Dark Messiah of Might and Magic

Jumpchain gauntlet

AKA:

The Adventures of Sir Kicksalot Deathboot in the Land of Conveniently Placed Spike Racks

=

The Wars of Fire raged as man, elf, and every other race that would heed the call allied themselves against the Demons. In the end they were victorious, largely due to the efforts of the wizard Sar-Elam who led a great ritual to cast the Demons out of the world and into a prison dimension he had crafted. Yet some imperfection tainted the spell, and it remained possible for Demons to be summoned or reach out and influence mortals at certain times.

Decades after Sar-Elam's death, his disciple spoke a prophecy that the prison would be destroyed and the demons freed by a 'Dark Messiah.' Almost a thousand years later, King Nicolai Griffin is slain and his fiance Isabel is abducted and impregnated by Kha-Beleth, the demon sovereign. Before she can be rescued, she gives birth and the offspring is spirited away.

Twenty years later, a young man named Sareth is summoned by his master. Raised by the wizard Phenrig and schooled in the arts of might and magic, he is sent on a mission to retrieve the Shantiri Crystal which shall lead the way to a mysterious artifact known as the Skull of Shadows. But first, Phenrig summons a spirit to reside within the body of his student as guide and minder, one that takes the form of a beautiful woman named 'Xana'...

=

For this jump, you will take the place of Sareth. No guessing his real identity. Your age is twenty, and your sex is male. If you would prefer, you may be female instead for no charge, and freely change the sex of the story's two potential love interests if you wish.

Your time here will be short. A month or three at most. You will have very little time to learn new things, or pick up anything beyond what you can scavenge on your journey. As a gauntlet, any out-of-jump items and perks you may possess are suppressed or locked away for your time here, and you are limited to your Body Mod form. Dying will not end your chain, but you will lose whatever items and perks you purchased here.

You begin with **0cp**.

=

Perks

As Sareth, who is a perfectly normal young orphan raised by a wizard and trained in all skills relevant to a protagonist, you have no need to choose a background. Instead you'll choose which of the three branches of training you favored. You'll receive the 100cp perks from that line for free and the rest of them will be discounted 50% off.

Undiscounted

100cp – Sir Kicksalot Deathboot

I cannot begin to state just how good you are at kicking things. You can smash open crates, break doors, and if you manage that perfect hit while they're off-balance and wide open you can make people go flying back several meters. Now, anyone with enough strength might be able to manage that, so here's the kicker. (No apologies.) If you kick someone towards a hazard like a cliff or something spiky, then the weaker they are the more likely they'll fall in, fall off, or get impaled. Mooks are pretty much doomed, while stronger types might be able avoid this fate.

400cp – Demon Messiah

Tapping into your demonic heritage with Xana's aid, you can assume a demonic form that is immensely strong, fast and armed with both rending talons and piercing tail. Maintaining this form is harmful, draining your life-force while active but it grants the power to restore your health by slaying the living. Like all demons, in this form you are greatly resistant to fire and poison. Take care not to be seen transforming by anyone not a cultist, lest you become a pariah. Post-jump, your power will have matured enough that assuming this form will not damage your health.

You may or may not acquire this power during this time here, depending on your actions. If you take the 'Prophecy must be fulfilled' drawback, you certainly will. So unlike the 'normal' version, buying this perk will make your demonic form even more powerful, and grant a major boost to your physical abilities even when not transformed.

Might!

These skills deal with combat, both in melee and at a distance.

100cp/200cp – Melee

For 100cp, you become very talented with all common melee weapons. You're more than a match for the average thug and can hold your own against multiple such foes without getting overwhelmed. For another flat 100cp you're a whirlwind in combat, able to break or slip around an enemy's guard, disarm the less skilled and pull off some very impressive if slightly unrealistic moves like hitting a target as you're leaping, sliding or generally swashbuckling around the room.

100cp/200cp – Archery

You're a skilled archer, able to reliably factor in the arc and travel time of your arrows as fast as you can fire them. For another flat 100cp, your aim will never waver and your vision can 'zoom in' on distant targets without losing awareness of your surroundings.

200cp – Strength

Few men alive can match your strength, you can clash with orcs without fear and it would take a monster to make you give ground. Needless to say, you are very dangerous to face in melee and only mildly less dangerous at range considering the power behind your throwing arm.

200cp – Critical Hit

Once in a while, you'll find that your attacks do far more damage. Bones snap. Arteries are opened. Sheer pain makes your enemies crumble. It's rare, but you'll know when it happens.

400cp – Adrenaline

As you fight, you can feel a force building inside of you. It slows when the tempo of the fight does, and drains when the fight is over. Once fully charged, you can gain a burst of enhanced strength and agility along with an accelerated perception of time. From an outside perspective, this will only last for a few seconds. But for you, it's more than long enough to choose and execute a strike that can easily decapitate a man or ram a knife through an eye socket with near-perfect precision.

Magic!

The various magic spells a player would spontaneously learn during their adventure.

100cp – Dark Vision

A simple spell, it allows you to see in the dark. Costs almost no mana to cast, and can be continuously maintained with an equally low effort. Unlike the in-game spell, this superior version allows you to see your surroundings in normal colors and not an eye-bleeding blue-white haze.

100cp – Flame Arrow

A small burning projectile. Not terribly damaging, but it can be cast very quickly. You can concentrate on a single projectile to control its flight path. It will ignite oil and flammable materials easily, but not more durable things like solid wood. Has the force of a strong punch.

100cp – Fire Trap

This spell creates a small and hard-to-notice rune on a surface that immolates whatever passes over/under/in front of it. At your level of current skill you can have four traps out at once, which can be layered on top of each other for more damage. Sadly the blast has very little force behind it.

100cp – Heal

A lifesaver, this spell closes your wounds and mends injuries. Does not cure poison, but you could survive the effects with enough castings if you don't have antidotes on hand.

100cp – Telekinesis

A very fun and useful little spell. Concentration allows for the careful manipulation of an item at range, or you can violently yank on an object to tear at things or throw it with great force. Don't expect to be tossing around anything too massive right now, and it's much harder to effect living things and what they're carrying directly with this spell.

200cp – Freeze

Quick to cast but long to recharge, you can wrap a target creature or object in ice. Opponents will be helpless for a few moments, while the ice is both incredibly slippery and difficult to see. This can make for some hilariously lethal accidents if cast near dangerous terrain.

200cp – Fireball

Though it can't be controlled with the same precision as Flame Arrow, there's little point to doing so. Fireball is not a subtle spell, bathing an area in fire and unleashing enough force to toss around everyone in the blast radius. Be careful you don't aim it too close to yourself.

200cp – Lightning

Unleash a stream of electricity that will keep piercing through enemies and bouncing off of resistant surfaces until it runs out of power. Like many other spells, you can exert some degree of control over the direction the spell takes, but you are not immune to your own lightning, so be careful.

200cp – Inferno

A straight-up flamethrower of intense heat and flame but little force. Few things can stand up to this spell unprotected for more than a few seconds without suffering grievous injury or death. It's a total mana hog, but if you've got the energy to spare it can sweep a room clear of foes.

400cp – Charm

Charm warps the mind of a target, making them extremely devoted to you and willing to follow almost any command. They won't hesitate to fight former allies, and knowing that they seek to harm you is enough to make your victim throw themselves into the fray to protect you. At your current level of skill, you can only have one target charmed at a time.

400cp – Sanctuary

This spell gives you 20 seconds of invincibility. It'll take a large chunk of your mana to cast and won't keep you from being knocked around or held down. But for those twenty seconds you can get hit by lightning, smashed by a cyclops, or take a ballistae bolt to the chest without harm. Sanctuary only applies against direct damage, so more talented wizards and things like demons and dragons may know how to dispel or work around this protection. Post-jump the protection is not absolute, but the spell remains a potent defence against physical and magical damage.

400cp – Weaken

An all-encompassing reduction in power. Your target becomes weaker, less skillful, and less magically able. The effect is temporary, but potent enough to turn a very dangerous opponent into a shadow of their former self. Like other spells of this level, it takes a lot of mana to cast.

...Miscellaneous?

This should be the stealth tree, but it also includes passive upgrades for some reason.

100cp – Stamina

Long training has paid off, and you have an incredible amount of physical stamina. Fight, run, climb in heavy armor, fight some more. You'll be fine. You're not tireless, but when you do feel the burn all you need is a few minute's rest and you'll be back on your feet and ready to head out.

100cp – Endurance

Practice swords make real bruises, and you've received enough of them that hits from real weapons don't bother you as much. You can push through pain and still fight after taking damage that would leave most people unconscious. You'll still need proper treatment afterwards.

100cp – Magic Affinity

You have much larger reserves of mana than most. While mages will get the most use out of this, anyone will appreciate being able to have more magic at their disposal if for no other reason than being able to cast Heal when you really need it.

200cp – Stealth

Beyond stepping softly, you know the proper way to sneak up to or past someone without making them suspicious or putting yourself into a bad position. You also know the best ways to take advantage of this surprise if you want to backstab someone, and do it in a way that won't let them alert others in their last moments or leave a bloody mess for others to find.

200cp – Poison Resistance
A product of your heritage, perhaps. You have a massive tolerance for toxic compounds, both mundane venoms and magical spells. Spiders and the toxic exhalations of zombies are no danger to you unless you allow yourself to be exposed to truly massive dosages.

200cp – Alertness
It would be wise to pay attention to your surroundings. Beyond ambushes and traps, many of the places you'll visit have hidden areas full of treasure or opportunities for visiting mayhem on your enemies that might not be obvious at first glance.

400cp – Mana Regeneration
A wizard without mana is helpless. While your mana will restore itself at a slow rate and there are potions around, relying on either in the middle of combat is impracticable at best. With this perk your mana recovers fast enough to make a difference in a fight, allowing you to be far more generous with your spellcasting. Out of combat, a short rest is enough to refill your reserves.

400cp – Burglar
You're a 'professional' thief at this point, able to skillfully pick locks, spot and disarm traps. You know how to look at a building and plan an unseen entrance and how to escape in a hurry, or create a situation to make guards respond in a method of your choosing. Picking someone's pockets is a trivial task, and you're an accomplished saboteur with an eye for unstable structures. Why thieves would be good at dropping buildings on people though, I'll never know. Maybe it's a local thing.

400cp – Vitality
Perhaps another sign of your unique lineage. Your injuries heal quickly, small cuts and scraps closing before your eyes. More serious wounds take much longer to heal, but this regeneration is perfect. A sword through the heart or brain will still kill you, but as long as you survive your injuries you'll eventually recover from them.

=

Items
Any purchased items will quickly find their way back to you if lost or destroyed.

General

100cp – Rations
Even protagonists need to eat, and this satchel provides. Just reach in and pull out skins of fresh water, bread, dried meats and fruits. It's nothing special, but it's healthy and filling. The satchel can produce enough to feed a dozen people a day, and if lost it will return to you the next day.

100cp – Antidote
A general-purpose antidote that can completely flush weak poisons from your system and weaken stronger toxins. Works equally well if drunk after or shortly before exposure. You get three, and this might be more than enough or not even close depending on how your fights go. Restocks daily.

100cp – Potions
Health and mana potions in the traditional red and blue. Five of each. One is good for first aid or casting a few of the low-level spells. You can guzzle as many as you need at once with no issue. You might go through these pretty quickly. Restocks daily.

100cp – Endless quiver
A handy thing to have even if you don't make frequent use of bows. This quiver simply produces an unlimited amount of finely-crafted if ordinary arrows. Merely reach back and one will slip into your hand, ready to be drawn. You don't need to provide the quiver with any mana, and the conjured arrows will eventually disappear. The arrows are compatible with any kind of magical bow, and will alter themselves to fit whatever kind of bow you're wielding, even crossbows.

Weapons

Free – Basic weapon
Common weapons you'll find all over the place. Short swords, bows, daggers, wooden staves, etc. You'll begin with the weapon of your choice, and if lost you won't disarmed for long. Another will be resting nearby.

Free – Rope Bow
Looking plain if well-made, any arrow you fire from this bow can be willed to sprout a long length of rope. You'll have no trouble climbing and swinging off these ropes even in full armor, but they will disappear after a while. Unlike the in-game version, you're free to use the ropes for more creative uses than climbing at specific locations. While you're not bound to travelling the linear path in the video game, losing this item could still make getting around very difficult. I'm giving it to you now, with the guarantee that if lost or destroyed you'll quickly find a new one nearby.

100cp – Masterwork weaponry
An exceptional example of weaponsmithing, these are incredibly durable, perfectly balanced, and razor-sharp. Naga silkswords, elven bows (and arrows) and paired kriss are all within this category.

200cp – Elemental weapon
A magical weapon enchanted with one of several possible effects. From daggers wrapped in lightning or staves that chill flesh on impact, this can be a melee or ranged weapon. Choose from fire, ice, lightning, or poison.

Alternately, there are weapons with enchantments that are activated by pouring your own mana into them. This might mean arrows that explode into fireballs or clouds of poison. Staves or shields that can catch and absorb a single spell to release it later on command, or necromantic weapons that steal life from your victims and transfer some of it to you.

300cp – Dragon weapon
Rare and potent weapons supposedly crafted from the bones of dragons or other materials blessed by them, each of these are fantastic weapons of unsurpassed quality. All dragon weapons can split common armor and hides with ease, but they do terrific damage against demons and the undead. Post-jump, they will do extra damage against anything similarly 'unholy.' Unlike the ones you find in-jump, you can wield dragon weapons you purchase with no issue, no matter your nature.

Armor

100cp – Metal
Made for warriors, this suit of chain and plate offers both excellent protection and mobility. For an additional 100cp the armor is made of Shadowsteel, a generic magical metal that is far stronger than steel. The enchantments on it are equal to and stack with the 'Endurance' perk. Both versions are quite heavy, however.

100cp – Cloth
This silken robe affords only minor level of protection, but it comes enchanted with a small reserve of mana that you can draw upon to cast spells and will absorb any spare mana you have to refill itself. For an additional 100cp you'll gain a version that is just as light but protects as well as mundane chainmail, and holds extra mana equal to the 'Magic Affinity' perk.

100cp – Leather
Leather armor that affords a decent level of protection, the metal pieces are concealed or blackened, the leather carefully oiled and designed to minimize any sounds your movements make. For an additional 100cp, you'll get a full-body suit of soft black leather that makes no sound when it moves and seems to dim the light around you when you wish to remain unseen.

Shields

Free – Buckler
Common as dirt among the foes you'll encounter, this is simple wood reinforced by a thin sheet of metal. Of little use against arrows and beasts, but a skilled warrior can still get good use out of it.

100cp – Vampire Knight's Shield
Well-crafted, light and balanced despite its large size, this cover of dark metal will serve you well. It is indestructible, and though it won't soften incoming blows it will never be sundered by them.

200cp – Elemental Shield
Finely crafted and indestructible, these shield carry enchantments to protect the wielder and punish attackers. Choose from fire, ice, lightning or poison. The shield will greatly enhance your resistance to the chosen element, and releases a small blast of the same when an attack strikes the shield. Gouts of flame, paralyzing shocks, flying shards of ice, or noxious clouds of poison.

Rings
You may benefit from two rings at once

100cp – Ring of Arcane Brilliance
Like cloth armor, this ring has a small reservoir of mana that you can make use of, and draws on your surplus to recharge.

100cp – Ring of the Weaponmaster
With an enchantment similar but inferior to the 'Critical Hit' perk, your strikes will be just a little more effective at slicing through armor and opening veins.

100cp – Ring of Might
While not as good as the 'Strength' perk, this ring will make you noticeably stronger.

200cp – Ring of Regeneration
While not as potent as the 'Vitality' perk, this ring works to heal your injuries and will do so properly. It prioritizes the most serious wounds, but may not save your life from extreme damage.

200cp – Ring of Protection
This ring offers a small amount of protection against both physical and magical attacks.

400cp – Ring of Phoenix
If you would die from your wounds, this ring shatters and restores you to life, teleporting you to a safe location if you're trapped or would immediately die again in your current situation. It will need to be worn to work. Post-jump you'll gain a once-per-jump 1-up.

=

Companions

You really only have two choices. The sultry Xana, or the young wizard Leanna. Should you and they survive the jump you may take one of them as a companion for free, if you remained on good terms with the girl of your choice.

Xana is a snarky succubus, yet one that seems genuinely devoted to 'my prince' and is terrified of being cast aside. She is entirely willing to aid you in betraying the demon sovereign if it means staying with you. Considering what his words imply in the 'evil' ending even after helping to unseal his prison as commanded, she may have good reason to wish to see him remain imprisoned.

On the other hand, Leanna is a young but talented wizard who quickly develops an obvious crush on you. She too wishes only for what's best for you, which includes purging you of your demonic half (and especially getting rid of Xana.) and remaining close to your handsome and muscular side.

But it may be possible to keep both of them appeased. If you can convince Xana that she will always be important to you and treated fairly, if you seal the demon's prison and can somehow convince Leanna to tolerate your 'dark side' then, well...You get both. They will then share a companion slot, and split the effect of purchased perks between them. To their eternal annoyance.

=

Drawbacks

You may take a maximum of +2000cp worth of drawbacks

+100cp – This is a terrible spell!
The original Darksight spell was supposed to help you see in darkness, not make your eyes bleed. Well now you don't have to worry about that. The spell will not work for you, and there are lots of dark areas in this game with creatures that can see in darkness just fine. You'll need to bring your own light sources and be prepared to fend off foes that have the environment on their side.

+100cp – But I thought you said...
When you approach dangerous situations, you'll get advice on how to deal with them. Just not the best advice. Sure, maybe you can sneak up on that ship with all the cannons pointed at you, or you could go looking for an unguarded entrance. You'll never be lied to or be told to do something that won't work, but there's always a better way if you can find it.

+100cp – Flaky forging
This land's equipment tends to be garbage. Shields will be half-broken after a single fight, weapons need constant shattering or may shatter outright at worst, while potions seem thin and poorly-made. You don't need to worry about, say, a rope or ladder you're climbing spontaneously snapping, but you'll go through a lot of items, even magical ones. Purchased items will still reappear for you to use again, but it will take longer and you'll be stuck with sub-par gear until then.

+100cp – Not a complete idiot
As hilarious as it can be to kill them in creative ways, enemies are now fully capable of spotting obvious traps and will take far more care not to place themselves in a dangerous situation if they have a better option. You can still knock them into spikes and maneuver to set them up for a long fall, but they'll be far more aware of environmental dangers around them.

+200cp – Inept
While you can still buy perks from any of the perklines, you're far less talented at one of them then you should be. The group of perks you apply this drawback to will operate at half-strength at most, and training them will be difficult. You just don't really 'get' those skills. You may take this drawback twice. You may not apply it to the 'undiscounted' perkline.

+200cp – Why can't I just stab the cyclops?
You'll find on occasion that things just don't seem to work unless you accomplish them in rather specific ways. Sure, you could chop it to bits, but that monster won't really go down unless you drop the nearby chandelier on him. Or maybe you need to walk up and stab the cyclops in the eye with an arrow after winding him no matter how good of a shot you are to finish it off. While not terribly obtuse in the old point-and-click 'use rubber chicken on pulley' kind of way, some problems will refuse to go away unless you can find just the right trick to solve them.

+200cp – Faceless goons
Physics engine aside, this is a hack-and-slash and you'll be doing a lot of both. There are far more mooks running around than normal, and while you won't have to take on twenty zombies at once unless you're really careless, you won't be able to go for long without running into at least one thing that needs stabbing.

+200cp – Where is all the armor?
Good gear is so very hard to find. You'll never run out of short swords, there's a quiver on every archer's corpse, and there are health and mana potions in marked crates, but anything beyond the most basic equipment will never be found. There aren't even any secret areas. Use these points to buy something good in the item section, because you won't find high-end gear within the jump.

+300cp – OSHA compliance
Well, shit. Someone went through the world and ensured that health and safety regs were being followed. There are no conveniently-placed spike racks, the guardrails that keep people from falling off cliffs are sturdily-built, and there are no flimsy platforms holding up heavy objects for people to walk under. This doesn't mean that you can't use the environment to your advantage, just that you can't expect to find a handy deathtrap whenever you get in a fight.

+300cp – Escort quests
At various points you'll be expected to keep people alive until they can do something. Some are soldiers, some are not, and few are very competent. It'll happen at least a few times, but as long as you're careful they'll probably be all right. After they do their part, it doesn't matter what happens to them. Leanna will often accompany you, but she at least is a capable sorceresses and has a degree of plot armor. If your charge dies before their task is done, you'll lose the gauntlet.

+300cp – Trick shot
Let's be honest, this game is all about finding creative and sometimes silly ways to kill things. Well now you're compelled to do just that, even when it would be much easier to just stab someone when they're not looking. If there's a chandelier, a swinging log, a cliffside, anything, you just can't bring yourself to just stab a guy. Unless it would be too dangerous to pull off, you've got to be creative.

+600cp – Prophecy must be fulfilled
During your time here, you will be compelled to follow the game's plot and advance it in a timely manner. No breaks, no vacations, and with very little free time for a training montage. Go to Stonehelm, then across the Sea of Blood, dig through temples, fight necormancers, etc. You must follow the game's plotline to its conclusion and make a choice at the end, to unseal the demon's prison or not. You will know how to do either when the time comes, but otherwise you'll loss all metaknowledge of this world in general and the game's storyline specifically.

Fate will conspire that events (mostly) follow along with the game, though nothing prevents you from finding alternate routes to accomplish your goals. Even so, things will generally progress as expected. If you screw things up spectacularly enough, such as destroying the Skull of Shadows or somehow making the prophecy impossible to fulfill then you will lose the gauntlet.

=

THE END?

Admittedly, it's entirely possible for you to just faff off and explore the world instead of going on a dangerous and slightly suspect quest in the middle of an invasion by an army of necromancers. If you have not taken the 'Prophecy must be fulfilled' drawback, leaving to do your own things will not automatically cause you to fail the gauntlet.

You will however annoy the succubus in your head, who has no small degree of power she can wield against you and has little reason not to, until you can somehow convince her otherwise. There is also Phenrig, the demon cultist who raised you. If you defy him, he will not hesitate to try to bring you to heel with the help of other mortals and whatever aid he can summon from Sheogh.

You are also half-demon and with a demon in your head, qualities which can be sensed by angels, priests of sufficient power, and potentially many others with sufficient magical sensitivity. Some things, like dragon artifacts, will burn you if touched or react in your presence. If you are ever believed to be a demon in disguise or even just a cultist, great effort will be made to track you down. It's not impossible to make your own way in the world, but don't think it will be easy.

If you don't intervene, the necromancer's ritual will be completed. Stonehelm will be destroyed, Sar-elam's spell will be reinforced, and it will be nearly impossible for demons to escape Sheogh.

Speaking of...

THE CHOICE

Should you end up fulfilling the prophecy in some way, driven by drawback or not, you'll have made the choice to either crack open the gates of Sheogh or use the Skull of Shadows to fix up the locks. Whether Xana, Leanna or both are there are the end means little.

If you break Sar-elam's prison open, the Demon Sovereign will welcome you as his son, and invite you to conquer the world with him. You can leave the jump then and don't need to stay the next ten years for the resulting war, which will set the demons against every race on the planet. As a reward, You'll receive the benefits of the Demon Messiah perk. If you purchased it already, it will be strengthened even further. You'll be able to rip men apart with your bare hands even untransformed, and your magical powers will be hugely boosted. Assuming she survives, Xana or any other succubus you desire is yours to claim as a companion.

If you choose to oppose the demons, the skull will reinforce the original spell. While not perfect, it will be much more difficult for demons to escape on their own or be summoned by outsiders. Again, you may choose to leave the jump now or stay and explore the world for the next ten years. Your contact with the skull will have dampened your demonic side somewhat, making it very difficult for anyone to notice your unique heritage. As for the skull, once you arrive in your next jump you'll find a copy of it in your possession. Once per jump, you can create a prison-realm not unlike Sheogh, and gain spells that can summon or banish beings into it. Though not perfect, the prison is capable of holding powerful being for centuries on end without trouble. The spells of summoning and banishment can be kept secret or taught to others.

=

The End

The usual choice applies.

You may **Stay**, regaining all your jumper powers in the process.

You may **Go Home**, with all you have gained here and in other jumps.

Or you may **Move On**, to continue your journey.