

To New Roads



Approximate Playtime
50 - 80 Minutes

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE!

You will notice rules sidebars (such as this one) throughout this quest book. These sidebars are intended to be used by first time players to more easily learn the rules. Each sidebar is placed in an entry where you are first encountering a new rule.

You can read more about any of the rules in these sidebars by reading their respective entries in the rules glossary in the rulebook. When searching for a specific rule, you will find it most easily in the rules glossary.

You slump down on the wooden bench, stretching your legs. You have been traveling for nearly a week now toward a small village called Dragonholt. Your journey is at the request of Celyse, a former adventuring companion and friend, who has since found her calling as a tutor to the children of Countess Regina Fairfax, Lady of Dragonholt. You take a moment to reread the letter.

➔ *Read the letter from Celyse.*

You are uncertain why Celyse has summoned you to Dragonholt. Her letter is strange, speaking only of a vague threat that requires your assistance. And although you are sure the letter was written in her hand, the message contains several details that you find uncharacteristic of the elf you adventured with in the past. You had never known Celyse to drink dwarven wine, and you would swear she always wore a green cloak. It is not unthinkable that her preferences have changed over the years, but something about the way the message is written makes you feel there is more to the letter than is obvious.

You have always known Celyse to be excessively proper in her speaking. She must have been in a panic while writing to have produced so many spelling errors. Even more alarming is the brief note on the back of the letter. You had not received any word from Celyse before this one. Could she have sent another letter that was intercepted as she had feared?

Regardless of the vagueness of her request, you owe Celyse at least this much after that business in Nerekhall. As the tutor in the employ of a countess, she may be in a position to reward you handsomely for any assistance you can render.

"Excuse me, is this road the fastest way to Dragonholt?"

You look up from the letter to see Mariam, a gnome merchant you've been traveling with, talking to another traveler and pointing down a path toward a forbidding-looking forest.

"Aye. If you're going to Dragonholt, you'll have to go through Eventide Forest. Ain't no way around it. About a day's travel straight through." Mariam thanks the traveler, and he continues on his way in the direction opposite the forest.

You fold the letter and stow it away before standing. It won't do to rest for too long. You sling your baggage over your shoulder and prepare to resume your travels.

Mariam turns to face you. "Well, what are we waiting for? If that's the road to Dragonholt, let's be off." Mariam has been traveling with you for some three days now. Like you, she is traveling to Dragonholt, and, as she put it when you met, "the more the merrier."

"We should proceed with caution," calls Braxton from behind you. The orc woman hefts Mariam's bag off the ground where the gnome had left it and drops it into Mariam's open arms. "Rumor has it there are bandits who make camp in those woods. We should watch our backs as we pass through."

Since meeting Mariam and the orc knight-errant, you have found Braxton to be the more cautious of the pair by a wide margin. As far as you can tell, Mariam has hired Braxton for protection, but at times the orc seems to dote on the gnome more than a bodyguard would.

You nod in agreement at Braxton's comment. With a last fleeting glance at the crossroads signpost, you follow after the energetic gnome, who has already started off toward Eventide Forest.

"Let's make some headway before we lose the light."

➔ *Read entry 2883.*

"What else have you heard about these bandits?"

➔ *Read entry 7773.*

"Stick close, Mariam. It's dangerous to get separated."

➔ *Read entry 4577.*

MAKING DECISIONS

During your adventures, you will decide how you react to situations and how you act in general. Options (seen above) are easy to identify by their white text on a dark red background. When you reach a decision point—a set of two or more options—you will read each of the available options and choose the one you prefer. You will then resolve the effects found below that option. Each effect is preceded by an arrow.

For example, if you choose the "What else have you heard about these bandits?" option, you are instructed to read entry 7773. To resolve this effect, you will turn to the page that contains the specified entry and read that entry in its entirety. That entry, in turn, will contain another decision point or have further effects for you to resolve.

MULTIPLE PLAYERS

If you are playing alone (one player), you will make all decisions throughout your adventures. However, if you are playing with two or more players, you will each take turns making decisions.

Each player has an activation token, and you exhaust your token (turning it facedown) when you make a decision. Once you have made a decision and your token has been exhausted, you are unable to make another decision until your activation token is refreshed.

When you reach a decision point, one of the players whose activation token has not been exhausted will make that decision. Determine who will make each decision as a group. When all players have exhausted their activation tokens, all players refresh their activation tokens (turning them faceup).

When you make a decision, you become the active player. The word "you" in an effect refers to you, the active player. The words "you each" refer to each hero individually.

1096

Mariam lets out a long yawn, and you second the motion. As you nestle into your bedroll for the night, Braxton speaks up. "Best we don't all sleep at once. I'll take the first watch. Can I count on you to take the second?" You nod your agreement and drift off to sleep.

- ➔ *One of you must volunteer to keep watch.*
Refresh your activation token if you are keeping watch.
The rest of you exhaust your activation token.
- ➔ *Two time passes.*
- ➔ *You each recover two stamina.*

RECOVERING STAMINA

Some effects, like the one above, cause you to recover stamina. To do so, you increase your current stamina by the amount specified by the effect (in this case, one). Your current stamina cannot exceed your maximum stamina. Remember to record your current stamina on your character sheet.

You rouse from your slumber to gentle coaxing from Braxton. "Your turn at watch," she says quietly. You rub your eyes for a moment and sit up, taking a drink from your canteen to wake yourself.

You glance around camp at your fellow travelers. Braxton prepares her bedroll, lies down, and is quickly asleep. Mariam stirs for a moment, possibly awakened by the brief commotion, and rolls to her other side. A gentle silence takes hold of the clearing.

Your journey to Dragonholt has been a long one, but now you are no more than a half day's travel from your destination. The crack of burning branches from the campfire keeps you company as you keep watch. The moon is beginning to set, and you know the light of a new dawn will soon grace the forest clearing where you have made camp.

Just then, you hear a rustling in the thick brush on one side of the camp and recall Braxton's warnings about bandits.

Watch for further movement or signs of danger.

- ➔ *Read entry 3123.*

Arm yourself and take a closer look.

This option does not exhaust your activation token.

- ➔ *Read entry 1654.*

Wake your fellow traveling companions.

- ➔ *Read entry 8267.*

1099

The bandit raises his mace and swings it at your head from the right. You block the blow easily, but it was a ruse, and his hook bites into your side from the left.

- ➔ *You lose five stamina.*

Trapping his hook-arm against your body, you hurl the bandit off balance despite your pain. A quick blow from your weapon sends him screaming to the ground, and you move on.

- ➔ *Read entry 2399.*

1103

You see that the orc bandit is moving toward the great oak tree in the center of the clearing while nocking an arrow. You duck around the oak from the other direction and soon find yourself behind the bandit.

If story point N3 is marked...

- ➔ *Mark story points H1 and K6.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Mark story point O2 and W3.*

The orc raises her bow and draws one arm back until the fletching on her arrow is brushing her cheek. You step up behind her and bring a rock down on the back of her head, watching her boneless form slump back against the great oak's trunk.

- ➔ *Read entry 9513.*

1253

Without skipping a beat, you seize an opportunity. You flourish the captured arrow and shoot the bandit a fiendish grin. A look of terror overcomes the orc's face. When you wind up as if you are about to throw the arrow back at the bandit, she panics, dropping her bow to the ground and fleeing into the forest.

- ➔ *Read entry 9513.*

1340

As you speak with your traveling companions, small trees begin to dot the terrain around you. Tall grass gives way to brush, and you soon find yourself at the edge of the forest.

- ➔ *Time passes.*

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Throughout your adventures, you will track the passage of time on the tracking sheet for the current quest. Each unit of time represents an abstract amount of time that could be anything from a few minutes to multiple hours, depending on the current quest.

When time passes, mark one box of time with a check mark or an X. Some effects in future entries will reference how much time has passed or if a specific amount of time has passed.

As you walk, you take the chance to become better acquainted with your fellow travelers.

Ask Mariam what she plans to do in Dragonholt.

This option does not exhaust your activation token.

- ➔ *Mark story point E7.*
- ➔ *Read entry 3579.*

Ask Braxton what she plans to do in Dragonholt.

This option does not exhaust your activation token.

- ➔ *Mark story point N3*
- ➔ *Read entry 4945.*

1513

You steel yourself and wait until the last moment before the spearpoint would impact your chest. In an instant, you fall back a step and grab the spear's neck.

If you have brawling (skill) or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 8563.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4384.*

1521

"Have you not met many?" she asks. "Well, they're not all like me. My people celebrate independence and strength. I hear that orc clans rule in the Broken Plains, but here in Terrinoth we mostly live in small bands, traveling from barony to barony. The humans don't like it when large numbers of orcs settle anywhere for long, so we have to keep moving."

Braxton looks down to where her hand is wrapped around her sword hilt. "The humans are happy to pay us to fight for them, though. You can find my people serving as mercenaries, even gladiators, all throughout Terrinoth." She takes her hand from her sword.

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 1096.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3859.*

1654

You grab your weapon and slip out of the camp, circling around toward where you heard the sound. As your eyes adjust to the darkness, you move silently from tree to tree and soon find yourself behind a small group of rough-looking people, lurking in the bushes and watching your camp. Bandits!

➔ *Mark story point X1.*

There are three bandits directly in front of you, two men and a woman in torn and stained clothing and scraps of leather armor. The woman holds a strung bow across her knees as she crouches, while one of the men has a spear and the other a long knife in his hand.

"Wasn't someone on watch by the fire?" asks one of the men.

"I don't see anyone there now," says the woman.

"Quiet!" says the other man. "Wait for the signal."

They clearly haven't noticed you. Just as clearly, they're intending to attack your traveling companions.

Shout a warning to your traveling companions.

➔ *Read entry 9943.*

Draw your weapon and engage the bandits.

➔ *Read entry 7686.*

Sneak up on the bandits and ambush them.

Requires stealth (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8408.*

1902

You tell Mariam that Dragonholt used to have a successful apothecary shop, one that was well known in the area.

"Yes!" says Mariam. "Aunt Sapphie told me! She says that the shop is standing vacant, so I should be able to buy it cheap. Who knows, maybe the last apothecary left some recipes or something interesting behind." Mariam claps her hands, evidently delighted at her stroke of good luck.

You almost don't want to tell her what happened to the last apothecary to work in Dragonholt, but you know you must tell her about the man's grisly fate. Mariam does not seem quite as distressed as you might have thought she would be.

"That's interesting," she says. "I wonder why Aunt Sapphie never told me that. Oh well, it's not as if I'm going to be doing anything that foolhardy once I take the place over, and I'm sure all that blood got washed out by now."

➔ *Mark story points K6 and M3.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 7094.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

1938

You grab up a burning brand from the campfire, slinging it into the bandit's face. He howls, staggering back, and you rush in shoulder-first to send him sprawling to the ground. You stomp your foot on the hand holding the knife, then kick the blade away into the shadows when it drops from his crooked fingers.

Groaning and clutching at his burned face, the bandit begins crawling for the trees. It's not until you turn your attention elsewhere that you notice you've burned your hand.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 2004.*

1942

You compliment Mariam's clothes and make a few astute comments as to the skill with which they were made. The cape in particular seems like it is both tightly woven and brilliantly hemmed.

"You like it?" asks Mariam. "Aunt Sapphie made it specially for me. It keeps the sun off and the rain, and I think it looks just dashing." She holds her cape out in her arms and makes a few swooshing motions, letting the fabric billow around her.

➔ *Mark story points D4 and M3.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 7094.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

1984

Braxton listens to your tales of your exploits politely, nodding at the appropriate points and asking a handful of clarifying questions. "I can tell you're quite accomplished," she says. "Mariam and I are lucky to be traveling with you."

You get the distinct impression that she is humoring you.

➔ *Mark story points S2 and W3.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 4389.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

2004

Your companions are still locked in combat with the bandits, who swarm around the edges of the light provided by your campfire.

Screaming incoherently, a scarred bandit rushes at you. In one hand, he brandishes a studded, iron mace. The other arm ends in a steel hook, its metal glinting in the firelight.

Rush forward to engage the bandit.

➔ *Read entry 7296.*

Brace yourself to receive the charge.

Requires military (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8310.*

Flee and attack at range.

Requires arcana (skill), archery (skill), or thievery (skill).

This option does not exhaust your activation token.

➔ *Read entry 3568.*

Protect yourself with an alchemical mixture.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 4340.*

2062

"I haven't seen them in years," she says. "My brothers were not happy about me 'abandoning' them to take service with Lord Kahler. But to be honest, I had to get away. After our father died, my brothers became more and more domineering. They wouldn't let my mother and me do anything without their permission. I was going on long hunting trips just to avoid them. It was on one of those trips that I met Lord Kahler." She glances up at the forest canopy, as if to see her brothers there.

"It's funny, but now that I'm grown, and a knight, I miss them. I'd like to see them again, as equals."

"I'd like to meet them, too," calls Mariam. "Maybe break all their kneecaps."

"Mariam doesn't like my brothers," explains Braxton. "Even though she doesn't know anything about them."

"They were awful to you!" says Mariam. "That's all I need to know."

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 1096.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3859.*

2091

You draw and loose as quickly as you can. The arrow catches the bandit in the leg, sending him tumbling to the ground and rolling to a halt not three paces from you. As he struggles to stand, you fire one more time then turn your attention elsewhere.

➔ *Read entry 2399.*

2172

You gaze up at the stars, walking a slow circle around the great tree in the clearing's center to get a better view. You take your bearings from the constellations and find Latariana's Star. You are now confident you know which way to go to reach Dragonholt.

➔ *Mark story point L1.*

As you make your way back to the campfire, you feel something small strike the top of your head. It's a small wooden statuette. You look up at the branches of the great oak and notice a number of small pages and other trinkets tied to branches or resting on tree limbs.

➔ *You gain the wooden trinket (item B).*

ITEMS

Some effects cause you to gain items. To gain an item, record the item's name on your character sheet, then search the item deck for the item card with the matching identifier (shown in parentheses above). Keep the item card faceup with your character sheet.

For instance, to resolve the effect above, record "wooden trinket" on your character sheet. Then search the item card deck for the item card with "B" printed on its back and place that item card faceup by your character sheet.

When searching the item deck, be sure to not look at the face of any other item card.

You return to the campfire and show the trinket to your companions. "What do you make of it?" asks Braxton.

"I'm not sure," says Mariam. "I think this was carved by a human or an orc; too rough to be made by an elf. Probably just some harmless local custom." Mariam tosses the trinket back to you.

➔ *Read entry 8549.*

2306

"I've heard all sorts of stories about Eventide Forest," says Mariam. "I've even heard that there is a secret kingdom somewhere in the treetops, where elves and fairies dance in the starlight hidden from the eyes of gnomes."

She shrugs and looks up at the mossy tree branches. "I don't believe half of it, though. I think it's just a big, dark forest, and people are scared of anything they don't know anything about."

"Also there's the bandits," says Braxton from behind you.

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 1096.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3859.*

You find yourself standing in a loose circle with your companions and no bandits close at hand. Even more of the enemy emerge from the trees, however, and they begin to surround you.

"What now?" breathes Mariam. You're sure it's the first time you've heard fear in her voice.

The bandits' leader chuckles and speaks, causing the firelight to play off the long scar on the side of his face in a sinister way. "Drop your valuables and leave. There is no need for you to die here." The other bandits hoot and howl and brandish their blades and axes in the air in front of you.

Braxton glances sideways at you. "There are too many of them. We cannot win this fight." She edges backward, and you notice her lean in the direction of Dragonholt.

"You can't have my gold. I'll be using it to start my business!" hisses Mariam. Despite the bite in her words, you notice her hands trembling.

Fend off the bandits long enough for the others to escape.

Requires brawling (skill), dueling (skill), or military (skill).

➔ Read entry 6738.

Create a diversion and flee toward Dragonholt.

Requires deception (skill) or performance (skill).

➔ Read entry 5280.

Create a smoke screen and escape toward Dragonholt.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ Read entry 9495.

Turn tail and run.

➔ Read entry 7804.

2407

You fumble in your pack for a rune that might help. After a moment, you fish out a flame rune and clutch it tightly in hand. A scalding heat envelops you, and you push the energy forward to surround your pursuer.

Within a moment, all of the metal the bandit carries glows white hot. He shrieks as the blazing metal of his mace sears his palm, and he drops it to the ground—yet still the man screams. He flails about, staggering this way and that in an attempt to escape the burning hot hook at the end of his arm.

➔ Read entry 2399.

2533

Straining and grunting, you push against the standing stone, getting nowhere. "Together," says Braxton, stepping forward and placing her shoulder to the rock. The stone grudgingly begins to give way, but the task is physically draining.

If you do not have athletics (skill) or endurance (skill)...

➔ You lose two stamina.

As the bandits come roaring up the gulch, you push as one and the standing stone picks up alarming speed, falling with a crash that crushes several bandits while others skid to a stop.

➔ Read entry 5129.

2552

"I learned to hunt as a young girl. Most orcs do." The way Braxton walks through the forest—quietly, alert to hidden dangers—you can easily believe her. "Throwing a spear into an enemy isn't much different from throwing a spear into a beast. But I didn't properly learn the arts of war until after I'd become a knight. Lord Garret Kahler and his master-at-arms were my teachers."

Braxton draws her sword, tosses it in the air, and catches it along the blade, letting it balance perfectly on the edge of her hand. "There is much more to fighting than fighting alone. The thrust and parry of the sword are only part of it. Battles are fought with the body but won in the mind. You must be aware, but never unfocused. You must be cautious, but never afraid. You must be decisive, but never inflexible." She flips her sword back into the air, catching it by the hilt and sheathing it again.

She casts her eyes down to the forest floor. "Anyway. You asked."

You divert the conversation toward the local soldiery, a subject where Braxton seems much more comfortable.

"Dragonholt must have some sort of town watch," says Braxton. "But if it's like other villages, it will be small, ill-equipped, and largely untrained. Militias are usually brave folk who mean well, but they don't win wars without someone to lead them."

➔ Mark story points S2 and Z1.

If two or more time has passed...

➔ Read entry 4389.

Otherwise...

➔ Read entry 7616.

2808

The young gnome glances over her shoulder at you with a raised eyebrow. "You're starting to sound like Braxton." She twirls to face you and walks backward down the road in front of you. "Despite my size, I'm quite capable of protecting myself, you know."

Braxton chuckles warmly to herself. "I believe our new friend is worried for you not because of your size but because of your nature. Even though you can protect yourself, try not to worry us too much."

➔ Mark story point R6.

➔ Read entry 1340.

2873

On your climb up, you had noticed a section of trail that was almost completely eroded, with a sickly-looking scrubby tree protruding out into the open air. You dash back down the trail a few paces and find that tree, pulling and twisting until its roots give way. The tree, and the entire section of trail, tumbles down the rocky slope, pelting the bandits below and leaving them no easy way to proceed.

➔ Mark story point H7.

You climb the hill, and the bandits (after a positively creative bout of swearing and taunting) retreat into the forest. You have escaped.

➔ Read entry 9999.

2883

Farther down the road, Mariam turns to call out, "Hurry along, Braxton, or you'll be left behind."

You hustle forward to catch up to the gnome and keep pace with her. Braxton falls in just behind you. "I understand your enthusiasm, but we must take our time once we enter the forest or we may become lost."

➔ *Mark story point 01.*

STORY POINTS

Story points are abstract recordings of the decisions you make throughout your adventures. They allow future entries or future quests to play out differently depending on the decisions you've made. Story points are recorded on the story tracking sheet.

Some effects, like the one above, instruct you to mark one or more story points. To mark a story point, locate it by referencing its letter and number, then mark that box with a check mark or X. Some effects in future entries will be resolved differently if specific story points have been marked.

"We'll be fine as long as we stick to the road."

➔ *Read entry 8828.*

"Do the rumors about bandits have any merit?"

➔ *Read entry 3298.*

2981

You draw a set of small throwing knives and send one to pierce your pursuer's thigh. The man shrieks and stumbles. A second thrown blade strikes his forearm, sending his mace tumbling to the ground.

The bandit roars and charges at you again, his sharpened hook glinting in the firelight, but you fling a third knife to slice across the side of his face. This causes him to slow his charge, and you draw three more throwing knives and fan them threateningly. His eyes morph from anger to fear, and he turns and flees into the woods.

➔ *Read entry 2399.*

3123

You shift yourself to watch the side of the camp where you heard the rustling, but you see nothing in the darkness. You wonder if the firelight is blinding your night vision or if the sound you heard was just some animal scurrying about.

Just when you think that you were worried for nothing, you hear a branch snap and leaves rustle, and then a half-dozen rough-looking figures step from the trees. They're clad in torn and stained clothing and scraps of leather armor, their long knives and the steel of their arrowheads glinting in the light of your fire. Bandits!

The bandits rush forward as you scramble to your feet. Some of them lift their bows, pulling the arrows back and aiming at you. You shout a warning to your companions, who spring to their feet and arm themselves.

➔ *Read entry 5912.*

3298

Braxton strides beside you, keeping an ever-watchful eye on her eager companion. "Not much. I've just heard from some travelers that a number of caravans have been ambushed while passing through. Valuable goods were taken, but the merchants and traders have been mostly unharmed."

➔ *Mark story point R6.*

➔ *Read entry 1340.*

3412

Your foot lands on a dry branch that snaps in half with a loud crack as you put your weight down. The braided bandit pivots and brings his knife down on you instead, slashing you across the arm!

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

You grab his knife hand at the wrist and wrestle with him for control of the blade. He gets the better of you and bears you to the ground, crushing the breath from your lungs as he slowly presses the knife closer and closer to your face. Unable to breathe with the heat of your campfire scalding your face, you desperately roll and topple the bandit into the fire.

He screams and shoots to his feet, running in random loops as he attempts to beat the flames out of his hair and clothing. You climb slowly to your feet, gasping for breath, and lose track of him in the melee.

➔ *Read entry 2004.*

3549

"It's already night! No wonder I feel so tired," Mariam mutters with a large yawn. Sure enough, when you look up, you see stars sparkling brightly in the vast emptiness of the night sky. You note how brilliant they seem so far from the torchlight of the city.

At the edges of the clearing, several paths cut through the dense trees, leading away from the great oak in different directions. Only a few seem well traveled, but none are marked by signs. Braxton, too, has noticed the myriad options for further travel. "We should get our bearings before making camp for the night."

Mariam rolls her eyes at Braxton's suggestion. "We can use the sun as our guide in the morning. I'm going to sleep." With that, she takes out a bedroll and makes camp at the base of the great oak.

Determine your heading by observing the stars.

Requires arcana (skill), devotion (skill), or survival (skill).

➔ *Read entry 2172.*

Convince Mariam to read the stars before she sleeps.

Requires empathy (skill) or persuasion (skill).

➔ *Read entry 4017.*

Climb the great oak to look for a landmark.

Requires agility (skill) or athletics (skill).

➔ *Read entry 3729.*

Leave the navigation to Braxton and turn in for the night.

➔ *Read entry 3562.*

3562

Braxton sighs and places her pack and heavy shield at the base of the oak tree. "I will see if I can get our bearings from higher up in the tree," she says. With that, she begins to climb.

After a little while, she drops back down again and tosses a small carved wooden statuette to Mariam. "I found dozens of these up in the boughs of the tree. Little scraps of paper with stories written on them too."

"Did you also find what way to go?" asks Mariam, holding the statue up to the moonlight for a better look.

"Yes, I could see the beacon tower in Dragonholt quite clearly from up there." Braxton bends down and retrieves her shield. "What about that statuette? What do you make of it?"

"I'm not sure," says Mariam. "I think this was carved by a human or an orc; too rough to be made by an elf. Probably just some harmless local custom." Mariam tosses the trinket to you and looks up at Braxton. "You can put your shield down."

- ➔ *Mark story point L1.*
- ➔ *You gain the wooden trinket (item B).*
- ➔ *Read entry 8549.*

ITEMS

Some effects cause you to gain items. To gain an item, record the item's name on your character sheet, then search the item deck for the item card with the matching identifier (shown in parentheses above). Keep the item card faceup with your character sheet.

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When searching the item deck, be sure to not look at the face of any other item card.

3568

You maneuver through the melee, dodging around Braxton and another orc woman. Then you break away from the fray, sprinting toward the great oak, hoping to put enough range between yourself and the bandit so that you can attack from relative safety.

- If you have agility (skill) or athletics (skill)...*
➔ *Read entry 5414.*

- Otherwise...*
➔ *Read entry 6332.*

3575

You quickly make a set of snares that you tether to young trees at the top of the gulch. Then you cover them with a handful of leaves and gravel. You urge your companions on and fall back as the bandits grow closer, hooting and baying as they come. Their shouts turn to cries of alarm as you hear the first of your snares yank a bandit off his feet.

- ➔ *Read entry 5129.*

3579

"I'm glad you asked!" bubbles Mariam. "I am going to set up the finest apothecary's shop that Dragonholt has ever seen. I'll brew potions and sell remedies and make lots of money." She nods, tossing a vial of pink liquid into the air, catching it, and balancing it on her finger for no particular reason.

"My aunt can help me get started; she already runs the best inn in town, and she's a fantastic tailor too." Mariam flourishes her half-cape and brightly-colored tunic.

Ask Mariam what types of potions she brews.

- ➔ *Read entry 4156.*

Ask Mariam about her family.

- ➔ *Read entry 3715.*

Exchange brewing recipes with Mariam.

- Requires alchemy (skill).*
➔ *Read entry 3876.*

Compliment Mariam's attire and inquire about its maker.

- Requires craftsmanship (skill) or empathy (skill).*
➔ *Read entry 1942.*

Tell Mariam what you know of Dragonholt's markets.

- Requires history (skill) or streetwise (skill).*
➔ *Read entry 1902.*

Educate Mariam on methods for barter and trade.

- Requires persuasion (skill) or streetwise (skill).*
➔ *Read entry 8508.*

REQUIRED SKILLS

Some options (like those seen above) require you to have one or more skills, items, or some other condition to be true. You cannot choose an option if the requirements are not met.

For instance, you cannot choose the "Exchange brewing recipes with Mariam" option unless you have the alchemy skill.

If you are playing with two or more players, you may read through all of the possible options before deciding which player will make the decision.

3607

You produce a blasting rune from a hidden pocket. With a violent thrust of your hand, you channel the arcane energy from the shard into the ground before the charging bandit. The earth swells before erupting in an explosive spray of molten shrapnel. The explosion occurs closer to you than you had anticipated, and you throw yourself to the ground to avoid the shower of shattered stone.

- If you do not have agility (skill)...*
➔ *You lose three stamina.*

When the dust settles you see the bandit lying motionless beside the smoldering crater.

- If story point H3 is marked...*
➔ *Read entry 6577.*

- Otherwise...*
➔ *Read entry 9513.*

3645

You run through Eventide Forest, scrambling and stumbling as you go. You are surprised to discover that you can see, and you realize that the sun must already be rising somewhere beyond the trees.

➔ *Time passes.*

The narrow and twisting path soon comes to a steep climb with a rocky outcropping that rises above on either side. A large standing stone towers to your right.

You can hear the bandits still coming behind you, shouting to their fellows like hounds on the hunt. But any pursuer will have to scramble up this same narrow gulch.

Tip over the standing stone to block the path.

➔ *Read entry 2533.*

Fire with your bow from the high ground.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 5223.*

Set a trap for the approaching bandits.

Requires survival (skill).

➔ *Read entry 3575.*

3686

Mariam starts laughing before she even begins her story about meeting Braxton. "Well, first of all, whatever Braxton tells you, I wasn't drunk," says Mariam. "But we did both get thrown out of the same tavern together! It was a good night."

"I remember it rather differently," says Braxton.

"Well, that's because you're no fun," Mariam winks at you. "You see, Braxton is a wet blanket, but she keeps following me around because secretly she knows that she would never do anything exciting if she didn't."

"Also you pay me to keep you safe," says Braxton.

"Also that!" exclaims Mariam with a broad smile.

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 1096.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3859.*

3715

"Oh, they're out there, somewhere," says Mariam with a wave of her hand. "You know us gnomes, we don't settle down much. But my father taught me most of what I know about brewing potions, and my mother was almost as good a tailor as her sister before—nevermind about that. My father and brother are out on the road somewhere. I'm sure I'll see them at the next festival. Aunt Sapphie and Braxton are all the family I need for right now."

➔ *Mark story points H1 and K6.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 7094.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

3729

As you climb up the great oak tree, you find a number of curious items secreted throughout its branches. There are scraps of paper covered in writing in various languages and hands—some tied around branches, others glued to the trunk with sticky pine sap. There are intricately carved statuettes tucked into crooks in the tree's boughs or strung from leather cords. There are small clay pots tucked into holes. You pocket a small, wooden trinket to show your companions when you return to the ground.

➔ *You gain the wooden trinket (item B).*

ITEMS

Some effects cause you to gain items. To gain an item, record the item's name on your character sheet, then search the item deck for the item card with the matching identifier (shown in parentheses above). Keep the item card faceup with your character sheet.

For instance, to resolve the effect above, record "wooden trinket" on your character sheet. Then search the item card deck for the item card with "B" printed on its back and place that item card faceup by your character sheet.

When searching the item deck, be sure to not look at the face of any other item card.

Leaving the other objects as undisturbed as you can manage, you climb from thick, sturdy branch to thick, sturdy branch until you find yourself in the upper boughs of the tree. Moving more cautiously lest the thinner branches give way beneath your weight, you make your way to the edge of the leaves and look out over Eventide Forest.

The trees beneath you murmur and whisper in the night breeze, visible as little more than a dark ocean of rustling leaves. In the distance, you can see the beacon tower in Dragonholt rising above the forest. You are now confident you know the way to Dragonholt.

➔ *Mark story point P3.*

When you return to camp, you show the wooden curio to your companions, but they have no better idea what to make of it than you do. You decide to keep the trinket as a souvenir to remind you of your trip.

➔ *Read entry 8549.*

3792

You position yourself between your companions and the orc archer just as she draws back the string of her bow. You realize what you've gotten yourself into too late.

If story point N3 is marked...

➔ *Mark story points K6 and M3.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Mark story point S2 and W3.*

The bandit looses an arrow that flies straight at your chest.

If you have brawling (skill), devotion (skill), or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 6899.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7861.*

3859

Eventide Forest is an intimidating landmark, and you can see why Braxton was concerned. Within an hour of entering the forest, the thin, young trees give way to ancient, gnarled guardians. The light, leafy canopy transforms into an oppressive shroud that cloaks the road in darkness, even during the most sunny of days.

➔ *Time passes.*

In the darkness of Eventide Forest, a chilling stillness reigns, and even bird songs are drowned out by silence. You continue onward, Mariam's usual banter quieted by her new mood, one part fascination and one part fear. Braxton keeps an ever-vigilant eye on the surroundings, her hand now resting on the pommel of the blade at her waist.

You soon come to a stop when you catch up to Mariam. She is glancing down what appears to be a small game trail that branches away from the main road. Up ahead, you see that a number of fallen trees are blocking your path. An old crossroads signpost marks the split, but the wood is too rotted and the writing is indecipherable. "What do we do now?"

"It doesn't seem like Lady Regina has been alerted yet." Braxton strains to look over the fallen trees. "We could clear the road ourselves or send word to Lady Regina once we reach Dragonholt."

"We could try this trail," offers Mariam. "Maybe it connects to the main road on the other side."

Scout along the game trail and report back.

➔ *Read entry 5822.*

Climb over the trees and continue on the main road.

➔ *Read entry 4184.*

Clear the road of debris before continuing.

➔ *Read entry 3962.*

3876

You swap recipes with Mariam, teaching her a useful draught to combat hay fever in exchange for a tincture that can repair broken pottery. "But be careful with it," says the gnome. "If it touches your skin, you will become part of the pot. Also," says Mariam as if just remembering something, "don't store it in a clay container. Only glass."

Braxton sighs. "You liked that pot. I'm sorry it was ruined."

"It's fine," says Mariam brightly. "It sure came in handy when you blundered into those spider webs."

"I remember that differently," says Braxton.

"You didn't have to come in after me," pouts Mariam. "I was fine. You're the one who got caught in webs."

➔ *Mark story points D4 and H1.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 7094.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

3962

Braxton produces an axe from her baggage, and you set to work clearing the trees from the road. Breaking each tree down into pieces small enough to move isn't complicated, but it is tiring. Your shoulders burn from swinging the axe, and your back aches from dragging the enormous tree limbs off to the side.

Mariam busies herself with the smaller branches. When only larger boughs remain, she "helps" by singing "a gnomish working song" that seems to include invented verses mocking you, Braxton, herself, gnomes in general, Eventide Forest, and any other subject that catches her fancy.

➔ *Two time passes.*

➔ *You each lose one stamina. You each lose two additional stamina unless you have endurance (skill).*

STAMINA

Stamina is a measure of how much you can push yourself or resist strain or damage. Excessive amounts of physical labor, prolonged exposure to harsh conditions, and physical damage suffered in combat all cause you to lose stamina.

Your maximum stamina was determined during character creation and should be recorded on your character sheet. Whenever you lose stamina, subtract that amount from your current stamina, recording your current stamina separate from your maximum stamina.

If your current stamina drops to zero, one of your skills will be disabled and you will recover one stamina. A disabled skill cannot be used until an effect allows you to recover that skill.

At length, you and Braxton roll the last and largest of the tree trunks to rest against the side of the road, then collapse atop it for a brief rest. You are done.

"Good work!" says Mariam, offering you each a drink of water from a tin cup. "We should mention this in Dragonholt; it'll really help me get my business off the ground if people know I helped clear the road."

Braxton glances at you over her drink but says nothing.

➔ *Mark story point F7.*

➔ *Read entry 8557.*

3967

You produce a blasting rune from an interior pocket and calmly bend the energy within to your will. You extend a phantom limb toward the rocks below and, with clenched fist, impact the cliff face. Stones and earth shatter and fly, showering the climbing bandits with rocky shrapnel.

A great cloud of dirt and dust covers the path below, causing the bandits to cough and sputter. Soon the bandits are running from the cloud, retreating into the forest. You have escaped.

➔ *Read entry 9999.*

4017

Mariam seems eager to build the fire and turn in for the night. "Who cares about the stars?" she asks. "We'll figure out which way to go in the morning."

After some gentle prodding, however, she relents. "Fine, fine!" she says and skips out into the center of the clearing, gazing up at the sky. "Okay, there's Latariana's Star," she says, pointing at a glimmering point in the velvet darkness that looks, to your eye, just like all the other stars. "So that means we need to go that way," she says, pointing again. "Right. Job done."

➔ *Mark story point P3.*

On her way back, Mariam stops and leans down. She picks up something from the forest floor, examining it as she returns. "What have you found?" asks Braxton.

"I'm not sure," says Mariam. "I think this was carved by a human or an orc; too rough to be made by an elf. A souvenir to remind you of our trip." Mariam tosses the trinket to you with a grin.

➔ *You gain the wooden trinket (item B).*

➔ *Read entry 8549.*

ITEMS

Some effects cause you to gain items. To gain an item, record the item's name on your character sheet, then search the item deck for the item card with the matching identifier (shown in parentheses above). Keep the item card faceup with your character sheet.

For instance, to resolve the effect above, record "wooden trinket" on your character sheet. Then search the item card deck for the item card with "B" printed on its back and place that item card faceup by your character sheet.

When searching the item deck, be sure to not look at the face of any other item card.

4041

"Oh, gosh. Well, what is there to say?" She furrows her brow and wrinkles her nose. "Gnomes are free spirits, I guess. We don't have any towns or cities of our own, not in Terrinoth, but you can always find us here and there. Most of us travel a lot, but some, like my aunt, settle down if they can find a good place to do it."

"Do all gnomes consistently place themselves in danger or is that just you, Mariam?" asks Braxton.

"Just me!" beams Mariam. "But I told you—I can take care of myself."

You notice that Mariam makes no mention of the most obvious trait of gnomes: their diminutive size. You're not certain if it seemed too obvious to bring up, or if she left it out as a sensitive subject.

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 1096.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3859.*

4055

You scramble up the cliff face, relying on the trees that cling to cracks in the rock for handholds. This proves unwise, as not all of the trees are anchored securely enough to bear your weight, and you find yourself dangling from your fingertips above a steep drop.

➔ *You each lose two stamina unless you have athletics (skill).*

Mariam isn't making things any easier, either, despite Braxton's efforts. "I'll be fine!" she huffs. "I'm not the only one here who needs help!" she says with a nod at you. In fairness to the gnome, she's not dangling from her fingertips.

Braxton makes her way over to you and helps you regain your footing. "Test each toehold before you put weight on it," she says.

You resume your climb, but you hear shouting below you—the bandits have reached the bottom of the cliff. They immediately begin pelting you with arrows and stones, making the rest of the climb a nightmare.

➔ *You each lose three stamina unless you have agility (skill).*

Finally, you make it to the top, gasping for breath. You are safe from the bandits' arrows up here, but the bandits have already begun to climb up after you.

Throw rocks at the bandits.

➔ *Read entry 8263.*

Return fire with your bow.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 4724.*

Smash a vial of alchemical fire on the cliff face.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 4293.*

Blast the cliff face with runic magic.

Requires arcana (skill) or runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 3967.*

4156

"Oh, all sorts." Mariam pulls out two glass bottles stoppered with wax. She flourishes the blue one. "This potion can cure a dozen diseases and keep wounds from being infected." She holds up a cloudy gray liquid in her other hand. "This one is bottled smoke; use it to choke out a hornet's nest, or signal for help, or maybe give yourself something to hide behind." She glances down at her bottles and purses her lips. "Or maybe I have that backward. Oh well." She slips the bottles back into a leather pack at her hip.

"I'm always looking for new recipes, but I already know enough to start my shop." She falls silent as she examines a shy-looking flower growing in the shadow of a mossy log. "Always looking for ingredients too!"

➔ *Mark story points M3 and Z2.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 7094.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

4184

Climbing over the fallen trees proves more difficult than you expected. It seems that one enormous tree fell and brought several others with it, resulting in an extensive tangle of branches and boughs. Many of the trees that collapsed were dead and their branches have a tendency to break off with a sharp "Crack!" when subjected to the slightest weight. Others are still fully leafed, making it difficult to see where you are going.

"We should proceed carefully," says Braxton. "These trees must weigh several tons. If the pile shifts unexpectedly, we could be crushed."

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *You each lose one stamina. You each lose one additional stamina unless you have athletics (skill).*

STAMINA

Stamina is a measure of how much you can push yourself or resist strain or damage. Excessive amounts of physical labor, prolonged exposure to harsh conditions, and physical damage suffered in combat all cause you to lose stamina.

Your maximum stamina was determined during character creation and should be recorded on your character sheet. Whenever you lose stamina, subtract that amount from your current stamina, recording your current stamina separate from your maximum stamina.

If your current stamina drops to zero, one of your skills will be disabled and you will recover one stamina. A disabled skill cannot be used until an effect allows you to recover that skill.

After a few missteps and undignified squawks, Mariam grudgingly consents to let Braxton lift her over the worst of the pile.

"We all have our talents," says Braxton at Mariam's disgruntled expression. "Mine happens to be lifting heavy things."

"I am not that heavy!" huffs Mariam. "Not even by gnome standards!" Braxton laughs and hauls her down from her perch, finally reaching the road again on the far side of the blockage.

➔ *Mark story point D6.*

➔ *Read entry 8557.*

4293

You hold up a vial of Lorimor Fire, sharing a knowing glance with Mariam. "Oh, that's just mean," she says, pulling out a vial of her own. "On three," she says, and counts you off.

Together, you each break your vials of fire on the lip of the cliff, sending a cascade of burning liquid down upon the climbing bandits. Shrieking in pain and fear, they hurl themselves from the cliff, some burned, others simply desperate to escape.

➔ *Mark story point G1.*

➔ *Read entry 9999.*

4300

Braxton hefts a heavy steel shield and slashes her longsword threateningly at one of the approaching bandits. Mariam produces two flasks and unstoppers one of them. A thick, acrid smoke pours from its open mouth as she holds it aloft, ready to throw.

Three of the bandits suddenly rush forward, charging the camp. Mariam hurls the smoking flask which smashes against one of their bucklers. A billowing cloud of acidic fog erupts from the impact site. The bandit shrieks and flails, dropping his buckler to the ground as it dissolves.

The two other bandits continue their charge. One swings an axe at Mariam, but Braxton catches the blade with her longsword and slams her shield into the man, sending him tumbling to the ground. The third bandit dodges around Braxton and darts forward straight toward you, spearpoint trained at your chest.

Dodge the attack.

➔ *Read entry 8803.*

Catch the spear and disarm the bandit.

➔ *Read entry 1513.*

Deflect the spear and counter attack.

Requires dueling (skill) or military (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8427.*

Blast the bandit with a rune.

Requires arcana (skill) or runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 3607.*

4340

You reach to a belt pouch to retrieve a mixture that will stop the approaching bandit in his tracks, but the bandit's charge is faster than you thought and you fumble with the flap. In a moment, the bandit is upon you, his mace held high!

If you have agility (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 4884.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8374.*

4384

The bandit's thrust is stronger than you expected. You clutch at the spear but only manage to redirect what would have been a lethal impact into a wounding jab into your shoulder.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

Your hands slick with your own blood, you manage to wrest the spear away from the bandit, setting him off balance. You follow through with a brutal swing, sending the butt of the spear whipping into the bandit's head. He goes limp and collapses in a heap on the grass.

If story point H3 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 6577.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

4389

You change the subject, electing to ask Braxton what she knows about Dragonholt.

"I've never been to Dragonholt myself," says Braxton. "Lord Kahler's lands were west of here, so I never had occasion to visit. I did hear that the village has a fine inn."

"You heard that from me!" calls Mariam.

"Mariam's aunt runs the place," says Braxton with a smile. "Apart from that, I think the place is rather unremarkable. A small collection of houses surrounded by farms and orchards." She frowns and drums her fingers on the hilt of her sword, looking all around. "Well, there was that one story about a brave hero who could freeze a dragon's flames in its throat. But I think that was just a story."

Braxton lapses into a comfortable silence for some time.

Ask Braxton about her family.

➔ *Read entry 2062.*

Ask Braxton about orcs.

➔ *Read entry 1521.*

Leave Braxton to her thoughts.

➔ *Read entry 7598.*

4510

Her gaze loses focus, and she strokes the hilt of her sword with one hand. "I was knighted after saving Lord Garret Kahler's life, and I served him faithfully for years. He was the Count of Lake Harmon, a cousin to Baroness Iona. Lord Kahler was a good man; a good human. He taught me to read, he taught me—" Braxton trails off as she takes a deep breath. "He was a good man. But, in time, he died."

She glances at you, then looks all around as if to find lurking threats. "My sword can't vanquish old age and illness. In any case, now I am a knight-errant. Let's talk about something else."

➔ *Mark story points C3 and O2.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 4389.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

4545

You grab the braided bandit from behind, twist, and pivot him around your hips, sending him tumbling to the ground with an undignified yowl. As he struggles to stand, you plant one foot on his back and shove, sending him sprawling yet again, this time into your campfire.

He screams and shoots to his feet, running in random loops as he attempts to beat the flames out of his hair and clothing. He staggers into another bandit, sending both sprawling, and then you shift your attention elsewhere.

➔ *Read entry 2004.*

4577

The young gnome glances over her shoulder at you with a raised eyebrow. "You're starting to sound like Braxton." She twirls to face you and walks backward down the road in front of you. "Despite my size, I'm quite capable of protecting myself, you know."

Braxton chuckles warmly to herself. "I believe our new friend is worried for you not because of your size but because of your nature. Even though you can protect yourself, try not to worry us too much."

➔ *Mark story point E3.*

STORY POINTS

Story points are abstract recordings of the decisions you make throughout your adventures. They allow future entries or future quests to play out differently depending on the decisions you've made. Story points are recorded on the story tracking sheet.

Some effects, like the one above, instruct you to mark one or more story points. To mark a story point, locate it by referencing its letter and number, then mark that box with a check mark or X. Some effects in future entries will be resolved differently if specific story points have been marked.

"We should hurry along before it gets dark."

➔ *Read entry 6620.*

"Do the rumors about bandits have any merit?"

➔ *Read entry 3298.*

4585

You grab up a burning brand from the nearby campfire, but before you can use it for anything, the bandit slashes at you with his knife, cutting open a ragged tear across your chest.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

You swing your burning branch over your head and thrust it at the bandit, sending him leaping backward with a squawk. He jabs out with his knife, preventing you from following up and finishing him off.

Behind him, you see Braxton slam her shield solidly into her assailant, then spin and bring her sword down on the braided bandit. He shrieks, then falls, and Braxton turns back to the axe-wielding brute without a word.

➔ *Read entry 2004.*

4641

Looking up at the great oak, you feel somehow captivated. You come to your senses when Braxton nudges your shoulder. "Are you alright? You've been staring at that tree for hours."

➔ *Three time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 3549.*

4724

With the advantage of your superior position, you are able to take your time aiming and firing each arrow. You focus your attacks on the enemy archers first, wounding them, and then shift your attention to the oncoming bandits, who soon break off their pursuit and flee beyond reach of your arrows.

The bandits retreat back into the forest. You have escaped.

➔ *Read entry 9999.*

4734

You attempt to reason with the bandits and prevent bloodshed.

"Well, it's very simple," says a bandit you take for their leader. He steps into the light of your campfire, revealing a scar that runs down the side of his face. "We're traditionalists, you see. And the tradition is this: your money or your life."

Before you can make any sort of counteroffer, Mariam's voice cuts the negotiations short. "Go sniff a goat!" she shouts. The bandit leader roars, and his minions rush to the attack. So much for reason.

➔ *Read entry 4300.*

4884

You pull a glass flask from the pouch at your hip, unstopper it, and light the soaked rag protruding from the end. With an underhand toss, you lob the burning bottle at the bandit, who drops his mace and catches the flask one-handed with a terrified look.

He shrieks as the scalding-hot glass of the bottle burns his hand. He bobbles the concoction and reaches to catch it with his other hand—the hook. The bottle breaks on the ground at his feet, sending a pillar of flame up into his face. He screams, tearing at his own skin with his hooked hand in an attempt to put out the fire, and falls over.

➔ *Read entry 2399.*

4897

"Oh, I do what I can to avoid adventure," says Braxton with a gentle smile. "It's safer that way."

After a few more questions, she sighs. "Very well. I shall tell you about the day I received my knighthood. I was quite young, and very foolish, and I came across a battle between Lord Garret Kahler's knights and a large pack of beastmen. I leapt into the battle, hurling my spears at the creatures. I soon ran out of spears, but there was no shortage of beastmen, so I took up the sword of one of the fallen knights and continued to fight."

Her fingers brush the hilt of her sword as she speaks. "When the battle was over, only Lord Kahler and I were still standing. He knighted me on the spot." She turns away, looking at the forest floor. "Is that the sort of thing you wanted to hear about?"

➔ *Mark story points C3 and O2.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 4389.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

4945

Braxton smiles gently, nodding her head in Mariam's direction. "I will continue to protect our friend Mariam for as long as she requires my services. As you may have noticed, looking after her does not leave me much time for anything else."

"I resemble that remark!" calls Mariam.

"After that, I am not certain. I was not certain what to do with myself before meeting Mariam, either. I suppose I will travel to a larger city and try to find employment."

Ask Braxton about her past adventures.

➔ *Read entry 4897.*

Ask Braxton how she met Mariam.

➔ *Read entry 9899.*

Tell Braxton about your past adventures.

Requires deception (skill) or performance (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1984.*

Ask Braxton which lord she served.

Requires empathy (skill) or history (skill).

➔ *Read entry 4510.*

Ask Braxton about her military training.

Requires history (skill) or military (skill).

➔ *Read entry 2552.*

Show Braxton how to foil sleight of hand.

Requires awareness (skill) or thievery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 7526.*

REQUIRED SKILLS

Some options (like those seen above) require you to have one or more skills, items, or some other condition to be true. You cannot choose an option if the requirements are not met.

For instance, you cannot choose the "Ask Braxton which lord she served." option unless you have the empathy or history skill.

If you are playing with two or more players, you may read through all of the possible options before deciding which player will make the decision.

4956

The bandit shifts direction to slip past your spear, catching the spearpoint on his hook and shoving it aside. His mace slams into your shoulder, and you stagger back.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

Giving ground, you find an opening and drive your spear home. The blow lands with such force that the spear haft breaks, leaving you holding a useless hunk of wood. But your opponent is now in no condition to take advantage of the development. He falls to his knees on the blood-slick grass, the other half of the spear protruding from his stomach.

➔ *Read entry 2399.*

5037

You pull out an oiled leather bladder and hurl it as hard as you can against the bandit's feet. The bladder bursts, sending a black, tar-like substance all over the grass and the bandit's legs.

"What is this stuff?" the bandit says, trying to brush the ooze from his thigh with one hand. "I'm stuck!" he says, trying to retrieve his hand. With a wail, the bandit soon finds that his feet are rooted in place, and his attempts to move only send him toppling over to get even more stuck.

You'd like to watch his travails and take notes, but sadly there is no time.

➔ *Read entry 2004.*

5129

With the bandits preoccupied by your efforts back at the gulch, you are able to gain a considerable lead on them. The rocky terrain continues to rise up around you, the trees of Eventide Forest becoming smaller and scraggier as you go.

Soon you come to a sheer cliff face, only a few scraggly trees clinging to the rocks rising above you. Sunlight spills across the sky above the cliff, a promise of freedom and safety. You could climb up to the top, but it would be a challenge.

The path continues to the left a fair distance, then becomes a tight switchback crawling up to the top of the rise. It would be a safer route to the top but slower than climbing directly.

Climb the cliff face.

➔ *Read entry 4055.*

Run for the switchback path.

➔ *Read entry 9716.*

5223

You settle yourself onto a rocky perch above the path and wait for the lead bandit to come into sight, arrow nocked to your bowstring. Soon, with a shout, a tall dark-skinned human with a shock of white hair leaps onto the trail. He rushes forward, axe in hand, and you draw back your bow.

If you have awareness (skill) or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 8202.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7348.*

5280

Using the darkness to your advantage, you throw your voice, making it sound as if soldiers are approaching through the trees.

"The village guards?" yells one bandit. "Here? Leg it, lads!"

"It's a trick, you credulous clods!" bellows the bandit leader, but the panic that ripples through his minions is enough for you and your companions to slip away. "After them!"

➔ *Read entry 3645.*

5414

The bandit gives chase, but you are too quick for him. You sprint away until you have enough distance to deal with the bandit at your leisure.

Loose an arrow at your pursuer.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 2091.*

Harass the man with thrown knives.

Requires thievery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 2981.*

Incapacitate the bandit with runic magic.

Requires arcana (skill).

➔ *Read entry 2407.*

5481

The bandit shifts direction to slip past your spear, but you shift with him and the spear point drives home into his chest. The bandit gasps, his hook and remaining hand both coming to scrabble at the haft of the spear, incidentally tearing it from your grasp, then falls backward with a thud.

➔ *Read entry 2399.*

5517

You leap forward and shout a challenge to the braid-wearing bandit, who spins and sneers at you with crooked teeth. The bandit brandishes a knife, and you begin to circle one another warily.

"I'll gut you like a bloated fish!" he shrieks and hurls himself at you. His attack is clumsy, more passionate than skilled, and you soon see your opportunity.

If you have brawling (skill) or dueling (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 1938.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4585.*

5705

You swing your weapon to deflect the spear, but only manage to divert it from a killing blow to a piercing jab into your shoulder. The spearpoint comes out black in the firelight, covered in your blood, and pain flares all along your arm.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

Ignoring the pain, you lunge forward and catch the bandit off-guard. He attempts to block with his spear, but you knock it aside and then follow up with a thrust that leaves the bandit bleeding on the grass. You step back, taking a moment to assess the situation.

If story point H3 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 6577.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

5822

You follow the trail away from the main road, ducking under low-hanging branches and hopping over muddy puddles. The trail winds back and forth, and you soon lose your bearings. As you scramble over a particularly steep slope, the soft earth gives way and you tumble head over heels until you come to a stop at the base of a tree.

If you do not have agility (skill), awareness (skill), or survival (skill)...

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

STAMINA

Stamina is a measure of how much you can push yourself or resist strain or damage. Excessive amounts of physical labor, prolonged exposure to harsh conditions, and physical damage suffered in combat all cause you to lose stamina.

Your maximum stamina was determined during character creation and should be recorded on your character sheet. Whenever you lose stamina, subtract that amount from your current stamina, recording your current stamina separate from your maximum stamina.

If your current stamina drops to zero, one of your skills will be disabled and you will recover one stamina. A disabled skill cannot be used until an effect allows you to recover that skill.

You crawl back to your feet and continue on, resolving to be more careful. After some time, you rejoin the main road, well past the deadfall that blocked it. You turn back and, being certain to mark your route this time, rejoin the others.

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Mark story point K3.*

You and your traveling companions make your way along the game trail and continue your journey along the main road.

➔ *Read entry 8557.*

5912

More and more bandits step into the firelight. Their armor and weapons seem crude, but sufficient to the purpose. Braxton grips her sword in her right hand, doing her best to keep herself and her shield between Mariam and all of the bandits.

Draw your weapon and engage the bandits.

➔ *Read entry 7686.*

Nock an arrow and fire at the bandits.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 7131.*

Toss a flask of explosive liquid at the bandits.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 6397.*

Attempt to reason with the bandits.

➔ *Read entry 4734.*

5967

You rush toward the orc bandit, shouting your battle cry. She raises a bow and looses an arrow. You feel it streak along the side of your head like a tongue of fire.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

If story point N3 is marked...

➔ *Mark story points D4 and H1.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Mark story points C3 and O2.*

As the orc draws another arrow from a quiver at her hip you tackle her blindly, throwing your shoulder into her chest and sending her sprawling. As she struggles back to her feet you grab her bow from where it fell on the ground, then bring it down on her head, breaking the bow and leaving her unconscious.

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

6332

The bandit gives chase and keeps close behind you no matter how hard you run. You duck behind the campfire, then sprint for the great oak, then circle back around the entire clearing. The bandit stays only a step behind the whole way. Your legs burn and your breath rattles in your chest, but still the bandit keeps pace behind you.

➔ *You lose one stamina.*

➔ *You exhaust your activation token.*

Finally, on another loop back around the great oak, your foot catches in an unseen tree root, and you go sprawling. The bandit looms above you, his hook gleaming, and then suddenly flames erupt all across his back. Screaming, the bandit falls over, rolling around and tearing at his leather jerkin with his good hand in an attempt to put out the flames.

Mariam calls out to you, "Quit playing around! These guys mean business, and I don't mean the kind we profit from!"

➔ *Read entry 2399.*

6397

You hurl a flask containing one of your own concoctions to shatter on the hard earth. The substance erupts into flickering red flame, just as you intended. Well, approximately as you intended. The flames lick at two of the nearby bandits, spreading to their tattered breeches and tunics. The bandits run, screaming, beating at the fire as it threatens to consume them.

But the remaining bandits give the pool of flickering fire a wide berth and close in.

Mariam flourishes one of her own flasks. "Not bad!" she says. "Looks like a variant on Lorimor Fire, right? I don't think either of us have enough of that handy to deal with all these bandits, though."

"Also," says Braxton through gritted teeth, "I would prefer if no one set fire to the forest until I were well out of it."

➔ *Read entry 4300.*

6577

As your companions do battle with the oncoming bandits, you take a moment to take stock of the camp. You see an orc woman holding a bow sneaking around to approach from the rear, her form difficult to make out in the dim light from your fire. Soon your companions will be fighting on two fronts.

Rush the lone bandit.

➔ *Read entry 5967.*

Put yourself between the archer and your companions.

➔ *Read entry 3792.*

Shoot an arrow at the bandit.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 6791.*

Blind the woman with a flash of runic light.

Requires runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 9109.*

Sneak around the great oak and catch her from behind.

Requires reasoning (skill) or stealth (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1103.*

Sing a bardic song to inspire your companions.

Requires performance (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8249.*

6579

Straining and grunting, you shove over the standing stone, which gives way grudgingly at first but then with shocking speed. The bandits skid to a stop as the stone falls, except one brave or foolhardy dwarf who dives frantically under the rock and rolls to his feet in front of you. He grins and flourishes a long dagger.

➔ *Read entry 5129.*

6620

You hustle forward to catch up to the gnome and keep pace with her. Braxton falls in just behind you. "I understand your enthusiasm, but we must take our time once we enter the forest or we may become lost."

➔ *Mark story point A1.*

➔ *Read entry 1340.*

6738

You tell your companions to run for it and spring forward, bringing the battle to the bandits! The ferocity of your attack catches the bandits off-guard, and at first they fall back. You press the advantage, taking down a burly human woman with a pair of jagged knives and disarming a gnome man who attempts to dart in and slash your hamstrings.

The bandits soon regroup, however, and their numbers begin to tell. You are swiftly pressed back and it becomes clear you will be overwhelmed. Since your companions have already escaped, you turn and run for it as well.

➔ *Read entry 3645.*

6757

You contort your body, leaning away from the blade and manage to prevent the spear from connecting solidly with your chest. However, the attack leaves you with a shallow wound on the side of your ribs.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

Pushing through the pain, you dart one foot forward into your attacker's path. The spear-armed bandit cannot stop his forward momentum, and his foot catches your leg, sending him tumbling to the ground.

If story point H3 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 6577.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

6791

You fire an arrow at the bandit, but the dim light betrays you, and you miss. The orc woman straightens up and bends her own bow, a steel arrowhead glinting in the darkness. You quickly nock another arrow to your bow and fire again.

You fire again but take too long lining up your shot. You and the bandit loose your arrows at the same time. Hers slashes across your leg, sending you staggering as pain blazes across your vision.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

If story point N3 is marked...

➔ *Mark story points H1 and Z2.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Mark story points O2 and Z1.*

When you recover yourself, you see no sign of the orc bandit. Perhaps your arrow felled her, and you lost track of her in the darkness?

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

6899

Whether by the will of the spirits, pure reflexes, or sheer luck, you snatch the arrow out of the air no more than a few inches from your chest. The orc bandit is just as surprised as you, too dumbfounded to nock another arrow.

If you have performance (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 1253.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7834.*

7076

The bandit raises his mace and swings it at your head from the right. You recognize the attack for what it is—a feint—and duck under the swing, bringing your own weapon up to block the hook coming at you from the other direction.

With a twist you knock your opponent off-balance, then lash out with your weapon. He screams again, still incoherent, and falls.

➔ *Read entry 2399.*

7094

"What about you?" asks Mariam. "What are you planning to do in Dragonholt?" Before you can answer, she hunches over and crooks one finger like a sinister hook, putting a sneer into her voice. "Are you seeking vengeance on a terrible foe?" Just as quickly, she swoons, throwing one hand artfully over her forehead. "Or are you in search of love?"

Mariam tumbles backward over a log with a squawk. She grins up at you from a pile of sticks and leaves. "Or maybe it's just a chance encounter?" She continues to talk about everything and nothing before finally pausing for breath.

Ask Mariam about Eventide Forest.

➔ *Read entry 2306.*

Ask Mariam how she met Braxton.

➔ *Read entry 3686.*

Ask Mariam about gnomes.

➔ *Read entry 4041.*

7131

You raise your bow and fire in the space of a heartbeat. Your arrow catches a bandit just beneath his crude leather pauldron, sending him tumbling backward into the undergrowth.

You nock another arrow to your bowstring, but there are clearly too many enemies to shoot them all down. And some of them have bows too. Braxton steps forward suddenly and raises her shield, catching an arrow that had been intended for you.

➔ *Read entry 4300.*

7296

You leap into the fray, dodging around Braxton and another orc woman. You heft your weapon and swing at the hook-handed human threateningly. He drops into a wary crouch and circles you, looking for an opening.

If you have awareness (skill), dueling (skill) or empathy (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 7076.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1099.*

7348

You draw back your bow and fire, narrowly missing the lead bandit. Your second arrow hits, however, and the bandit slumps over against the rocky slope. The next bandit in line, a dwarf woman with an eyepatch, hurls a hand axe at you before your fourth frantic arrow fells her as well.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

After a few more tentative essays into the gulch driven back by your archery, you break away, running toward Dragonholt.

➔ *Read entry 5129.*

7526

Braxton chuckles and waves one hand dismissively. "I'm certain that I'm capable of—" She notices what you are holding, and her hand drops to her belt, where her purse had been until just recently. "How did you get my purse? Give that back," she says. "And then show me how you did that."

You return her purse and then spend a few minutes walking her through the basics of misdirection and thievery. Her brow furrows as she focuses intently on your lesson.

➔ *Mark story points O2 and W3.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 4389.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

7598

"Don't mind her," Mariam says to you in a hushed voice. "Braxton isn't much for socializing. Don't take it personally. I'm sure she'll warm up to you over time."

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 1096.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3859.*

7616

You continue down the road, and the sky overhead is soon obscured by the foliage of the forest canopy. Streams of sunlight dance around you as a gentle breeze shakes the leafy ceiling. Mariam skips forward and spins through the shafts of light, smiling and laughing.

"It would be best if you stayed close. Becoming lost in the woods is all too common for those not accustomed to traveling without the sun or moon to guide them." Despite the orc's warning, Braxton makes no additional effort to keep pace with the playful gnome.

If story point N3 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 4389.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7094.*

7686

You hurl yourself at the bandits, who are quite surprised by your sudden attack. You soon fell one enemy and wound another, bellowing your battle cry all the while. However, three more bandits approach and threaten to surround you, brandishing long knives and brutal cudgels in a deadly dance. You quickly retreat.

If story point X1 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 9943.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4300.*

7773

Braxton strides beside you, keeping an ever-watchful eye on her eager companion. "Not much. I've just heard from some travelers that a number of caravans have been ambushed while passing through. Valuable goods were taken, but the merchants and traders have been mostly unharmed."

➔ *Mark story point S1.*

STORY POINTS

Story points are abstract recordings of the decisions you make throughout your adventures. They allow future entries or future quests to play out differently depending on the decisions you've made. Story points are recorded on the story tracking sheet.

Some effects, like the one above, instruct you to mark one or more story points. To mark a story point, locate it by referencing its letter and number, then mark that box with a check mark or X. Some effects in future entries will be resolved differently if specific story points have been marked.

"We should hurry along before it gets dark."

➔ *Read entry 6620.*

"Mariam, best you don't get too far ahead."

➔ *Read entry 2808.*

7804

"Go!" shouts Braxton, stepping forward with her shield raised. "I'll hold them off!" You run for it, tearing through the trees toward Dragonholt as the cries of battle and the clash of arms ring out. After a few moments, you hear heavy footsteps behind you. Fearing the worst, you crane your neck to see Braxton gaining on you rapidly.

"Keep going," she wheezes. "They're right behind me."

➔ *Read entry 3645.*

7834

Mariam takes notice of the archer and tosses a flask to shatter on the ground between you and the bandit. A cloud of thick, billowing smoke obscures the area around the great oak, preventing the archer from taking aim.

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

7861

You attempt to block the incoming arrow, but you are too slow. The arrow slams into your shoulder with a loud "thunk!" Searing pain wracks your body as you are thrown off your feet. You land on your back on the hard ground.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 7834.*

8202

You draw back your bow and send an arrow straight through the lead bandit's heart. He falls, but is soon replaced by a dwarf woman with an eyepatch. You put an arrow through her remaining eye, and then into the arm of the orc man who is next into the gap. He bellows and pulls back, and you hear confusion and more shouting from just out of sight. You have the bandits at bay!

➔ *Read entry 5129.*

8249

You begin to sing, choosing the "Triumph" movement from The Ballad of Falladir's Fall. Your voice is strong and clear, and you soon hear Mariam joining in with a surprisingly pure mezzo-soprano.

If story point N3 is marked...

➔ *Mark story points M3 and Z2.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Mark story points S2 and Z1.*

Your companions move smoothly in time with the music, as if engaged in a carefully-rehearsed dance. Braxton, perhaps energized by your song, steps forward and cuts down the lurking orc bandit without missing a beat.

➔ *You each recover two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

8263

You and your companions gather rocks and begin to hurl them down at the bandits below. Some of your rocks impact on arms and heads, but even the ones that miss knock others loose from the rocky terrain, causing small cascades of scree and gravel to pelt and harass your pursuers.

Driven back by a steady assault of stones and probably just as tired as you are, the bandits turn back and retreat into the forest. You have escaped.

➔ *Read entry 9999.*

8267

You stand and quickly shake the others awake. Braxton listens to your report and nods, rolling swiftly and quietly to her feet and grabbing her shield and sword.

Mariam rolls over and pulls her blanket over her head. "Probably just some animal. Wake me when there's actual danger."

"To arms!" calls Braxton as a group of rough-looking figures pour out of the trees.

Mariam throws her blanket off and scrambles to her feet. "Okay! I'm awake!"

There are at least a half-dozen of them, wearing torn and stained clothing and scraps of leather armor. The firelight glimmers on their long knives and steel arrowheads. Bandits!

➔ *Read entry 5912.*

8310

You see a discarded spear lying close at hand, so you snatch it up. Bracing the butt of the spear against your foot, you line its steel point up on the onrushing bandit, set to receive the charge. At the last moment, the bandit shifts direction to slip past your spear.

If you have agility (skill) or empathy (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 5481.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4956.*

8374

You pull a glass vial from your pouch, but to your dismay, it is no more than a mundane mixture, not yet ready for use. The bandit swings his mace, clipping you on the shoulder and spinning you around. He swings again and catches you in the gut, knocking the breath from you.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

You stagger back, and as he raises his mace a third time you aim a kick at his knee. You feel his knee give out with a satisfying crunch and smash the glass flask against the side of his head, showering the surrounding area with shards of glass and glistening liquid. The bandit falls over, shrieking and clutching at his knee with his good hand and his face with his sharpened hook. You wonder if he might accidentally do more damage to himself than you did.

➔ *Read entry 2399.*

8408

You creep carefully up behind the bandits, ghosting up behind the man with the spear. Moving swiftly, you grab his spear and twist, tearing it from his grasp and bringing it up across his throat. He gurgles and kicks, then goes still as you drag him into the dark forest.

"There's one of them in the trees!" shouts the bow-armed woman, loosing an arrow blindly in your direction. The shaft passes within a hand's breadth of your head, and you see her pulling back to fire again. You drop your unconscious captive and sprint back to the camp.

You hear confusion in the forest all around you as the bandits try to track you down.

➔ *Read entry 9943.*

8427

With instincts born of long training, you brace yourself, readying to parry the incoming thrust and counterattack. As long as you don't slip up, you can drop the bandit in a single attack.

If you have agility (skill) or athletics (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 9608.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 5705.*

8508

You talk Mariam through several strategies for ensuring a good price from her supplies and setting her own prices for clients.

"This would be easier if I had a clear idea what my expenses will be," muses Mariam. "Aunt Sapphie told me there's a place I can buy where the last apothecary used to keep his shop. It'll all be human-sized, of course, but I can manage. But I don't know how much it will cost or if I'll need to take a loan." Mariam sighs. "Ugh, I can figure this stuff out later. Keep your eyes peeled for Shrinking Violet; it likes to grow in forests like these!"

➔ *Mark story points H1 and Z2.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 7094.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

8549

You assist Braxton in gathering some kindling and start a small campfire a few paces from the great oak. While you work, you can hear Mariam humming softly to herself. You set out your bedroll and relax. Although you are all tired, a brief chat around the campfire is not an unwelcome event.

Ask Mariam what she plans to do in Dragonholt.

Requires story point N3 is marked.

This option does not exhaust your activation token.

➔ *Read entry 3579.*

Ask Braxton what she plans to do in Dragonholt.

Requires story point E7 is marked.

This option does not exhaust your activation token.

➔ *Read entry 4945.*

Go straight to sleep.

➔ *Mark story point H3.*

➔ *Read entry 1096.*

8557

After following the winding road for what feels like hours, you begin to fear that you are traveling in circles. Just as you are about to suggest turning back, Mariam calls out from beyond the next bend, "There's a clearing up here!"

As you round the bend, you see Mariam staring up at a single massive tree that stands alone in the center of a clearing some twenty paces across. Although the great oak's canopy is just as thick as anywhere else in the forest, its branches reach well above the tops of the surrounding trees, affording you a view of the sky at the edges of the clearing.

If three or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 3549.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4641.*

8563

You twist the spear away from you and step into the bandit's rush, raising your elbow to impact solidly with his oncoming face. You feel something break, and the bandit cries out, collapsing to the grass and leaving you holding his spear.

You turn and hurl the spear into the chest of another bandit as she attempts to slash out at Mariam with a long knife. She falls and Mariam gives you a quick thumbs-up.

If story point H3 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 6577.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

8803

You ready yourself to dodge the incoming attack. The charging bandit lunges forward at you a moment before you expect, and you desperately twist away from the spearpoint.

If you have agility (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 6757.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9918.*

8828

"I hope you're right," says Braxton, bringing up the rear of your little group.

"Braxton is a bit of a worrywart," says Mariam. "She is also very slow for someone with such long legs!" Mariam skips forward, and back, taking six steps for every one of Braxton's. You wonder where the gnome gets all her energy.

➔ *Mark story point A1.*

➔ *Read entry 1340.*

9109

Before the orc woman can line up a shot, you produce a lightning rune from a hidden pocket. You hold the shard out in front of you and close your eyes tight. A brilliant flash of light arcs across the darkness toward the bandit followed by a peal of thunder that shakes the great oak and the surrounding clearing.

If story point N3 is marked...

➔ *Mark story points D4 and M3.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Mark story points C3 and S2.*

When you open your eyes, glimmers of static energy still cling to the darkness. The orc woman is collapsed on the ground, clutching her ears, her eyes shut tight as if she's attempting to drive the light from her senses.

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

9250

Moving as quickly as you can on silent feet, you drift up behind the braided bandit. He lifts his knife, ready to bring it down into Braxton's neck, and you reach to grab him from behind.

If you have stealth (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 4545.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3412.*

9495

You smash a vial on the ground, releasing thick clouds of billowing smoke. "I'll add injury to that insult," shouts Mariam. She tosses two handfuls of pellets into the smoke cloud. You notice the pellets change shape as they land, four triangular barbs protruding from each pellet like so many caltrops. "That'll slow them down."

The smoke soon obscures you and your companions, and you escape in the direction of Dragonholt.

"They can't have gone far," bellows the bandit leader. "Find them!"

➔ *Read entry 3645.*

9513

"For Kahler and Harmon!" bellows Braxton. In the flickering firelight, she seems a demon from a nightmare, huge and dark and powerful. Three of the bandits attempt to surround her, but she pivots away, slamming her shield into one and knocking her down, then slashing at a second and sending him screaming into the dark, clutching at his face. She trades blows with a large human, his axe sliding off her shield, her sword flickering past his face as he dances backward.

You notice a bandit with his hair in a long braid creeping up behind Braxton with a knife glimmering in his hand. Focused as Braxton is on her battle with the large bandit, she clearly hasn't noticed.

Intercept the approaching bandit.

➔ *Read entry 5517.*

Catch the bandit from behind.

➔ *Read entry 9250.*

Stop the bandit with an alchemical concoction.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 5037.*

9608

You swing your weapon to deflect the spear, knocking the lethal point aside and following up with a riposte. Your attack catches the bandit off-guard and leaves him bleeding on the grass. You step back, taking a moment to assess the situation.

If story point H3 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 6577.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

9716

You sprint for the switchback trail, covering the distance in short order. Braxton swings Mariam over her shoulder without breaking stride. The gnome contents herself with a single squawk of protest. When you reach the bottom of the switchback you are already out of breath.

➔ *You each lose two stamina unless you have endurance (skill).*

You start the climb but haven't reached the first turning when the bandits emerge from the trees. Hollering like hounds on the scent, they rush after you. Two of their number fall back, nocking arrows and launching them in your direction.

➔ *You each lose three stamina unless you have agility (skill).*

By the time you reach the top of the slope, your lungs and legs are burning and you're gasping for breath. But you can't rest now—the bandits are still too close behind you.

Throw rocks at the bandits.

➔ *Read entry 8263.*

Return fire with your bow.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 4724.*

Block the path behind you.

Requires awareness (skill) or survival (skill).

➔ *Read entry 2873.*

Blast the path with runic magic.

Requires arcana (skill) or runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 3967.*

9899

"We were both thrown out of the same tavern, if you can believe that," says Braxton. "Well, I say 'thrown.' I walked out under my own power, at least. Mariam was already a bit drunk—"

"I was not," breaks in Mariam. "And you didn't 'save my life three times' that night!"

"And then I saved her life three times over the course of the night," continues Braxton. "So she figured she might as well make it official and hire me."

Mariam levels a cross glare at Braxton, wagging one finger in the general direction of the orc's face. "First of all, the bit with the water trough doesn't count."

Braxton chuckles to herself and smiles as she watches Mariam turn away from you. "There is some disagreement as to precisely how much life-saving happened that night. But in any event, I'm glad we met."

➔ *Mark story points S2 and Z1.*

If two or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 4389.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7616.*

9918

You contort your body in an attempt to evade the strike, but you are too slow and only manage to redirect the spearpoint slightly. With a solid 'thunk,' the weapon's blade sinks into your shoulder, tearing open a ragged gash in your flesh.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

Pushing through the pain, you dart one foot forward into your attacker's path. The spear-armed bandit cannot stop his forward momentum, and his foot catches your leg, sending him tumbling to the ground.

If story point H3 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 6577.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9513.*

9943

You shout a warning and rush back into the camp, hearing the bandits swear and move to follow you.

"We're supposed to wait for the signal," hisses one.

"That was the signal!" shouts the other.

As you skid to a stop by the campfire, you see Braxton already on her feet with her shield in hand. Mariam is still staggering out of her tangling blanket.

"What is it?" grumbles Mariam. "What's going on?"

"Bandits," rumbles Braxton as a half-dozen of the desperate-looking figures run into the firelight, weapons held high.

➔ *Read entry 4300.*

9999

As the sun climbs above the trees, you continue your journey toward Dragonholt. At your new elevation, the trees are smaller and farther apart, and at some point you have passed an invisible barrier, where you are not in a forest so much as a rocky plain with occasional trees.

Dragonholt lies below you, and you can see the beacon tower rising above the trees, the sun climbing the sky behind it. You have less than an hour of walking before you.

➔ *Time passes.*

At length you walk through an orchard, the twisted trees heavy with fruit and propped up by weathered boards and poles. Then you find yourself on Dragonholt's main street, walking beneath the dueling dragon statues that serve as the closest thing to a city gate. One dragon is carved from black stone, the other from white, and they arch across the street above you, not quite touching.

"Marvelous," breathes Braxton.

"Some sort of memorial of the Dragon Wars," says Mariam. "This way," she says and skips down the cobbled street as if she hadn't been woken in the middle of the night by bandits.

You cross a crowded village green that is laid out before a garden shrine with a domed, glass ceiling. In front of the shrine stands a marble spire, atop which burns a beacon fire. Then you pass a building dark with soot and marred by broken windows. Mariam pauses at an intersection and peers down two side streets before nodding vigorously and leading the way south. "We'll get a proper breakfast as soon as we find my aunt's inn," she says. "It's called the Swan."

"Does it have a lovely white swan painted on its sign?" asks Braxton.

"Yes, it does," says Mariam.

"Then is that it, just there?" She points, and Mariam beams.

"That's it! Let's go!" She rushes off in a fresh burst of energy, leaving you stumbling along behind.

When you finally reach the Swan, you find Mariam babbling excitedly to a gnome who looks almost exactly like her, plus twenty years.

"You must be Mariam's friends," says the older woman. "I'm Mariam's aunt, Sapphire. It's good to meet you." She welcomes you inside, and you step down into a blessedly cool, half-sunken common room, where a scattering of thick oak tables and sturdy chairs lie beneath rafters strung with herbs and root vegetables. Thick iron lanterns rest on each table, none lit now, and light streams in from tall windows against the south wall. "Please have a seat," says your host, and you do.

"We made it," says Braxton, dropping heavily into a chair that creaks under her weight. "I think I could sleep for a week."

"None of that!" says Mariam. "We have work to do." Braxton lifts her head and glares. "Starting tomorrow, I guess. Let's all take today off." Mariam vanishes into a back room, then appears a few minutes later with a tray rattling with glass bottles of red liquid. "Here," she says and distributes the bottles. "It's the least I can do for helping get me here safely."

➔ *You gain three healing potions (item A). Distribute these potions amongst yourselves as you choose.*

HEALING POTIONS

You can carry multiple healing potions. However, there is only one copy of the healing potion item card, which should be shared as a reference among all players. Some items, healing potions included, have additional effects listed on the item card.

You may drink a potion at any time. To do so, you must have at least one potion recorded on your character sheet. When you drink a healing potion, reduce the number of healing potions you have by one and recover half of your maximum stamina.

If playing with two or more heroes, you can drink a potion only if your activation token is not exhausted. In addition, you may give any number of your potions or other items to another hero at any time, but only if your activation token is not exhausted. Drinking a potion or giving your items to another hero does not exhaust your activation token.

Sapphire returns a moment later with a larger tray, overflowing with plates of yellow eggs, loaves of dark brown bread, and a tall pitcher of milk. "I hope you'll stay at the Swan for as long as you like," she says. "No charge, of course. Not after what you went through to get my Mariam here safely."

Mariam pours everyone a glass of milk. She holds hers aloft and exclaims, "To new roads!"

Braxton takes a glass, holds it up, and looks from Mariam to Sapphire to you. "To new friends."

The meal is amazing, and you soon collapse in rooms provided by your generous host. You doze through the majority of the day. After dinner, you rest in the common room, chatting idly with Braxton and another patron. Soon, the lack of a good night's sleep is too much, and you retire to your room. You will have to explore Dragonholt on the morrow.

- ➔ *You each recover half of your maximum stamina.*
- ➔ *You each recover one skill.*
- ➔ *You each refresh your activation token.*
- ➔ *You each gain one experience.*
- ➔ *Your fame increases by one.*
- ➔ *This quest is complete. Read entry 1001 in the "Dragonholt Village" book.*

EARNING EXPERIENCE

At the end of a quest or after a particularly harrowing event, an effect might cause you to gain one or more experience. Experience is an abstract measure of what you have learned during your adventures. Record the amount of experience you have accrued on your character sheet. You will be able to spend your experience to learn new skills in the future.

EARNING FAME

As you and your companions continue your adventures, you will accrue fame. Fame is an abstract measure of how well known you are to the public and how they feel about you as heroes. A high fame indicates that you are well known and well liked by the community. Fame is recorded for the group as a whole on the story tracking sheet.

COMPLETING A QUEST

You have now completed the "To New Roads" quest. You will no longer read any entries from this quest book. When you complete a quest, an effect will instruct you to read an entry from another quest book. You will continue the story in that quest book.

Just after completing a quest is a great time to take a break. You might wish to stop playing for now and pick up from here at a later date. If so, record the entry number and book you have been directed to on the story tracking sheet so you can pick up where you left off next time you play.