She was running towards the house.

Three arrows stick from her back. You bend down to examine her, when you feel arrows strike you.

As you die, a goblin archer approaches you and kicks you. "You'll live on, vile one, in the stories we tell other prisoners before they die in the arena. You'll live on as they despair, as we tell them only one has escaped the arena, but he could not escape our vengeance."

He walks away as you bleed to death.

19

You are in a long corridor, leading down and left into the mountain. Eldritch lamps mounted in the walls cast an eerie green glow down the corridors.

You feel a slight evening breeze coming from the right, where the tunnel slopes up. You creep upward towards the breeze and see at the end of the tunnel an exit from the cave. But six goblin guards are playing at a dice, just inside the entrance. If you wish to fight them, [go to 66](#). If you wish to go down into the caverns, [go to 68](#).

20

You and Ayur climb out of the pen, leaving the corpse of the hellhound behind. You both rush down the slope and into the woods. "It smells so wonderful," says Ayur, laughing and smiling at the aroma of the pines. But he quickly turns serious. "They will be coming down to look for us soon."

"My master Wegyo's cottage is this way," you say. But then you are tinged with guilt. "My master... she is still a prisoner."

"You were lucky to escape the goblins. I was imprisoned there for years. But the undead who have your master: you'll need magic to beat them. It's impossible. But, look, we can't go back to your cottage. That's the first place the goblins will march to. We need to go somewhere else. It's been years, but I will return to my village, Blackhill. I was captured far from there, so it should be safe."

"I should rescue my master."

“I’m never going underground in my life again, if I can help it!” says Ayur. “But I can show you a little used cavern that leads into the realm of the fishfolk and give you directions.”

Do you want to go with Ayur to Blackhill ([go to 77](#)) or go back under the mountain ([go to 90](#))?

21



“Child of bears, indeed,” growls the dragon. “To think dwarves tried to teach you animals anything.”

DRAGON	STR 16*	DEX 7	WIS 14	HP 99
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If your dexterity is higher, you may attack the dragon three times before it begins its attack.

On a hit from the dragon, you take damage on all three dice. The dragon never panics.

When the dragon rolls 16, or when your health drops to 0, [go to 6](#).

22



You open the door to reveal a skeleton warrior. It advances on you, its jaw opening wide in a battle scream - but you hear nothing but the clunk of its bones. It is wielding both an axe and a mace.

SKELETAL WARRIOR	STR 9*	DEX 6	WIS 4	HP 14	PNC 14+
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The skeleton hits on a 9 or less. On a 9, the skeleton strikes you with both the mace and the axe, and you will take damage on strength plus dexterity, rather than just strength. If the skeleton rolls a 14 or higher, and has taken damage, it retreats to the corner and its eye sockets stare blankly at you, but it will not attack again.

As a member of the undead, the skeleton takes less damage from non-magical weapons wielded by the unmagical: it takes your lowest die as damage. If you have a magic weapon, or your wisdom is your highest attribute, your weapons work as normal.

If you lose, you can flee by crawling into a small maze of tunnels: [go to 65](#).

If you win, add its axe and mace to your inventory. The mace requires a dexterity check and does damage on a dexterity die; the runes KVLVN are carved into it. The axe requires a strength check and damages on the highest die; the runes FALTA are carved into it. Neither of these weapons are magical. You see nothing else but ancient wooden coffins, in various states of decay. [Go to 29](#).

23

You wake to find yourself bound and lying on stone. The stone is deathly cold, and you fill the chill permeating your body.

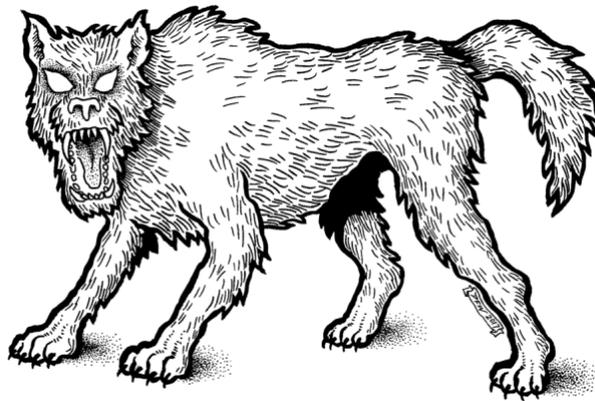
You are disoriented and not thinking straight. But you see you are in a room under the Blood-Red Mountain, with eldritch lamps in the walls casting shadows in a flickering umber light.

You see that the stone you are on has channels cut into it, leading down to a large reservoir carved into the stone. Next to the reservoir is a lead chalice.

You feel a sudden sharp pain and see blood streaming down the stone and into the reservoir. Your blood.

When you wake next, you will be a zombie. And you will march off to make war on your friends and your master.

24



You are barely conscious, but you see Ayur take your weapons and square off against the hellhound, which strikes first.

HELLHOUND	STR 11*	DEX 7	WIS 5	HP 7	PNC 15+
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The hellhound hits on a 11 or less. On a 11, the hellhound's fiery breath scorches Ayur, and he take its strength die +1 as damage. If the hellhound rolls a 15 or higher, and has taken damage, it flees to a corner of the pen, far from the gate.

Ayur has STR 12*, DEX 7, WIS 12, HP 14. If he wins, [go to 20](#). If he loses, [go to 81](#).

25

A rung near the top gives way, and you stumble and fall down a slick, sloping cavern. Take a health check: if you roll your current hit points or less, take the dexterity die as damage.

You are in a low-ceilinged balcony that provides a panoramic view of the crossroads. Perhaps it is used as a watchtower.

Near the edge of the balcony, you find that rags have been spread out to make it more comfortable. You decide to watch and wait. You end up nodding off.

You wake to notice two goblin warriors scurrying down the leftmost corridor back towards their realm.

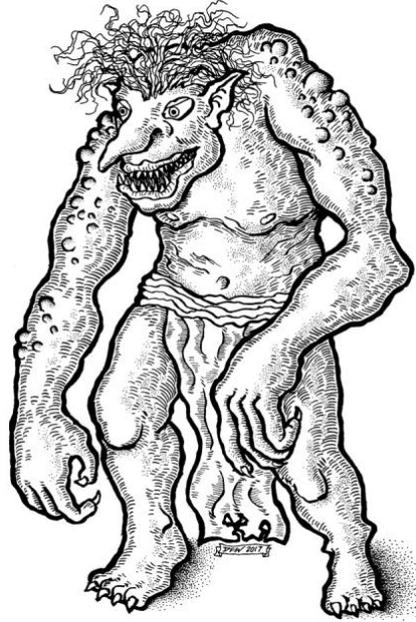
Every hour or so you see a large lizard scuttle along the corridor. They always go left, never turning right or going straight. "Follow the lizards to find the kobolds," you remember a ranger telling you once, as she tracked some foe across Master Wegyo's land. "Follow the kobolds to find the dragon." Not that kobolds are as bad as goblins, or so you've heard.

The passageway straight leads through a bone archway, as if going down into a crypt. You fear what might be found there. Once, after a burial of a villager, an ancient warrior's grave in the same cemetery was disturbed. That night the warriors' undead skeleton rose and attacked the village, which had been built on the site of a now-vanished people's settlement. Regular wood and iron weapons had little effect, and only your master's magical attacks were able to stop him and return him to his uneasy slumber. A new graveyard was started the next day.

One undead warrior from that crypt would be foe enough for a lifetime.

You must march on. Before you go, you notice some leather armor. On closer inspection, you see that rings have been sewn into it and that it has the inscription KVV cut into. While the rings are long since rusted, it's better than leather armor. If you want it, record it on your inventory: it turns damage rolls of 6 to 4.

[Go to 50.](#)



Pushing aside the iron gate and striding into the arena is a troll, with exceptionally long arms for even his species. You have a sudden flashback to when you were five years old, and a band of trolls attacked your parents' farm, and killed both of them. How different your life might have been if not for trolls.

But there's no time to think about that now. You'll have to work hard to stay out of his reach. Even though he lacks a weapon, he'll easily strangle you or crush your head.

TROLL	STR 14*	DEX 7	WIS 7	HP 25	PNC 14+
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The troll hits on a 14 or less. On a 14, the troll chokes you with both hands, and you will take its highest die as damage instead of the strength die. If the troll rolls a 14 or higher, and has taken damage, it kicks you away from it (take its dexterity die as damage); it then rushes back to the iron gate into the arena, pulling the gate off its hinges and fleeing back into the prison.

If you lose, [go to 42](#). If you win, [go to 89](#).

27



This chamber houses rows of open coffins, each containing a corpse, still covered in rotting flesh. Many of the closest coffins are empty, but out of the next occupied coffin a zombie stirs into action, and half climbs, half falls out of its coffin.

It shambles towards you. As always, you'll have time to get off a shot, if you have a bow.

ZOMBIE	STR 10*	DEX 4	WIS 3	HP 4	PNC 17+
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The zombie hits on a 10 or less. On a 10, the zombie bites you, and you will take its highest die as damage instead of the strength die. If the zombie rolls a 17 or higher, and has taken damage, it shambles away.

The zombie, like all of the undead, takes less damage from non-magical weapons wielded by the unmagical: it takes the lowest die as damage. If you have a magical weapon, or if your wisdom is your highest attribute, your weapons work as normal.

If you lose, you can flee by crawling into a small tunnel: [go to 65](#).

If you win, you have two exits to choose from: a broad stairway that leads into catacombs ([go to 91](#)) or a narrow alcove ([go to 3](#)).

28

You take the meat and eat it with gusto. Add up to 6 hit points to your health (you can't exceed your starting health).

You no sooner finish, then the guard marches you back down to the arena.

[Go to 26.](#)

29

You are in the broad ascending passage that rises from the catacomb's entrance.

The first door and third doors are open. The second door ([go to 2](#)) and the fourth door are closed ([go to 48](#)).

Or you can return to the catacombs ([go to 91](#)).

30

Glancing at the lich, you feel a sudden compulsion to step up on to the rampart. Is this the lich's spell?

You look down on the lich. She beckons towards you, inviting you to her.

But you feel no compulsion to jump.

You can fight her with ranged weaponry, if you have it, such as a bow or a magic staff.

LICH QUEEN	STR 8	DEX 8	WIS 16*	HP 28	PNC 17+
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The lich queen hits on a 16 or less. On a 16, she strikes you with a fireball, and you take damage on the dexterity die as well as the wisdom die. If the lich rolls a 17 or higher, and has taken damage, she retreats ([go to 5](#)).

If you lose, you fall behind the rampart, crawling out when the sun rises. [Go to 5.](#)

If you win, [go to 13.](#)

31

The hillfort has not been used in your lifetime, but you have helped maintain it at least once each year. The deep cistern has water for all, but the tradition of keeping reserve food stored there was lost during a few lean years. You help bear food and other supplies up the narrow causeway and across the makeshift wooden drawbridge.

Refugees arrive from Treb, a small village that has fallen to the lich's army. Treb's villagers set up camp in the hillfort, and many villagers of Woodside join them, while others still stay in their cottages.

A few days later and refugees come in from Weixel, another village lost to the lich.

You see little of your master during these days, but the magic arrows and weapons she is enchanting are brought into the hillfort regularly. One day she climbs up the hill to see how things have progressed. She brings with her a gift from the smith: chainmail armor, with the runes FEVKVV inscribed in it; it can be used to reduce a damage die of 6 to 3. (Record this on your inventory.)

[Go to 99.](#)

32

You are in another crypt lined with rotted coffins along each wall and with a narrow stairway on the other side from the door you entered by. The only light comes from the green eldritch lamps of the passageway. Through the shadows you see that the wood has decayed and crumbled. Some coffins are now empty. Others contain skeletons, broken apart with bones akimbo.

You glance down the stairway - it leads to a long passageway lined with crude shafts and in each shaft is a skeleton. Hundreds and hundreds of skeletons. All inanimate, for the moment.

[Go back to 91.](#)

33

You wake lying on rags in a narrow niche in a wall. You remember fighting, but you don't remember losing. A long slash on your arm is aching and has been covered and bound in dirty cloth. Uncertain of your surroundings, you hear the stirring of creatures up and down a narrow hallway. A man peers in. "Awake? Good."

He fumbles with a key, unlocks the gate you hadn't seen and comes in. He hobbles over to you, using a crutch. You see that he has a peg leg. "My name is Ayur," he says.

"Where am I, Ayur?" you ask.

“You’ve been captured by the goblins to fight in their arena.”

“How can I escape?”

“Death is the only escape. But they won’t let you die until you’ve provided some entertainment.” Ayur spoon-feeds you soup, with tubers and baked insects and random bits of meat. You spit it out.

Ayur scoops it up and puts it back in your soup and stirs it. “You’ll need your strength,” he says. He spoon-feeds you again, and this time you choke it down.

“Can you take a message to my master and let her know I’m here? Master Wegyo?” you ask.

“Your master? The wizard that the goblins ambushed? She’s not here. She was captured to barter to the lich.” Ayur shudders. “Your fate will be better than hers.”

Like all the caverns you’ve been in so far, eldritch lamps provide illumination. For many days, you are too weak to leave the niche, but you see creatures shuffle by, under guard. A gnoll, a fiend, even a giant. Each time they ignore you.

You ask Ayur many times about what lies in store for you, but he says you will learn soon enough, and asks instead for tales of your village, of the outdoors, of the wind in the trees.

Finally, you have healed enough. (Your hit points have returned to your starting total.)

Then one day or night (you have lost all sense of time), a guard takes you out and escorts you down a long passageway, descending into darkness. You walk in silence for a long time. Finally, you see eldritch lamps flickering ahead.

You have come to a locked iron gate, with gaps big enough to push an arm or leg through but not wide enough for your entire body. Through the gaps you see an amphitheater with tiered seating carved into the stone. Many dozens of goblinoids of all ages, shapes, and sizes are sitting, silent. A throne in the center is occupied by the king of the bugbears and goblins, a huge goblinoid.

Across from you is another iron gate like the one you just passed through.

The guard returns your weapons, armor, and other items to you, and pushes you into the arena.

[Go to 43.](#)

34

As you lay dying, the lich queen strides towards you.

All is lost.

You will become an undead warrior, terrorizing and killing others.

Her arm stretches out towards the gauntlet you took from the medusa. The light from its ruby has been pulsing like a frantic heartbeat throughout the battle, as if possessed by a life of its own.

No, not a life of its own.

You grab your dagger and stab at the hateful stone. To your surprise, rather than deflect the blade, the ruby shatters into pieces. Its light goes out.

A wail goes up from the lich.

For this was her phylactery. She had hidden it with the medusa, thinking any who dared to take it would be turned into a statue.

You stab her with your dagger. Perhaps destroying the phylactery imbued it with power, or perhaps the loss of the phylactery dramatically weakened the lich queen. She shrieks, an awful banshee shriek that pierces your ears, then slumps to the ground.

As you watch, her body decays, and her bones dissolve into ash.

You lay exhausted, silent, aching, in this tomb of death.

But it does not become your tomb.

Slowly, your strength returns to you.

You take the crown from her ashes. With it, you will be able to prove to all that the queen no longer reigns under the Blood-Red Mountain.

And, because of your deeds today, someday you will wear a crown of your own.

35

The tunnel forks. You notice a lizard heading to the left. To the right you can smell the stench of goblins - an odor you happily knew nothing of not so long ago. You think you hear the bark of hellhounds echoing down the caravan to the right.

To explore the left fork, [go to 52](#). To go back to the crossroads, [go to 50](#).

36



The passageway ends in a narrow door, guarded by a kobold.

KOBOLD	STR 10*	DEX 10	WIS 10	HP 6	PNC 11+
--------	---------	--------	--------	------	---------

The kobold hits on a 10 or less. On a 10, the kobold pushes you against the wall with its shield, and you take damage on whichever is higher, the strength or the dexterity die. If the kobold rolls an 11 or higher, and has taken damage, it panics and flees down the corridor from which you came.

If you lose, [go to 44](#).

If you win, you can take the scimitar, which requires a dexterity check and does damage on the higher of the strength or dexterity die. It has the runes ZVKYV carved on it. The round shield, with the runes NVF inscribed in it, can be used to reduce a damage die of 4 to 3. (Record these on your inventory.) [Go to 94](#).

Or, if you don't want to fight, [go to 63](#).

37

You regain consciousness as the creature drags you into the lake. It stuffs seaweed into your mouth, and when you gag it out, it stuffs the plant back into your mouth and up your nostrils for good measure.

It then drags you underwater. All your weapons, armor, and items have been left behind on the shore. You gasp and fear drowning, but to your wonderment find that you can breathe underwater. Which is well, for it is dragging you downward. You try to break free but are too weak. And it feels like forever or a day that it is dragging you down through the mirk. From the daylight that still peeks through from the far side of the pool, you can see cursed creatures that swim all around you.

Finally, you reach the bottom of the strange infernal pool, and you are dragged once more, into a tunnel. To your surprise, the tunnel rises into a cavern, full of air and lit by eldritch lamps. It pushes you forward, and you stumble and fall on the sandy floor by the water's edge.

You straighten up and see a great mere-beast, matron of her people, mother of Grendel, the queen of the fishfolk squatting on a throne of shell among a jeweled hoard of gems and riches. In her right hand she holds the staff of battle, the spear of the blood snake.

You see amid the war-gems a weapon of victory, a glory of warriors, of weapons the most choice, a giant splendid sword made in fact by giants. Grabbing the sword hilt, grasping for victory, you find it unmovable, and your foe unmoved. Casting her spear like a fisher casting a line, her staff cuts through you straight.

Fate-cursed is your body as you fall on the beach.

38

You tell the kobold, "We have but recently escaped from the lich queen's undead army, but she has already attacked and destroyed one of our villages. We seek her phylactery. Do you know anything of it?"

The kobold says, "The lich queen is no ally of ours. I will take you to our dragonlord. But you must offer her one of your treasures."

[Go to 15.](#)

39

You are in a broad ascending passage, rising from the entrance to the catacombs. Four doorways are in the left wall, none in the right.

The first door is open, and you see into a bare workshop, with a table and empty glass vessels and some scraps of parchment. The other doors are all closed: the second door ([go to 48](#)), the third door ([go to 22](#)), and the fourth door ([go to 2](#)).

If you have the item NEKLV, you can examine it ([go to 88](#)).

Or you can return to the catacombs ([go to 91](#)).

40

You walk the passageway for a long time until you come to a narrow natural bridge, falling into darkness on each side. At the other end, behind a rough stone fortification, you see a dead archer, skeletal, propped against the cave wall.

Roll a wisdom check. If you pass, [go to 87](#), otherwise [go to 17](#).

41

You take out Ayur's dagger and examine it. It glows an intense red when you walk down the passageway. The glow fades when you walk to the left or right. You notice lizards scurrying down the passageway to the left.

If you want to do down the passageway, [go to 67](#). If you want to go left, [go to 36](#). If you want to go right, [go to 70](#).

42

The troll has lifted you from the ground, and one of its arms is wrapping around your neck, tightening. You struggle for breath. You drop your weapon and with both hands try to pull back its arm. The taunts and yells, the clamor and clash of goblins cheering and banging on their weapons, are the last thing you hear.

Like so many before you, you have died in the arena.

43

If you have the item ZKIYEN, [go to 26](#).

- Otherwise, if you have the item AK, [go to 79](#).
 - Otherwise, if you have the item KVELH or the item with the single rune I on it, [go to 69](#).
 - Otherwise [go to 93](#).

44

The kobold bounds you, knocks at the door, and other kobolds come out. They drag you into their lair.

When you come to, you are in a giant, deep chamber, as wide as it is high. A green great dragon lounges among a hoard of items, of all shapes and sizes: weapons, jewels, chalices, crowns.

The dragon's snout comes towards you and sniffs you. Your last sight is of its great jaws opening.

45

The door is bracketed by alcoves, each in shadow. In each stands the stone statue of a bugbear, an arm raised with palm outright, forbidding you entrance.

The door is locked. Pushing and pulling on it have no effect. You try to recite an opening spell that you once heard Master Wegyo use, but it doesn't work for you.

If you have items ZELA and KELT, [go to 84](#). Otherwise [go back to 91](#).

46



Opening the door, you find another tomb that is also a workshop. A skeletal mage steps back from the table where it was studying. Suddenly both of its bony fists shine with a cobalt fury.

SKELETAL MAGE	STR 8	DEX 8	WIS 12*	HP 14	PNC 16+
---------------	-------	-------	---------	-------	---------

The mage hits on a 12 or less and does damage on the wisdom die. On a 12, the mage sends a cobalt-blue burst of lightning that stuns you, and you lose your next turn. If the mage rolls a 16 or higher, and has taken damage, it flees into the catacombs.

As when facing any opponent who is undead, you'll need high wisdom or a magical weapon, otherwise the mage only takes your lowest die as damage.

If you lose, [go to 82](#).

If you win, you find a runic spell book on its desk, though you are unsure what it does. Record the runes HEVKVZ on your inventory. Then [go to 4](#).

47



The bugbear is wearing thick armor and leather gauntlets over each arm. You'll have to fight him:

BUGBEAR	STR 11*	DEX 7	WIS 11	HP 10	PNC 12+
---------	---------	-------	--------	-------	---------

The bugbear hits on a 11 or less. On a 11, the bugbear thrusts its sword into you, and you take its strength die as double damage. If the bugbear rolls a 12 or higher, and has taken damage, it panics and flees.

If you lose, [go to 11](#).

If you slay the bugbear, you may take its sword, gauntlets and armor. The sword, with the runes MEL along the blade, requires a strength check and doubles the strength die as damage (STR+STR). The gauntlets, with the runes KATVVN inscribed in them, can be used to reduce a damage die of 3 to 2. The leather armor, with the runes EKVV inscribed in it, can be used to reduce a damage die of 6 to 5. (Record all this on your inventory.)

If you win, [go to 53](#).

48



This tomb workshop contains a wraith, which is half decaying corpse, half skeleton. It had been slumped over a scroll on a table in the corner, with its back to you when you came in, but it turns and faces you.

WRAITH	STR 12	DEX 8	WIS 15*	HP 23	PNC 16+
--------	--------	-------	---------	-------	---------

The wraith hits on a 15 or less and does damage on the wisdom die. On a 15, the wraith drains your life force and adds the wisdom die to its own hit points. If the wraith rolls a 16 or higher, and has taken damage, it flees into the catacombs.

Like all the undead, the wraith takes less damage from non-magical weapons wielded by the unmagical, taking your lowest die as damage, regardless of the power of your weapon.

If you lose, [go to 82](#).

If you win, you examine the table where the wraith was looking and find a closed spellbook. You try to open it, but it is bound closed by a spell. The runes VAF are on the spine. You open another door and see a long passageway. On the right side is a barred gate ([go to 7](#)), while a closed door is at the other end of the passage ([go to 2](#)).

49

You climb out of the shaft. You are in a galley where meals are prepared. You see the carcasses of rats and some type of rodent unfamiliar to you. Rat jerky hangs along the cave walls. You feel nauseous thinking about the soup you've eaten.

You hear a noise from the shaft. Looking down you see Ayur. "Help me!" He cries. He looks forlorn - and more than you can carry. If you help him, [go to 74](#), else [go to 61](#).

50

At last, the tunnel widens into a great open chamber where intersecting caverns come together beside a great dark lake. You can go right, along the lake, or straight along a sloping upward cavern, or left and downwards, where the tunnel forks.

You notice an old rope ladder, rotting, leading up into the darkness.

To climb the ladder, [go to 25](#). To go along the lakeshore, [go to 8](#). To go left to the fork, [go to 35](#). To go straight, [go to 40](#).

51

You drop to one knee and bow in the direction of the bugbear king. "Your majesty, I am not fit for your service. I am fit only to entertain you in this arena, until the better combatant than me draws my last blood."

The crowd shouts with glee and stands and stomps their feet, in the goblinoid show of approval.

"We eagerly anticipate your next battle," the king says to you. To the guard, he says, "Make sure he gets some real meat to eat" - he gestures to the slain body of the troll - "so that he will be strong for his next opponent."

The crowd continues to stomp their feet as you are led out. [Go to 10](#).

52

You are in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike. Make a wisdom check. If you fail, [go to 95](#), else [go to 85](#).

53

The shaft is very narrow, but you are able to squeeze into it. You climb halfway up, using the rope and wedging your body at an angle in the narrow shaft.

Make a dexterity check. If you fail, you fall and take damage on the dexterity die. If you lose all health, [go to 11](#), otherwise repeat the dexterity check.

If you succeed, [go to 49](#).

54

The door creaks back to reveal a large, empty chamber. The eldritch lamps in the walls cast a soft rose light when you entered but have now darkened to a flickering umber. Opposite the entrance, on the far end of the room, you see a stone altar.

You cross to it. The altar is large enough and long enough to hold the body of a giant, and high enough that you would not need to bend down to sacrifice it. Blood has dried on the stone, and you see that channels have been carved into the altar, leading down to a large reservoir. Next to the reservoir is a lead chalice, a goblet fit for a king. But you dare not take it.

If you have the item FALTA, [go to 62](#). Otherwise [go to 91](#).

55

You take from the goblin mage its staff and its magic sword. The staff has the runes MAKHV inscribed on them; it requires a wisdom check and does damage on the wisdom die. The magic sword has the runes KHVEL on it, requires a strength check, and does damage on the strength and wisdom dice.

Whenever a monster flees in panic, if you stun it with your staff, you may steal any items from it.

You exit the mountain. You are just above the tree line, with a forest of pines below you. Far away, to the right, you can see range of hills where the villages of Treb and Weixel are. From the left you hear a lonely hellhound howling. Below you, past the trees, is Master Wegyo's cottage.

Master Wegyo. To rescue her, you will need to re-enter the dungeon realm. Looking up the mountain slope, towards the red-topped peak covered in moss, you see a tunnel opening ([go to 12](#)). Or you can go back into the caverns you just left ([go to 50](#)). Or you can head back to your master's cottage ([go to 18](#)).

56

Down the hill, streaming along the road, you see a band of villagers fleeing the burning of Treb. You hurry to make your way down to them.

But as you cross a meadow to reach the road, you suddenly are struck by an arrow. You turn and draw your bow, but even as you do so you are struck by multiple arrows and fall. Your last vision is of a band of skeletal archers rushing towards you.

[Go to 23](#).

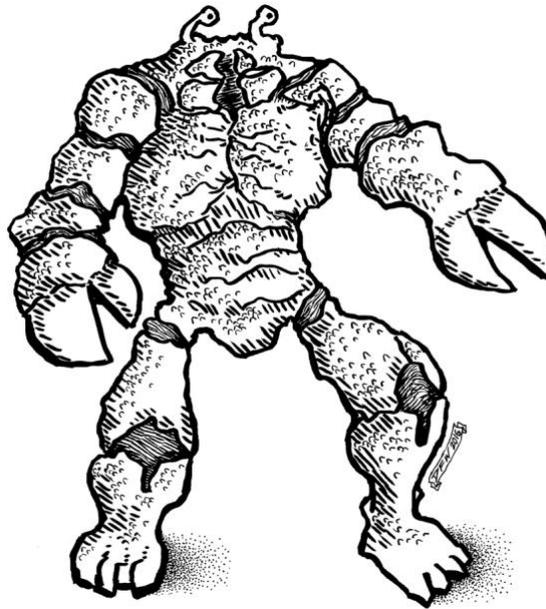
57

You pull Ayur up and out of the shaft, and he falls against you, holding you longer than is necessary. You peek out of the galley: you're not far from the entrance, and morning light is coming in. But you hear at least one guard moving, and others snoring.

Ayur pulls you back in. Soundlessly, he goes over to the butcher block. Next to it, in the cave wall, is a wooden flap. He pulls it back to reveal a steep shaft, the walls slick with grease. "The garbage goes out here, but I must warn you, it ends in a pen filled with hellhounds down the slope. If we survive the fall, we may have to fight our way out. But they will be easier to take than the guards. Help me up."

You lift him onto the table, and he enters the chute and slides out of sight. You can follow him down the chute ([go to 83](#)) or try to sneak past the guards ([go to 61](#)).

58



You continue along the shore for a long time. The light from across the pool grows even dimmer. Suddenly, crawling out of the sand along the deep pool is a crabman. It immediately scuttles toward you and attacks.

CRABMAN	STR 10*	DEX 13	WIS 6	HP 11	PNC 12+
---------	---------	--------	-------	-------	---------

The crabman hits on a 10 or less. On a 10, it clamps you with both pincers, and you take double its strength die as damage. If the crabman rolls a 12 or higher, and has taken damage, then it quickly buries itself in the sand and you lose track of it.

If you lose, [go to 37](#).

If you win, you can go back to the crossroads ([go to 50](#)), or you can continue along the lakeside ([go to 96](#)).

59

Master Wegyo gives you lessons on how to enchant arrows, spears, and swords, starting with your own items.

You are unable to get the spells to work at all on the iron swords, with limited success on the fire-burnt wood of spears, and complete success on the birch arrows.

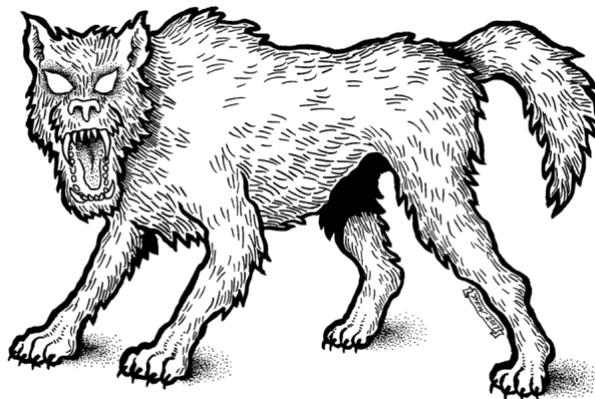
You are put to work assisting the fletcher, who is repairing and making new arrows. There is no time to make new bows.

After about a week of this work, refugees arrive from Treb. Their village had been attacked and destroyed by an undead army. Among the refugees is another apprentice wizard, who assists you.

With the arrival of the refugees, everyone begins spending their nights camping out in the hillfort rather than sleeping in their separate cottages.

[Go to 99](#).

60



You regain your composure from your tumble out of the chute and prepare to face the hellhound.

HELLHOUND	STR 11*	DEX 7	WIS 5	HP 7	PNC 15+
-----------	---------	-------	-------	------	---------

The hellhound hits on a 11 or less. On a 11, its fiery breath scorches you, and you take its strength die plus dexterity die as damage. If the hellhound rolls a 15 or higher, and has taken damage, it flees to a corner of the pen, far from the gate.

If you win, [go to 20](#). If you lose, [go to 81](#).

61

You are in a long corridor, leading down and left into the mountain. You see a bit of morning sunlight coming from the right, where the tunnel slopes up. You creep upward towards the sunlight and see at the end of the tunnel an exit from the cave. You hear the snores of guards coming from behind a hole in the wall, covered by rough cloth. One guard is pacing back and forth, then finally sits on the floor against the wall. You wait patiently until he is half asleep.

Tempted by the daylight, and a chance to finally escape these accursed caverns, you rush towards the guard.

He was awake, and he attacks first, shouting to his comrades.

5 GOBLIN WARRIORS	STR 10*	DEX 10	WIS 10	HP 6
GOBLIN MAGE	STR 8	DEX 10	WIS 12*	HP 5

On a 10, a goblin warrior cuts you deeply, and you take its high roll as damage instead of its strength die. Since you are outnumbered by them, these warriors won't panic and flee. The good news is the passage is narrow, and only one can face you at a time.

Each time you defeat one of the goblin warriors, the goblin mage tries to stun you. You take its wisdom die as damage, if it hits. Then the next warrior attacks.

If you defeat all but the goblin mage, it draws its sword and attacks. It hits on 8 or less and does its strength and wisdom dice as damage.

If you defeat all 6 goblins, [go to 55](#). If you lose, [go to 11](#).

62

Another zombie from another open coffin has risen to guard this room. Your master waves the small wand she had been using in her prison cell. While it is not very powerful, she uses it to cast a spell that confuses the zombie. The zombie begins wandering away.

Bending down, she examines the corpse of a zombie on the ground. She twists its hand off its arm and tucks it in her satchel. "Proof of our story," she says. "Now follow me."

She leads you back to the crossroads. From there, you are able to find your way out of the mountain.

At one point you hear hellhounds in the distance, perhaps tracking you both, but you make it down the mountain without being caught. You avoid the area near the cottage and head instead into the village. Finally, you are both feeling safe enough to begin talking, and in earnest you each relate your adventures.

You come to the hut of Presgwu, the village elder. She is working in the garden outside. She takes one look at you, with your outlandish equipment, and sits down amongst her vegetables in shock.

Your master explains what happened, and relates some of what happened to you, while you sit quietly. You learn for the first time what the lich queen wanted from your master: artifacts empowered with blood magic to help her control the living and to more rapidly take control of the newly dead.

Other villagers have started to gather and listen. Your master pulls out the hand of the zombie, to cries and mutters from the villagers.

"What can we do?" asks Presgwu.

"We will need to reinforce the old hill fort. The undead take little hurt from regular iron weapons. I will work with the smith to enchant as many weapons as I can. I will work with the fletcher to enchant as many arrows as I can. You must send out messengers to alert the neighboring villages. The women and men and children of Weixel and Treb must be warned. The undead may not attack tonight, they may not attack next week, but when they do, we will need a place to rally to and defend."

A long discussion ensues among the villagers until a consensus is reached to follow Master Wegyo's advice.

As is the way of your village, each person volunteers to serve in the role that they wish. But first you have the opportunity to fully rest and heal (restore your hit points to your starting health).

Wegyo gives you a magic longbow. The longbow, with the runes FEVK inscribed on it, can be used prior to melee combat: it requires a dexterity check, and hits on the higher of the dexterity and wisdom dice (DEX | WIS). (Record this on your inventory.)

She also goes over all of your items. Record on your inventory that all of your weapons are now

magical; they now do full damage to the undead. The master spends time studying the undead wizard's spellbook, but when you ask her if she has found any clues on how to defeat the lich queen she only shakes her head and goes back to reading it.

If wisdom is your highest trait, you can help Master Wegyo enchant weapons ([go to 59](#)). If you wish to help stock the hill fort, [go to 31](#). If you wish to scout the approaches from the Blood-Red Mountain, [go to 75](#).

63

You approach the guard. She stares at you, but says nothing. (You remember a lesson from Master Wegyo: all kobolds, dragons, medusae, and naga are female.)

If you have the item FEVK, [go to 38](#), otherwise [go to 9](#).

64

You are back in prison, in the narrow niche, with Ayur once again tending to your wounds. You exercise and spar, with Ayur giving you tips.

You ask Ayur if he has heard any news of your master. "No, the goblins and the undead have little to do with one another, outside of the occasional barter for prisoners. The lich queen sometimes needs sorcerers for blood magic: magic that only the living can do. The goblin mages aren't very powerful, but sometimes they can surprise and ambush a human mage."

Once you have fully healed (restore your hit points to their original value), you are marched back into the arena and all your items are returned to you. [Go to 43](#).

65

You have fallen into a dark, sandy pit. The sand has broken your fall. You are in absolute darkness. You hear the sound of dripping water and crawl towards its source: a trickle of water cascades down a wall and is absorbed into the wet sand here. You drink as much as you can, holding your face to the stone wall.

You crawl back to the dry sand, tend your wounds, and rest for days until you have fully recovered (update your hit points to your starting health).

With no light, you orient yourself with the dripping water behind you and carefully and methodically crawl and explore. At last, when you've despaired of every seeing light again, you see yellow light from eldritch lamps in the distance.

You are able to stand and head towards a tunnel. [Go to 70](#).

66

The corridor narrows. Designed so that the goblins can easily defend their underground kingdom from any outsiders seeking a way in, the tight corridor makes it easy for you to defend yourself from the goblins, one at a time. The bad news is there are six of them.

5 GOBLIN WARRIORS	STR 10*	DEX 10	WIS 10	HP 6
GOBLIN MAGE	STR 8	DEX 10	WIS 12*	HP 5

On a 10, the goblin warrior cuts you deeply, and you take its high roll as damage instead of its strength die. Since you are outnumbered by them, these warriors won't panic and flee.

Each time you defeat one of the goblin warriors, the goblin mage tries to stun you. You take its wisdom die as damage, if it hits. Then the next warrior attacks.

If you defeat all but the goblin mage, it draws its sword and attacks. It hits on 8 or less and does its strength and wisdom dice as damage.

If you defeat all 6 goblins, [go to 55](#). If you wish to flee, [go to 33](#). If you lose, [go to 11](#).

67

You follow the broad tunnel further down. The eldritch lamps have shifted from green to red. Suddenly, the tunnel widens into a huge, high-ceilinged chamber. The ceiling is full of blood-red rubies. They glow with the same eldritch light, which brightens and darkens in a regular pulse.

The strange light had drawn your eye, but - looking down - you see that the chamber is full of skeletons. Every one of them is lying down on the rock, motionless.

Well, a sudden motion catches your eye: a skeletal wizard has cast a blue burst of lightning at you. It strikes you full on, and you pass out.

[Go to 82](#).



You hurry down a long passageway, lit by eldritch lamps, with many doors off of it, ignoring each until the tunnel you are in merges with another. Suddenly you are face to face with a goblin mage, heading towards you.

GOBLIN MAGE	STR 9	DEX 9	WIS 12*	HP 8	PNC 13+
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The mage hits on a 12 or less and does damage on the wisdom die. On a 12, the mage mesmerizes you and takes a second attack (unless you have item ZKEL). If the mage rolls a 13 or higher, and has taken damage, it flees up the corridor you just came down.

If you lose, [go to 33](#).

If you defeat it, you take from the goblin mage its staff. The staff has the runes MAKHV inscribed on them; the staff requires a wisdom check and does damage on the wisdom die. Whenever a monster flees in panic, if you stun it with your staff, you may steal any items from it.

If you win, [go to 50](#).

69



A gnoll strides confidently out of the gate and into the arena. After it draws its longsword, you see that fresh blood drips from the blade.

GNOLL	STR 9*	DEX 11	WIS 9	HP 11	PNC 15+
-------	--------	--------	-------	-------	---------

The gnoll hits on a 9 or less and does damage on the strength die. On a 9, it gouges you with its claws, and you take the higher of its strength or dexterity dice as damage. If the gnoll rolls a 15 or higher, and has taken damage, it tries to run back out the way it came, to cries and yells from the goblins and bugbears, but guards push it back towards you to finish off.

If you lose, [go to 64](#).

If you slay the gnoll, its shield, with the runes FELTV inscribed on it, can be used to reduce a damage die of 4 to 2. Its longsword, with the runes AK, requires a strength check and does strength plus dexterity dice as damage. (Record this on your inventory.) If you win, [go to 79](#).

70

You are in a long, low tunnel, so narrow that you often have to duck. Eldritch lamps shine yellow. They are placed much further apart than in other corridors, and the areas in between them are dim and hard to walk through. Eventually you come to a part of the tunnel that is completely dark. The corridor turns, and you sense many openings. You walk forward slowly.

If you have both the items KELT and ZKEL, [go to 27](#). Otherwise, to continue forward, [go to 36](#), or back up slowly and [go to 92](#).

71

You are sent back to your cell. Ayur finds you. "Congratulations on your victories," he says, in the most solemn congratulations you have ever heard. "I must warn you that your sternest test is still ahead. You are being saved to do combat during the celebrations of the first full year's reign of the bugbear king." Though you press him, he claims not to know who or what your opponent will be.

Many tedious days pass, during which you have the time to fully recover. Restore your hit points to your starting health.

[Go to 26.](#)

72

Perhaps you will be able to use the opportunity to escape and to warn your village before they attack. "Yes, your majesty, I will join you," you say.

The goblins and orcs in the area laugh and holler. Some pelt you with rocks, and some throw garbage at you. Their aim is good.

"Guard, strike him for his insolence," the bugbear king says.

Roll three die and take the low die roll as damage. If your health is down to zero, [go to 64.](#)

Otherwise [go to 10.](#)

73

"Possibly," your master says. "Now hurry!"

You go back down the passageway to the workshop.

[Go to 4.](#)

74

Make a dexterity check, then if you pass that take a strength check. If you pass both, you pull Ayur up successfully. If you fail either, take the low die as damage. If your health falls below 1, [go to 11.](#)

You can try again until you succeed ([go to 57](#)), or you can leave Ayur behind ([go to 61](#)).

75

The brooding peak of the Blood-Red Mountain rises menacingly above the trees. You have heard that the undead have been seen near the village of Treb, so you head out in that direction, camping each night in the woods.

One evening, as you are preparing to camp for the night, you see a glimmer of white in the trees. A skeleton charges towards you, readying a battle axe as it advances.

SKELETAL WARRIOR	STR 9*	DEX 6	WIS 4	HP 14	PNC 14+
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The skeleton hits on a 9 or less. On a 9, the skeleton strikes you squarely with the axe and you will take damage on its highest roll, rather than just strength. If the skeleton rolls a 14 or higher, and has taken damage, it retreats back into the woods.

If you lose, [go to 23](#).

If you win, [go to 98](#).

76

You continue along the edge of the pool. The sand has given way to rocks. The dim light from the outside world is almost gone, but it reflects off something, and you find stuck in the rocks a large trident. You pick it up, and magic surges through it.

The trident has the fishfolk runes III on its staff. In battle, this magic weapon hits on your dexterity check, but does a wisdom die of damage. (Record this on your inventory.)

You take a drink from the pool. The water is brackish but refreshing. Restore up to 6 damage (but you can't exceed your original hit points).

[Go to 27](#).

77

You passed over and down the mountain, without event. A week of hiking along a ridge of hills was what it took to reach Blackhill. Ayur, who had loved every moment of the hard trip, and had proven to be an excellent woodsman and hunter, grew more and more nervous the final day. It was shortly before sunset when you made it to the village, perhaps twice the size of Woodside. Ayur led the way to the village's one inn and tavern, the White Hart.

He walked in, and stopped suddenly, temporarily overwhelmed to be among so many humans.

A crowd of several dozen was seated along two long tables. They fell silent at the sight of Ayur.

“Father, father, is that you?!” A matron rose, and crossed to him, trembling.

“Thuya, Thuya!” He cried. “I daren’t hoped you had escaped.” They hugged, and there was much laughing and crying. Ayur met his son-in-law for the first time, and his three grandchildren. You stood by awkwardly.

Finally, Ayur said, “Friends, friends, I am forgetting my manners. Here is my hero, who saved me from under the Blood-Red Mountain.” He then told of your victories in the arena and your daring escape, and how you helped him escape as well.

You were given more than enough to eat, and more than enough to drink, that night and many others, as word spread throughout the village and the neighboring farms.

The villagers gave you land and helped you raise a cottage and start a farm. In the years to come, you led the local militia in defense against goblin raiders, married and raised a family, and were celebrated for all your days, and those were extraordinarily long.

78

The gauntlet you are wearing has been pulsating red in time with the lich queen’s attacks. The lich queen had tried to ignore it throughout the combat, but now as she lays dying she stares at it in horror.

What is death to her anyway? Won’t she eventually reanimate, so long as her phylactery is safe elsewhere?

You follow her gaze.

You look at the ruby in the gauntlet again. Could this be her phylactery?!

You rip it from your wrist in disgust and stab it with your weapon. To your surprise, rather than deflect the blow, the ruby shatters into pieces.

You hear a hideous sigh, and look back at the lich queen, who is gone.

In her place is a collapsed pile of bones akimbo, as if from an ancient grave, long since disturbed by thieves and animals.

Without hesitation you reach into the charnel remains, and you take the queen’s crown from among the bones, so that you will be able to prove to all that her reign is over.

You leave the chamber and begin the long journey back to Woodside. Undeath's reign is done, and new life will fill the hills and vales. Word of what you accomplished here will spread and become the subject of ballads sung all around the Blood-Red Mountain. You will live on, as long as humans have voices to lift in song.

79



Now the iron gate of the arena opens to reveal a spider chimera, with the head, arms and torso of a woman, and the eight legs of a spider. She screams and advances, each arm wielding a spiked sword.

SPIDER CHIMERA	STR 11	DEX 14*	WIS 10	HP 16	PNC 14+
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The spider chimera hits on a 14 or less. On a 14, it pierces you with both of its swords, and you take double its dexterity die as damage. If the chimera rolls a 14 or higher, and has taken damage, it scuttles towards the guards, knocking one aside with its great legs and rushing into the prison.

If you slay the chimera, you can take one of its double-edged swords, with the runes ZKIYEN inscribed. These blades use a dexterity check and do strength plus dexterity dice as damage. (Record this on your inventory.)

If you lose, [go to 64](#). If you win, [go to 71](#).

80

With the sack of Treb completed, pairs of skeletons are grabbing the corpses of those they slew and bearing them away. In the darkness you can see the red glow of the lich queen's staff as she begins to order her troops.

You stay in the woods in the hills, stopping occasionally when a warrior or two appears, working their way back to the main host.

You lose sight of the queen but are able to keep an eye on the stragglers from a safe distance.

You are now working your way up the mountain. You are exhausted and stop and rest where the tree line ends. There is little cover further up the mountain, and the sun is dawning.

From your vantage point at the edge of the forest, you see the last of the army march into a tunnel into the Blood-Red Mountain.

Perhaps an hour has passed since the last skeleton disappeared into the mountain. With a heavy heart, you climb up to the tunnel, and enter into it.

[Go to 12.](#)

81

You feel the hellhound's jaws clamp down on your neck, and you bleed to death in moments.

You end up as food for the entire pack, when they return.

82

You wake with a start. What a strange dream. You had defeated the skeletal wizard, but it had reanimated itself.

You look down - you lift your arm and see a skeleton's hand move towards your face.

It wasn't a dream at all - the wizard is back!

You jump up, but your gait is unsteady, and you feel light on your feet. Your neck pivots down, and you take into view your torso and legs: you realize that your entire body is now a skeleton!

You have been cursed to join the undead army.

83

The chute is slick with grease, and you can't slow your speed. You tumble out of the chute and into the daylight. You're in an animal pen down the mountainside. Ayur is waving his crutch, holding off a hellhound.

Roll a dexterity check, and take your dexterity die as damage if you fail it. If your health is 0, [go to 24](#), otherwise [go to 60](#).

84



You try the different keys you took from the mage. Only one fits. You turn it, and the door unlocks and opens towards you. You stare in awe. This tomb workshop contains the lich queen. She wears a crown over a hooded robe and holds a rod of power, with a giant glowing ruby that begins casting a blood-red glare over the entire room.

LICH QUEEN	STR 8	DEX 8	WIS 16*	HP 28	PNC 19+
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The lich queen hits on a 16 or less. On a 16, she strikes you with a fireball, and you take damage on the dexterity die as well as the wisdom die.

If you have a magic weapon, or your wisdom is your highest attribute, your weapons work as normal, otherwise only the lowest die causes damage.

If you lose the battle, [go to 34](#).

If you win, [go to 78](#).

85

You are in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike. Make a wisdom check. If you fail, [go to 95](#), else [go to 92](#).

86



A quick glance reveals a half-snake, half-woman creature, uncurling herself from the floor. Her hair itself is a nest of writhing snakes. She turns to look at you, but you quickly lower your eyes.

MEDUSA	STR 12	DEX 12*	WIS 12	HP 27	PNC 17+
--------	--------	---------	--------	-------	---------

In melee combat, she hits on a dexterity check, doing the higher of strength or dexterity in damage. If she hits on 12, she strikes you with both scimitars, and does both strength and dexterity in damage.

Unless you have the item ZKEL, you fight at a disadvantage, as you must avoid making eye contact: instead of resolving attacks as normal, regardless of your weapons, resolve every attack as a wisdom check, and do damage only on the wisdom die.

If you lose, [go to 14](#).

If you win, you must take both scimitars. Each requires a dexterity check and does damage on the higher of the strength or dexterity die (STR | DEX). Each has the runes ZVKYV carved on it. On its gauntlet, inscribed with the runes KELT, you find mounted a small ruby, which pulses with a ruddy light; this gauntlet reduces a damage die of 3 to 1. You also find a healing potion, in a bottle marked with the runes FVTI. Add 6 to your hit points now, or save the potion for later use. (Record these on your inventory.) [Go to 70](#).

87

You wait patiently and finally notice that the skeleton has an arrow drawn tight to its bow.

The skeleton is still as death.

Do you want to cross the bridge ([go to 17](#)) or return to the crossroads ([go to 50](#))?

88

You take out the dagger that Ayur gave you; it glows with an umber-red light.

You look intently at it as you walk past each room. It glows as you pass the empty workshop, glows much brighter as you pass the second door, drops in intensity as you pass the third door but continues to glow, then glows brighter again from the last door. As you walk back, you see that the second door is where it glows the brightest.

[Go to 39](#).

89

The crowd goes wild, and the bugbear king roars his approval. He stands, and the goblins scream even louder. "Puny human, you fight like a bugbear! Will you join us, and lead us on our next raid among your kind?"

If you say yes, [go to 72](#). If you no, [go to 51](#).

90

Ayur led you up the mountain and around, until you came to a tiny stream amid a small swamp, in a basin formed by rockfall. "I don't see a tunnel," you said.

"I've never been here," said Ayur, "but I think it is there, under that overhang." You saw a shadowy opening, more an animal's burrow than a proper cavern. "You'll have to crawl through it. The fishfolk live near there in a large pool, of which this is just overflow. Don't go in the water! Go far enough and you'll come to a crossroads, and past that a fork. Take a left and you'll come to the kobolds and the lair of their master, the dragon. If you take the right, you'll go back into the goblin caves. Before that, over a bridge over a pit, you'll find the land of the undead."

"Where do you think my master would be?"

"You'll find the crypt and the catacombs easily enough. Getting out - well, that's another thing altogether. If you succeed, please come to Blackhill, along the ridge of the Blackdown Hills. I will make sure you get the hero's welcome you deserve."

He presses into your hand a double-edged dagger, the runes NEKLV on it. "I grabbed this as I escaped. It will glow red when the undead are near." (The dirk is magic and will do damage on the wisdom die. Record this on your inventory.)

You thank Ayur, and gingerly step through the mud along the edge of the swamp, until you come to the overhang. It's too low for you to stand up straight. With a last look back, and a last wave to Ayur, you bend down and crawl back under the blood-red mountain.

In time, the crawl widens into tunnel, with a large dark pool stretching out to the right. On the far side of the pool is a broad but short opening, an overhang of the mountain, letting in daylight.

Occasionally there are ripples on the water, and movement underneath, and you try to stay as far to the left as possible.

At last, the tunnel widens into a crossroads. You can go right, along the lakeshore ([go to 8](#)), or straight along a sloping upward cavern ([go to 40](#)), or left and downwards ([go to 35](#)). You notice an old rope ladder, rotting, leading up into the darkness ([go to 25](#)).

91

You are in the catacombs, a collection of narrow passages, each with closed doors off them. The eldritch lamps here cast an eerie green glow.

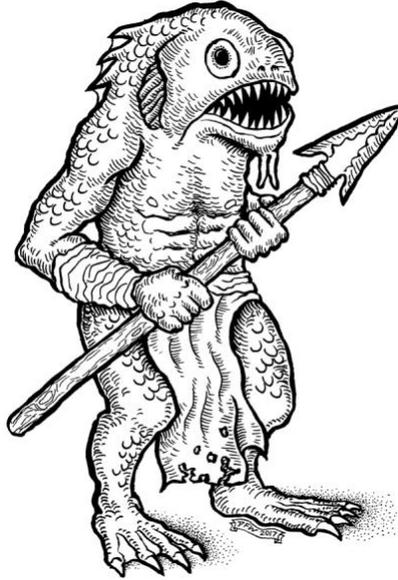
The longest passage ends in a closed door ([go to 45](#)). A broad ascending passage, nearly as long as the first, has four doors on the left wall ([go to 39](#)). The broad stairway leads back up to the row of zombie coffins ([go to 27](#)).

92

This chamber contains a wide variety of military statues. You see statues of dwarves, of women and men, of goblins and bugbears, of kobolds and lizardman. Each is in a fighting pose.

To go through this room to the next, [go to 86](#). Turning around you see that two tunnels have come together. To go back, into a narrow tunnel, [go to 52](#); to go back into a broader tunnel, [go to 70](#).

93



Your combatant in the arena is a member of the fishfolk, wearing a loincloth and wielding a spear. You have only your dagger.

FISHFOLK	STR 7*	DEX 10	WIS 8	HP 11	PNC 8+
----------	--------	--------	-------	-------	--------

The fishfolk hits on a 7 or less. On a 7, it bites into you, and you take its strength die plus two additional points as damage. If the fishfolk rolls an 8 or higher, and has taken damage, it tries to flee, but the spears of the guards push it back towards you, and you get a free additional attack roll.

If you lose, [go to 64](#).

If you slay the fishfolk, its spear, with the rune I inscribed on it, becomes yours. It does a strength die as damage. (Record this on your inventory.) Like any mixed-use weapon, it can be thrown at an enemy before combat or at a fleeing combatant.

If you win, [go to 43](#).

94

The door is locked. You beat on it with your hands, kick it, strike it with the kobold's scimitar, but nothing happens.

You wait for a while then finally retrace your steps, cross the tunnel, and keep going. [Go to 70](#).

95

You are in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike. Make a wisdom check. If you fail, [go to 52](#), else [go to 85](#).

96

You continue to trudge along the lakeside. Here the beach has curved back around, almost doubling back, and little light comes in. That makes it even slower going, with hard work walking through the sand and along the rocky shore, which is getting rockier.

Roll a health check. If you roll your health or under, you take damage on the highest die. You have fallen into a sinkhole and cut yourself severely on the sharp rocks at the bottom of it.

If you want to continue along the lakeside, [go to 76](#), otherwise you can go back to the crossroads ([go to 50](#)).

97

The dragon was resplendent, its scales glistening red. You scan its underbelly for any weakness, any vulnerability, but its armor is perfect, no flaw to be found.

"What gift do you bring me, child of bears?" (Dragon beliefs are too convoluted to go into here.)

If you give it item EKVV, I, FELTV, or NVF, [go to 21](#).

If you give it item AK, FALTA, III, KVI, KVLVN, MAKHV, MEL, KHVEL, NEKLV, or ZVKYV, [go to 15](#).

98

You see flames in the distance and giving up on the idea of your camp you move cautiously through the woods.

Near the peak of a hill, you look down into a valley where you see fields and cottages on fire. The village of Treb burns.

Silhouetted against the flames you see a group of villagers fighting hand-to-hand with the

skeletons. One bears a red torch - no, as you look at it more closely, you see that it is a red ruby, shining on top of a wizard's staff. This must be the lich queen herself, and she shoots fireballs from the ruby. Having ignited the countryside, now she casts her fireballs at the humans opposing her. One by one they catch flame, until the rest flee.

You realize that the fate that has just befallen Treb will soon burn a path to Woodside.

Do you hurry back to Woodside ([go to 56](#)) or will you scout the undead army ([go to 80](#))?

99



The hillfort was built by an ancient people, the same people presumably who built the great dolmens and henges that can be found among the valleys of the Blood-Red Mountain. The walls were great earth embankments, and the only entrance came along a narrow causeway. Any enemy approaching that way would fall victim to archers in the fort.

One night, shortly after dusk, you hear hunting horns sound in the distance, raising the alarm. You see villagers who had stubbornly stayed in their cottages running up the slopes. They come clattering across the narrow wooden planks that connect the rampart to the ramp.

In the distance, you see flames grow. The army has set fire to many of the cottages in the village. And then to the fields.

In the shadows around the foot of the hill, reflecting the moonlight, you see the bodies of the villagers who did not escape in time. Skeleton warriors strut into view, on ungainly legs. A few

panicked arrows fly and fall short, then a seasoned veteran yells at her young charges to hold fire until the enemy is in range.

Coming out of the darkness is a blood-red light. As it gets closer, you see that is a giant glowing ruby, atop a rod of power. In its glare you see that it is held by the lich queen. She wears a crown over a hooded robe and advances calmly towards the hill.

Closer, closer, but still out of range of the archers.

Suddenly a lightning bolt shoots down from the hill and strikes the lich with a thunderclap. It falls to the ground. The villagers cheer and shout. Standing not far from her, you see that Master Wegyo has unleashed a powerful attack.

The lich stirs, and rises, and lightning again strikes it. But this time it redirects the lightning into the woods, where it strikes a giant pine, catching it on fire. The lich sends a fireball arching up to the hillfort. It strikes Master Wegyo squarely, and she is consumed by fire.

Yelling hoarsely, you rush to try to extinguish the flames, but they are too fierce, and you can do nothing but watch her burn.

A great sigh rises from the villagers. Suddenly a young man pulls himself on to the rampart - and casts himself down. You look and see that the lich had raised her rod and drawn him to her. One man after another jumps screaming to his death, drawn to the lich.

“Hide your eyes! Hide your eyes!” you cry.

At last you hear only sobbing. No more screams.

You look down to the army, taking care not to look toward the red light of the lich queen. Some of the skeletons are going to the bodies of those who fell to their death and dragging the bodies with them into the woods.

If you have item ZKEL, [go to 30](#). Otherwise [go to 5](#).