Love is a Battlefield: A Knight's Tale

A Generic Princess Rescue Gauntlet

Version 1.01

There was no warning that you were being summoned. No mystical energy building around you, no small arcs of lightning bouncing between the nearby metallic objects, and you certainly didn't levitate off the floor with blue light flooding from your eyes. One moment you were going about your business and the next you were in another world. Hopefully you weren't doing anything too embarrassing at the time.

You find yourself standing on the stage of a large amphitheater. Long rows of backless seats have been carved out of the surrounding limestone and topped with individual slabs of marble. Tall walls rise nearly four stories on each side and define the edges of the wedge shaped building etched into the stone. Hundreds of banners coat those walls in an entire rainbow of colors, each a different shape and embossed with a unique symbol from any of the rest. There are so many that you can barely make out the wall behind them. The stage itself consists of polished wooden planks with small bronze sconces set into the edge. Half-burned candles rest in each.

As your eyes wander the room you realize you are far from alone.

Thirty men are sitting in the front row of seats and are staring at you intently. As you take in the group, you realize men may be the wrong word to describe them. A few are undoubtedly Human, and even more are at least humanoid in appearance, but once those are discounted the rest are quite clearly monsters of one kind or another. A skeleton sits among the group, a wide gold band sitting atop his grim, lifeless skull. Next to him is some kind of giant spider humanoid with a crown of emeralds and bronze. Behind them is a male gorgon gazing with amused interest in your direction. His yellow-tinted glasses match the gold and silver chains that dangle from the snakes constituting his hair.

The staring contest is eventually broken by the man near the center of the group. He too is wearing a crown, decorated with diamonds and silver, as well as a polished steel breastplate. The massive sword slung over his shoulders is carried with an ease that bespeaks of long practice and great skill.

"Welcome, Sir Hero! We, the various Kings of this great land, welcome you from beyond the mists of time and space. I am sure I speak for all of us assembled when I say that I am pleased you have arrived."

He gestures one well-muscled arm towards the others assembled. Some of them certainly don't look all that pleased to see you. Then again, that might just be their face. A few of them don't look capable of even pretending to be pleasant.

"We, the Kings, have summoned you here for one reason. Our daughters have each been kidnapped by one of the dread Dragons that wander our realms. Thirty in all, stolen from their homelands in a single night by foul magic and brute force!" The group issues a rumble of dissatisfied noises. The King sporting red horns and nut-brown skin curses in a language so vile that a spout of flame issues from his lips, forcing a beastial-looking man coated in white fur to flinch away.

“However, this is not an unheard of occurrence for our lands. A sad fact, but true, that these Dragons have hounded our lands since before time was recorded by even the longest lived of us. They normally strike individual kingdoms and steal only one princess at a time, but time and again there will rise a greedy, vile wurm who is truly powerful. When they arise, we have only one recourse. To summon a Hero from the lands beyond the mists. Only they have the power to slay such mighty Dragons and rescue our daughters.”

“Now, we realize that rescuing thirty Princesses at once is a tall order. No one expects that of you. Instead, we ask only that you rescue a single one and slay the Dragon. This will greatly weaken the magic, traps, and monsters that hold the others captive and allow our local champions to do the rest. Of course, should you manage to rescue and keep safe more of our daughters, you can rest assured you will be rewarded with more than just our gratitude.”

From there the Warrior King launches into introductions and a brief history on each of the Kings who are present and their kingdoms. As interesting as the information may be, you find your attention wandering. A nagging feeling has been tugging at your attention since you arrived here. Following that sensation inwards, you quickly realize something has gone horribly, terribly wrong.

Your link to the powers you have gathered in your travels has vanished. You prod connection after connection to no avail. Even that which binds your Cosmic Warehouse, be it the key normally in your pocket or the ability to call up Portals, has disappeared from your grasp. You check your pockets and also confirm that everything you had been carrying is also gone.

[You have been reduced to your Body Mod form.]
[No items and no powers.]
[If you have not taken the Body Mod Supplement, you may do so now.]

[You gain 0 CP.]

When you snap back out of your introspection, you realize that the Warrior King has been finished for some time. He appears a little annoyed at your lack of attention. The gelatinous looking gentleman near the back wearing a crown of black onyx chuckles, but stifles it after a harsh look from those around him. It is safe to say that few of the other Kings share the same sense of humor. The Warrior King sighs and rubs at the bridge of his nose before continuing.

“I guess I did drone on there for a bit. Look, the important thing to remember is that each Princess is held in her own Tower. They have between five and ten floors each and are far larger on the inside than they appear. It’s all Dragon magic. There will be monsters and traps inside the towers, but some will have more of one than the other. A few may even have some special gimmick or trick you will have to overcome instead.”

“Keeping so many Princesses locked up at once forces the Dragon to spread out their magic. This means it will be at its weakest when you have only freed one or two Princesses and only grow stronger from there. Additionally, freeing more Princesses will allow the Dragon to commit more resources to defending those still remaining, so each Tower will grow more difficult to conquer with each one freed.”

“Beyond these general statements, we cannot be entirely sure what you will face inside the Towers or the Castle itself. Each Dragon has their own methods. Some are stronger, some are weaker, some prefer magical defenses and traps while others prefer to lure in monsters to do the work for them. A few even lay traps in the hallways of the Castle themselves. But that is the gist of it and we are all out of time for questions. Our daughters await their rescue. We each only pray you will rescue our own first.”

And with those words, three of the Kings step onto the stage. All Elves, though each bears a different tone of skin and wildly different tastes in clothing. One stands to your right, one on your left, and one directly in front of you.

“Hero from beyond the mists, we send you on your way.” The three intone simultaneously. This time magic does indeed build up around you and small sparks of electricity lance from their outstretched fingers to touch upon your skin. There is a tingling sensation that builds until it is on the verge of becoming pain, before a massive force squeezes around your chest and tugs. The world dissolves into a blue and black blur as time and space bends itself around you. For a moment you cannot breathe, cannot blink, cannot so much as cry out in shock.

But then, the world snaps back into view. Where did you land?

[You must pick one of the Options below.]

[+0 CP] On the Doorstep: Wow. That teleportation spell really is something. It landed you only feet away from the massive wooden door that is the entrance to the Dragon’s castle. Those Elf wizards really know their stuff.

[+50 CP] Several Days Away: Wait, what? This doesn’t look like the castle. It looks more like a cobblestone road running through some grasslands with not a landmark in sight. A moment later, a backpack pops into existence in front of your face before dropping to the ground. Inside you find several days worth of travel rations, a basic map, a compass, and a few bottles of water. There is also a note, which reads: *Apologies on missing the mark summoned Hero. Even with three mages teleportation magic can be difficult. Please accept these supplies and we urge you to hurry on your way.* Well, isn’t that fun. To top it all off, the Dragon will use the extra time you spend getting to the castle to spruce up the Towers, enhancing their defences to **Tier 1** right from the very start.

[+100 CP] In a Swamp: The feeling of warm sludge seeping into your boots greets you as you emerge from the teleportation spell. Around you the fetid fumes of decaying plant matter and stagnant water swirls amidst clouds of mosquitoes. You barely have time to slap a few of the offending insects away before a simple backpack pops into existence a short distance away. You have to struggle to reach it before it sinks from sight, but you do manage. Inside is a week's worth of travel rations, a basic map, a compass, and a few bottles of water. There is also a note, which reads: *Our most sincere apologies for setting you down in such an inconvenient place. Even with three mages accurate teleportation is no small feat. Please accept these supplies and we urge you to hurry on your way.* You suppress a shudder as a trickle of cold water drips from the trees above. It appears to be raining as well. Oh joy. Struggling through the swamp and the increased distance to the castle will take you most of a week and a half, which will give the Dragon plenty of extra time to infuse the Towers with additional magic. Each of them will start with **Tier 2** defenses and only increase from there.

[+200 CP] A Short Distance Away: Hang on, that teleport spell felt awfully short. You turn around to realize that you didn't go that far at all. In fact, you barely made it to the top of the amphitheater you were just standing in. You can even see the Kings, all looking vaguely proud of themselves for a job well done. Annoyed, you stomp down the steps and confront them with their own inadequate spellcasting. The Elf Kings each look embarrassed and the Warrior King is flabbergasted. After a short round of Kings yelling accusations at each other, the decision is made to send you on your way without magic. A horse is found and supplies gathered for your trip, which include a map and a compass as well as several water bottles and food. Warrior King explains the basics of the route and cautions you to stick to the path, as all kinds of horrible monsters await those who wander from it. Promising to do as he says, you set out. It will take you a solid month to travel the extended distance to the castle, even on horseback. The Dragon, bored with your seeming inability to reach the castle in a timely manner, will have turned their magic on the Towers again and again. Each of them will start with **Tier 3** defences. While this would normally be the upper limit of what a Hero would be likely to find, your troubles are just beginning. It is hard to tell just what you'll discover awaiting you inside the Towers as they continue to grow more difficult, but it is sure to be unpleasant.

The Castle

The Castle is an impressive creation of polished black stones and tall, majestic towers capped with red tile roofs. Despite their sheen, the castle walls fail to reflect even the slightest bit of sunlight. Thirty Towers rise up from the outer wall, evenly spaced and lacking any obvious characteristics to distinguish one from any other. There is only one entrance, the large, wooden, double doors at the very front. They open easily and silently to your slightest touch, as if eagerly inviting you inside. However, once you cross the threshold they slam shut and will not open again. They will stand as impervious to damage or trickery as the stone walls themselves until you slay the Dragon.

Directly ahead of the main entrance is an expansive indoor garden. Black stone columns reach up to the glass-roofed ceiling high above that allows the sunlight to filter down. Small fruit trees fill the space, along with flowers of all shapes and sizes. None of these are species you recognize, but all the fruits will prove edible and non-poisonous if you dare to taste them. A small spring issues up from the rocks in one corner, following a winding trail cut into the floor through the greenery. It, like the fruit, is fresh and clean for drinking, bathing, or what have you. While it strikes you as an odd amenity for a Dragon to build, you reason that the Princesses must need to eat and drink in their captivity.

Behind the garden rests an oversized iron doorway with a stylized design of a Dragon carved into the metal. Red paint fills in the artistic representation with individual scales showing through the color. Clearly this is the door that the Dragon lies behind. As you test the handle, you are surprised to find it unlocked. You could challenge the Dragon now, while she is distracted protecting the Princesses, but a feeling of dread pulls you up short. Warrior King's voice echoes in your memory that at least once Princess must be rescued first. An "Or else!" seems to be implied in his tone. Still, should you truly want to do so, there is no one that can stop you.

**Should you decided to challenge the Dragon now,
skip immediately to Ending 1, Page 117**

Deciding against unrestrained action for the moment, you turn and begin to explore the rest of the Castle. One long hallway follows the outer wall of the structure and eventually lead you right back to the front entrance after making four right angle turns. Thirty doors adorn the outer wall while nearly as many are set into the inner wall as well. Each Tower door has a small symbol crudely scratched into it, corresponding to the Princess held inside.

The inner doors reveal a fully furnished Castle, lacking only staff and willing occupants to give the building that sense and buzz of life. A kitchen, complete with pantry and expansive dining room, a full stocked library, and a whole selection of bedrooms, studies, and workshops can be found within these four walls. There is also an armory, though sadly this is barren. The whole inspection takes a little time but it is time well spent in your opinion.

However, as you complete your circuit and step back into the garden, a stone abruptly sinks under your weight. You look down as a sharp click issues from the hidden pressure plate. It remains pressed even with if you raise your foot. You can only gaze about and wonder what mischief this will unleash.

[You may pick as many of the Drawbacks below as you wish, or none at all.]

[+50 CP] She was locked away in a Castle… - With a slam-click that reverberates throughout the Castle, all of the doors to the inner rooms shut and lock in unison. The doors to these rooms will not unlock and cannot be battered down by any amount of force, just like the front door. The Dragon must be slain to break this enchantment. While a minor inconvenience on its own, if coupled with another Drawback you will find this to be a major problem. Without these rooms, the Princesses will be forced to follow you into each Tower or wait out in the halls, which may be an issue all of its own in a moment. Only the Garden lies open now… and it has no doors to lock.

[+100 CP] In the highest room of the tallest Tower… - The earth suddenly begins to shake, all but guaranteed to knock you off your feet. Dust fills the hallways and clears only after the rumbling stops a short time later. As you pick yourself up, you happen to glance up through the garden's glass ceiling and realize instantly what has changed. The Towers, who were all various heights between five and ten stories just a moment ago, have grown like desert flowers after a rain. Each now sports eleven floors, which means more traps, monsters, and other tricks to overcome in your rescuing pursuits. Hopefully you didn't skip leg day.

[+100 CP] Guarded by a terrible fire-breathing Dragon… - Somewhere out of sight there is the sound of stone grating against stone followed by the howls, roars, and gargles of dozens of monsters. The hallway of the Castle is no longer a safe place. Monsters of all sorts will soon be wandering them and you will never be completely free of their presence. Slaying hundreds will only result in more issuing forth from cubbies in the walls, trap doors in the floor, or leaping down from cleverly concealed holes in the ceiling. While their assault will by no means be constant, you will find opportunities to sit down and refresh yourself, they will continue to happen on a regular basis. This will make your job of protecting the Princesses you rescue much more difficult.

[+100 CP] Many had attempted to free her from this dreadful Prison… - From behind the walls, underneath the floors, and just on the other side of the stone above, comes a horrible cacophony of clicks, clacks, snaps, and other various mechanical noises too numerous to mention individually. After a moment, the noises ceases but nothing appears to have changed. However, out of sight is not out of mind for you. Numerous switches and plates now lace the stones in the floors and walls, linked to murderous devices of every shape and design. Everything from simple arrow traps to sawblades springing from the walls to sections of the ceiling slamming down without warning now awaits you in the halls of the Castle. Tread lightly and ensure your Princesses do the same. No King wants a pincushion or a blueber… pancake for a daughter.

The Merchant

Whether you found the Castle to be filled with traps and monsters or as peaceful as a library, you will quickly notice a door to one side of the Garden that was not there at your first inspection. Shimmering blue tiles seem to float in the rough shape of a door. They spin in place, some slowly, some quickly, as if responding to movement unfelt by any but the tiles themselves. However you realize that gazing through the gaps reveals nothing about the room beyond.

There is no doorknob, no obvious way of parting the tiles, but they do so automatically as you reach one hand towards them. They slip away from your grasp to each side, tile folding on top of tile like a geometric puzzle until the way is clear.

Inside is a dark room barely illuminated by a pair of torches at one end. A thin, reedy looking man with grey-pale skin wrapped in a voluminous robe stands behind a short wooden counter. As you step inside, the tiles slide back into place, closing off this room from the rest of the castle. For some reason you are entirely certain that neither trap nor monster will follow you into this room.

“What’re ya buyin’?” The man abruptly rasps in your direction. One white-filmed eye fixes itself on your face while the other, a black orb with a spot of fiery red at it’s center, stares off into space over your right shoulder. From under the counter he draws forth a massive tome, leather bound and coated with dust, which he slaps down onto the counter. He opens the book to a spot near the middle of the pages and finally reverses it to face you.

A few tentative steps forwards reveals that the two pages he has opened to read like a shopping list of skills, training, and an odd assortment of items that seem to be gathered from across more worlds than just this one. His face does not invite questions nor does he seem keen on anything but your business.

Just as you are about to tell the strange man you have no coin to buy any of his “goods” with, a weight suddenly appears in your pocket. Fishing it out, it appears to be a large, flat, copper coin, utterly plain except for the symbols **50 CP** stamped upon one face. If you have picked any of the Drawbacks above, or any of those below, additional coins spill into your pocket as well.

Judging from the glitter in the man’s eyes, the only life you’ve seen in them, this is exactly the currency he expects to be paid in. So you hand over the coin and point to the Basic Training skill that looks the most interesting, useful, or powerful to you. The swiftness and greed that he snatches the coin with gives a certain lie to his appearance. You wonder just what sort of being you are really doing business with.

In exchange for your coin, he hands you a small, white crystal. As soon as you touch it the gem dissolves painlessly into your skin. A moment later a fire briefly rages in your mind, pouring in knowledge, skills, and expertises you did not have a moment before. Within a few heartbeats the sensation vanishes and you are simply left standing in front of the Merchant again.

You will be able to return here whenever you wish during your time in the Castle, should you discover additional coins to spend. The Merchant will not allow any Princesses you rescue along the way to remain in the safety of his shop. Attempting to leave them behind will result in them all ejected into a large pile just outside the door. The Princesses will ***not*** appreciate this kind of treatment.

Skills

You may spend the 50 CP coin however you wish. A Basic Training Skill is suggested. Skills with a * may be bought multiple times.

[-50 CP] Basic Weapon Training* - A very straight-forward option. You may learn how to properly wield a medieval-era weapon of your choice. It can be melee or ranged and anything from a simple dagger to something as exotic as a length of spiked chain. You will be able to use the weapon without injuring yourself. This will not turn you into a master swordsman (or whatever) instantly, but will give you enough experience that the first monsters you run into won't easily smack you aside.

[-50 CP] Basic Acrobatic Training - For those who prefer a little extra spring in their step. This training will allow you to dodge, duck, dip, dive, and dodge with the best of them. Includes some parkour ability, which adds a little extra distance to your jumps and makes falling generally a less deadly experience. You're not a master at any of these things, but it should keep you out of the way of the more basic traps you'll encounter.

[-50 CP] Trapfinding - A practical skill for practical people and a staple for dungeon delvers who forgot to add a Rogue to the party. This skill is part knowledge and part instinct. It allows you to detect a majority of the traps that litter the floor and even walls of most of the Towers, as well as some you might find in the Hallway. Particularly well hidden or insidious traps may still escape your notice and you do have to have time to concentrate to spot traps effectively. Trying to it while fighting someone is going to be as difficult as it sounds.

[-100 CP] Trap Disarming (Requires Trapfinding) - Being able to spot traps is all well and good, but now you'll have a good shot at jamming, breaking, or even temporarily disabling those that you find. Just keep in mind that doing so takes time and concentrated effort. Meaning that if you decided to disable every trap you find along the way, even your slowest Rivals are going to have plenty of time to pass you up.

[-50 CP] Mundane Crafting Skill* - Have you ever wanted to be a Blacksmith? A Leatherworker? Weaver is always a popular choice. Well, whatever tickles your fancy as a hobby when you're not off rescuing Princesses, the Merchant is all too happy to take your coin so you can indulge. This small, white gem will grant you roughly ten years of professional experience in whatever mundane craft you pick. Not sure what good that will do you here, but you'll figure something out.

[-50 CP] The Basics of Architecture - While some may find the study and design of buildings to be a dull topic, many adventurers are at least roughly informed on the subject for a variety of reasons. Knowing how a structure or dungeon should be crafted helps spot hidden treasure troves behind walls by spotting incongruities. Fresh mortar around a stepping stone that could indicate a trap. This skill grants you a chance of spotting both, along with other architectural clues that may indicate secret passages and the like, due to your familiarity with the subject.

[-50 CP] Silent Feet - Perhaps you're not one of those Heroes who likes to kick down the door and run in bellowing war cries? There's no shame in slipping around to the rear and taking your enemies by surprise, which shouldn't be too hard for you now. You've learned how to silence your footsteps to a whisper on all but the noisiest of surfaces. The knowledge also includes tips on how to keep your equipment from clinking and clattering, though carrying around an entire kitchen's worth of pots and pans is still going to make noise. Nin nin nin!

[-50 CP] Basic Athletic Training - For those who wish they had a little bit better grasp on things, this white gem includes techniques and experience on a number of athletic skills. Running, Swimming, Climbing, and even a short tutorial on Riding are all included in this package. While it doesn't include any kind of additional strength to perform these feats, just knowing the proper techniques will help you out immensely. Expect to have little trouble with any of these feats barring extraordinary circumstances.

[-50 CP] Kampfringen - It can be called by many names, but the German word for it sounds so much better. Grappling and throwing can be useful against a wide variety of opponents. Knowing how to do it without hurting yourself, and while fully armored, is the whole point of this martial art. While admittedly less than useful against all but the smallest Dragons, it will come in handy if you wish to defeat the more humanoid foes you find here. Just try to remember you might not have the strength to throw every opponent you find yourself up against.

[-100 CP] Monster Identification - Do you know the difference between all three varieties of goblinoid? Or how to tell a regular wolf from a dire version? Did you know that a bridge trolls are deadly afraid of canaries? Well of course you do! A very handy knowledge base about monsters of all stripes from this world has just been crammed inside of your head. You'll know their weaknesses, strengths, any peculiar habits or tendencies they have, and tons of other tidbits. It will definitely give you an edge on any you decide to fight.

[-150 CP] Alchemy - The noble art of brewing strange components together to achieve a variety of healing effects is now yours to command. At least you'll have no shortage of components with all these Guardians and Towers. Given a little time, the right ingredients, and a proper chemistry set like the one in the Castle's workroom, you will be able to design and create a whole assortment of healing potions. Everything from the basic wound sealers to antidotes for poisons and diseases you might encounter in the Towers. Should you find some especially exotic components, you might even be able to come up with water breathing or fire breath potions, but expect to only see one or two opportunities to snag those components along your climbing.

[-200 CP] Relationship Dynamics and You! - Many Heroes will simply rescue one Princess and call it a day, a few prefer to put some extra effort into it. Rescuing ten, twenty, or even thirty Princesses in the course of an adventure is sure to land you in the history books. However, it will not be managed without its own share of headaches. Princesses are, as a group, vibrant and willful creatures with personalities that run the gamut from calm to violently antagonistic. Getting even a few of them to get along and work together can be a nightmare if their personalities aren't at least a little similar.

By buying this option, you will gain a wealth of knowledge and a subtle intuition on how to help people get along despite their differences. You are able to spot similarities in two opposing personalities and, with a little effort on your part, help the two parties to see them as well. While not a perfect solution every time, it is enough to keep everyone involved from openly fighting during a high-stakes rescue operation with just a short conversation. By investing more time and effort, you can help form lasting relationships that do not require your direct intervention to succeed.

Items

Items marked with a * may be bought multiple times.

[-0 CP] Basic Hero Equipment - While The Merchant is not one to give things away for free, there is a pile of normal, ordinary equipment in the corner of the shop that he seems to consider beneath his notice. Given the bloodstains on some of it, you can guess what happened to the last wearers. Still, at least it's more protective than the shirt you're wearing now. You find a leather vest with metal studs in it that is relatively free of stains and stab holes, along with a medieval era weapon of your choice, and a shield. You may take all or none of it, but you will receive a stern look should you try to take more than one weapon.

[-50 CP] Boomerang - The faithful boomerang has been a staple of adventuring heroes since time immemorial. Do not be deceived by its relatively ordinary appearance. This wooden flying stick is guaranteed by magic to always return to your hand after being thrown. Use it to flip switches out of reach, or bop enemies to distract them, or any of a hundred uses you could devise for it. Don't expect it to pick up treasure for you. That's just silly.

[-50 CP] Red Potion* - A trio of vials filled with a magical healing potions. Each will absolutely cure any and all wounds in a matter of seconds upon being ingested. Warning: Red Potion will not revive the dead or cure diseases, curses, or poisons. Side Effects may include… oh, that part of the label is missing. The Merchant will begrudgingly refill all three of the Red Potions for you every time you ask.

[-50 CP] Jellybeans* - A small back of magical jellybeans that come in every flavor under the sun. You'll never know what you will end up with! Oh, they also cure the variety of diseases, poisons, and curses you'll find around the dungeon. The bag, when purchased, will contain five jellybeans capable of curing poison, five disease removing ones, and two curse-lifting candies. The Merchant will unhappily refill the bag for you whenever you ask him to.

[-50 CP] Exit Mouse - The Exit Mouse is a well-trained, blazingly intelligent little rodent born to help Heroes out of tough spots. All but immortal, an Exit Mouse can be kept in the pocket and will stay there no matter what, able to survive any amount of punishment that the Hero carrying them can endure. Once pulled out and the command word is spoken, the Exit Mouse will lead the way out of whatever dungeon, Tower, or maze the Hero may find themselves in by the shortest, easiest route. Simply put, it will show you the way back to the Hallway of the Castle while avoiding any traps and monsters that do not significantly increase the walking distance. Once the Hero is safe, a second command word can be spoken to send the Exit Mouse scurrying back into their pocket, waiting for the next time they can be useful.

[-100 CP] Enchanted Weapon* - Magic makes almost everything better. This is a fact. So applying magic to your weapon of choice must, by that logic, make it much better. The Merchant will moodily enchant whatever weapon you present to him with an element of your choice. So long as that choice is either Fire, Ice, or Lightning. Don't expect him to explain how all three can coexist on the same blade at the same time either. It's magic and he doesn't explain anything.

[-100 CP] Hookshot - A short, wooden wand with a metal claw set into the head and a single button on the side. Admittedly unimpressive to look at, all it takes it a press of the button to reveal the useful tool hidden in such a small package. When activated, the metal claw shoots forwards like a rocket a fair distance and attempts to find a handhold of any kind to latch onto. Once it has a secure grip, the magic hauls the Hero holding the Hookshot forward with dramatic speed. Excellent for crossing short gaps without jumping or climbing a rocky ledge. Can also be used to latch onto monsters, but that might cause more trouble than it solves.

[-100 CP] Fire Flower - A rather oversized flower that appears similar to a red sunflower. The thick, woody stalk is firm enough that it can be waved around without worry of it snapping or bending and the head has been magically enchanted to never lose a single petal. But this item's true power is that it allows its wielder to summon blasts of fire. While limited to small fireballs or short bursts of flame, the Fire Flower can produce either effect infinitely, requiring neither mana or effort on the wielder's part. However, keeping the Flower active for too long in one stretch will cause it to "wilt" and it will need several minutes to refresh itself.

[-100 CP] Ice Wand - This light wand appears to be made from a sliver of eternally unmelting, deep glacial ice. The wielder will never feel that cold while holding it. The wand makes for a rather impressive bashing weapon, though its size limits that ability, the real power comes from its magical abilities. The holder can simply will it and cause the wand to launch needles of thin, sharp icicles in straight lines. The Ice Wand can also issue forth a gust of freezing wind, equally as damaging as the icicles but with a much shorter range. It requires neither mana nor any other kind of power source, but using it for too long in one stretch will cause it to shut down for a few moments while it refreshes itself.

[-100 CP] Thunder Staff - Despite the name, the Thunder Staff is no larger than a wand and made of simple wood with a large Topaz bound to the head with silver wire. Like the Fire Flower and Ice Wand, the Thunder Staff's simple exterior is simply camouflage for the magic that lies within. The holder can cause the staff to launch small bolts of lightning at foes with just a thought. Alternatively, it can be made to flare lightning magic randomly in all directions, which is more powerful than the basic bolt, but could strike anyone or anything in a short distance. The Thunder Staff requires no mana or further upkeep, but if used for an extended period of time at once it will shut down for several moments to refresh itself.

[-100 CP] Dragon's Call - A magical, musical horn that has been carved out of the severed horn of a Dragon. When the small end is blown into, a massive roar like that of a grand Dragon is produced from the other end. It is startlingly loud and the noise echoes much further than it seems like it should. While an interesting novelty on its own, it's true power comes from the effect this roar has on the other monsters in the Towers. Most of them fear the might of a Dragon, and rightly so, and will flee in terror at the sound of it. While it will do little against the undead or golems, against living foes it can be a powerful distraction or a way to scatter clumped groups. Be warned that creatures will soon realize no Dragon is stomping through the halls and return to their own habits. Using this repeatedly in short order will cause its effectiveness to dramatically diminish.

[-200 CP] Red Heart Boxer Shorts - Once worn by a Hero whose dedication to his Princess was second to none, The Merchant will not say how he came into possession of these undergarments. But the magic that allowed that Hero to endure blows that would fell lesser men still clings in a small way in the silken cloth. Once during your time in the Castle, if anything should cause your death while you are wearing these shorts, anything at all, you will awaken a short time later inside of The Merchant's shop instead. You will be completely unharmed, refreshed, and you will have lost none of your Items, Skills, or Princesses in the process. While you may keep the boxer shorts, their magic will not function again. Perhaps, should you wander to other worlds after this, you will find their magic returning.

[-200 CP] The Rose Sword - A rather fanciful-looking rapier designed with a delicately made rose for a guard and thorned vine for a blade. At first glance, it appears to be a decorative weapon rather than anything made to endure combat. Those who pick it up will find that the Rose Sword conceals magic like few others'. Once drawn, the thorned vine will quickly transform into a supernaturally sharp and durable blade that is ideally suited for the combat style of the wielder. In addition, it provides a sizable boost to the wielder's combat abilities due to the instincts the magic imbues into all who wield it.

The sword has cobbled together a bit of a personality over the decades of changing owners. It will only allow itself to be held by the Hero who purchases it or any they expressly allow to do so. Those who attempt to wield it anyways will find their hand pierced with short, sharp thorns that even punch through armored gloves. It is also a little jealous on the behalf of its owner and will warm to the touch as Rivals or Rogues come near.

The Rivals

As you prepare to exit the shop with your purchased goods in hand and skills in mind, the tile door slips open of its own accord. Well, not exactly of its own accord, as a figure enters. They appear to be a local hero who slipped into the Castle before your presence sealed the doors behind them. While you are unsure where they were hiding little can be done to oust them now. They're stuck in here with you.

The Merchant clears his throat loudly, nodding towards a poster hanging on the wall when you turn to look. You're certain it wasn't there a moment before, but you step over to inspect it. A bold, decorative title reads "*Rules for Rivals"* at the top. It seems the local heroes are bound by a code of conduct, as unbreakable to them as the front door and the dragon magic that seals it. While you are grateful they have been listed them out for you, the sinking sensation in your stomach tells you these Rivals will only add to your troubles.

Rules for Rivals

1. *There will always be one.*
    - **You must pick at least one Rival, but you may choose as many as you wish.**
2. *Rivals are inexorably linked to Heroes.*
    - **You may NOT gain CP from a Rival if you do not intent to save at least one of the Princesses they are interested in.**
3. *The Hero must take the first step, but then the race is on.*
    - **Rivals only attempt to climb Towers you do unless otherwise noted.**
4. *Rivals may not directly harm the Hero, but the reverse is also true.*
    - **While Rivals may make your life more difficult, they are not allowed to directly attack you and vise versa. Accidents may still happen.**
5. *No matter who rescues a Princess, their claim shall remain inviolate.*
    - **Rivals will never attempt to steal a Princess once the you have rescued them, but similarly you may not steal one they have rescued.**
6. *Break not these rules lest the weight of your sins weigh you down.*
    - **Seriously, don't break the rules. Just don't.**

You feel no magical enchantment or tingle of geas settle onto your shoulders as you read, which strikes you as odd. You expected something of the sort after that last line. So while there is nothing stopping you from breaking the rules, you get the feeling that you should abide by them anyways. If nothing else it is just good manners and the honorable thing to do.

Should you stick to the code of conduct, you will find the Rivals friendly for the most part. While you are all competing for the same prizes they see no reason that should keep them from sharing a joke or tales of adventure together in between moments of danger. Inside the Towers they will be more serious and driven, but they will retain their heroic spirit and act accordingly.

Should you break the code of conduct in an obvious way or consistently, the Rivals grow more brooding and withdrawn. They will not laugh with you or be interested in spending any amount of time around you. They will also be more willing to break the rules as well. It could quickly turn the friendly competition into a blood match.

[+50 CP] The Colorful Knights - While you're unsure exactly how these four managed to slam a magical tile door behind themselves, they not only manage it, but enter the room with a cacophony of clanking metal that has undoubtedly damaged your hearing. Each stands roughly three feet tall and all four wear a suit of brightly colored plate armor complete with a helmet that completely obscures their features. They're a comical bunch, pushing and shoving against each other as they crane their necks to look around the room. But something about the way they carry themselves tells you that they are experienced princess rescuers.

This foursome will enter each Tower alongside you, attempting to rescue every Princess you do. However, despite their incredible durability and combat ability as a group, they will climb each Tower slowly due to their lack of other skills. If they somehow manage to rescue 4 Princesses, they will stop climbing Towers with you, content with their haul.

[+50 CP] The Archer with the Feathered Cap - The tall figure stands in front of the open door for several long moments with a smirk on his lips and a playful gleam to his eyes. Finally, he enters fully and you can see the longsword strapped to his hip and the longbow across his back. He stands six feet tall and has a lean frame simply packed with muscle. His green clothes and feathered cap make him the spitting image of a familiar hero who is a peerless archer and fantastic swordfighter. By sheer coincidence, this figure is both of those things. His name is also Robin, but he is quick to assure you he isn't *that* one.

The Archer will attempt to rescue any humanoid Princesses you do. Depending on the Tower in question, he has a decent shot at succeeding. However, his lack of magical talent will make him unable to progress in Towers where that is essential. His ego can also be his downfall at times as he tends to underestimate his foes, allowing many to sneak in a first strike. Still, in straight combat, there are few foes he cannot finish.

[+50 CP] The Shining Knight - Despite his lack of height, you must admit the Knight strikes an imposing silhouette. He is clad from head to foot in steel plate armor and carries a short lance with an ease that speaks of long practice. His thick, red beard combined with his rugged good looks mark him as a man few ladies would not swoon over. Of course, much of this is offset by the fact he stands only four feet tall. But you would never know it by the way he carries himself. He is quick to offer you his hand and a salute of respect with his spear.

The Shining Knight is an experienced dungeon delver and Princess rescuer. He has battled monsters of all stripes and can quite handily defeat all but the hardiest of them. He is also far more agile than he looks, jumping and springing with ease despite the weight of his armor. He even comes with a pair of Red Heart Boxer Shorts of his very own just in case the worst should happen. He is only interested in Eimhear Mac Carthaigh, but will forget a vital piece of gear once he nears the finish line. Thus he will be forced to climb back down, then up all over again. Even still, it would be best not to underestimate him. He will climb the tower with a rapidity that few will believe.

[+50] The Forgotten Princess - The woman who strides into the shop is dressed for adventure and danger. A rapier of fine steel rests at her hip and her solid, low-heel boots are engraved with magical runes of all kinds. The scarlet and gold finery that matches the pins holding her hair in place absolutely screams royalty. Has a Princess already broken out of her Tower without your help? Well, no, as she will angrily shout at you. The dread Dragon didn't deign to abduct her along with all the rest and what was so wrong with her that she wasn't worthy of being chosen?

The Forgotten Princess has a fiery temper which will likely get her into trouble more often than not. But beware that she is not a wilting violet in need of constant rescuing. Her sword and boots hold powerful enchantments, granting her power and grace that only accentuates the bit of training she has received. She will attempt to rescue every Princess you do but will usually falter on some trap or monster before the final room. Which makes one wonder if she is really trying to rescue anyone at all.

[+100 CP] The Boy In Green - The figure has the tall and lanky form a youth not quite through growing. His green clothes and hat are simple in design, but appear to be made from durable materials. If it wasn't for the sword at his side and the tools he carried he could easily be mistaken for a lost farmhand. But there is something about the way that he carried himself that shows the hero inside. He will offer you a wordless grunt in lieu of a greeting.

The Boy in Green is inexperienced, but has a natural talent towards Hero work and a touch of destiny on his side. He comes equipped with a magical sword that can fire bolts of magic as well as a sturdy shield. He has the Hookshot and Boomerang items and is quite creative with their use. His clever mind is well equipped for solving puzzles and spotting traps. The Boy in Green is interested in every Princess, but will attempt to rescue Al'ea T'ch Ou' after his first success no matter which one you attempt next. This will go very poorly for him and he will remain lost and stuck inside there for quite a while.

[+100 CP] The Grey Knight - It is a tall, imposing man who blocks the doorway. Dressed from head to toe in a dark grey plate armor and wielding a massive sword across his back, he looks less like a Hero and more like a villain. He rarely speaks and when he does it is in a rasp as if the words are painful to his throat. When he moves closer, one can see that his armor has been welded on.

The Grey Knight is a study individual that is capable of dispatching all but the very toughest of monsters on his own. His armor is able to negate blows that would fell small trees and his sword cleaves like few other weapons can. But it comes at a price, the weight making him slow when not in combat. He is almost incapable of avoiding traps, but many will not even damage him. His sole weakness is his lack of puzzle solving skills. The Grey Knight prefers to rescue Princesses that are warriors themselves, though he will also show interest in those with potential in those areas.

[+100 CP] The Suspiciously Feminine Warrior - The young man who strides into the room exudes confidence, but doesn't wear it as arrogance. He has a lithe build of lean muscle that speaks of agility over strength. His clothes, complete with long, white leather boots and a half-cape, are a touch too fancy for real adventure work. You cannot help but think that their features are more feminine than fitting a man, but their figure betrays nothing.

The Suspiciously Feminine Warrior is a duty driven individual and smiles only rarely. There is a trace of sadness in his eyes, as if he would rather be anywhere else but here, but he will not talk of the situation to anyone. He is a fair all-around Hero, if focused more on agility than raw strength, and is armed with a longsword seeped in magic. They have a talent for scraping through sticky situations that seems a little too lucky to be entirely natural. He is only interested in a few Princesses, but he will give any Hero or other Rivals a true run for their money.

[+100 CP] The Reborn Hero - The young man stumbles a bit on his own feet as he steps through the door. Embarrassed, but determined, he continues into the shop as if nothing happened. He is a scrawny individual and only the katana at his side even hints that he should be in the Castle. You have the feeling you're going to spend more time rescuing him from death than worrying about him rescuing a Princess.

The Reborn Hero has zero training, less physical aptitude, and barely seems able to walk down a hallway without falling over. Still, he has a stubborn drive to succeed that all but blazes in his eyes. Wounds will only slow him down for a while, but never stop him. At first he will barely be able to survive a single floor of a Tower before being forced to turn back. But with every failure, he improves. At first they will be minor things. He'll move a little faster, be a little stronger, wield his katana a little better. But even small upgrades quickly stack together. After five Towers, he'll begin reaching the final floor, if long after everyone else. After ten, he'll be racing other Rivals to the finish line. After twenty? Who knows how far such an individual can improve?

[+150 CP] The Plumber - He strides in with a spring in his step and a massive sledgehammer over one shoulder. The man is medium height with a chubby build that hides the muscles underneath. The blue overalls and red shirt, along with his cap, seem familiar even if you can't quite place it. But he seems a friendly sort, quick with a handshake and a smile and an introduction. Now if only you could understand his thick Italian accent.

The Plumber doesn't look like much, but he has decades of experience rescuing Princesses from all kinds of dungeons, solving puzzles of all varieties, and dodging every kind of trap imaginable. While he's not very durable he has insanely powerful legs that can easily allow him to clear his own height during a simple standing jump. Given a little room to run and a wall or two to bounce off of, The Plumber can perform acrobatics feats normally unthinkable for someone with his build. He is also quite adept at defeating foes with his massive hammer. A Hero would do well not to underestimate him. He will attempt to rescue all Princesses, though he will try much harder when it comes to Human Princesses.

[+150 CP] The Golem Knight - By the fluid way the figure moves through the doorway, you realize instantly that whatever this being is, it isn't Human. The Golem Knight leaks blue light from every joint and has only a blank plate for a face. Two blue spots of flame flicker inside the metal where eyes should be, moving slowly as they scan the room. You can see no visible weapon on the creation but you have no doubt that it is armed to the teeth. Unlike the other Rivals, it turns to leave without waiting for you.

The Golem Knight is a creation by the Golem King himself, who never believed in the whole "Chosen Hero" nonsense to begin with. It has an uncanny skill with the sole weapon it has come equipped with, a magical gauntlet built into its right arm. The gauntlet can launch fairly destructive fireballs to pick off enemies from afar or form a solid blade of flame to assault those close at hand. The runes that adorn its armor-plated body are not just for show either, granting it truly staggering durability and strength enough to punch through stone. These two abilities allow it to all but ignore damaging traps, along with curses, poisons, diseases, and many other debilitating effects the Towers may inflict on those of the flesh. While not agile enough to climb Towers quickly, the Golem Knight is not bound by the Third Rule and will climb Towers independently of the Hero.

[+150 CP] The Burly Hunter - The man is huge. Not just tall, but bound in bulging muscles with every last inch of him covered in hair. He clearly ate three, no!, four dozen eggs every day as a lad to get so large. Seriously, he's almost the size of a barge! Is that a musket across his back? Is that fair? He doesn't care. And his neck is just so incredibly thick! There could be no one as manly as this heart-breaking, intimidating, expectorating gentleman in front of you.

The Burly Hunter, despite the rather handsome exterior, is not a man to be trifled with. Not only does he come armed with a fairly modern rifle, which he should by no means have in this world, but he truly deserves his title as a master hunter. He can move surprisingly quietly for a man of his size and prefers sneak attacks whenever possible. When pressed to it, he can wrestle all but the largest of creatures into submission. Fair warning: The Burly Hunter is a very sore loser and will often ignore the Fourth Rule if he believes no one else will discover he did so. He does, however, have a certain weakness around reflective surfaces and cannot pass up an opportunity to gaze at himself for a moment. The Burly Hunter, for all his skill, tends to prefer smarter Princesses but will try to rescue any just for the thrill of the chase.

[+200 CP] The Young Dragon - For a moment, you are stunned by the creature that stuffs itself through the doorway. While certainly a youth for its kind it is unmistakable in the light of the shop. A dragon, green of scale with lightning on its breath and a greedy glint in its eye. It gazes down dramatically from the end of its long, sinewy neck. The impression of power and grace lasts until it opens its mouth. It complains in a whiny, petulant tone about the size of the door.

The Young Dragon, as it will be impossible to get it not to tell you, is here because he has failed on three separate occasions to steal a Princess of its very own. This is obviously because it is too young, but it refuses to accept that as an answer. Rebellious youth being similar no matter the species, it decided to steal its prize from a Dragon who had far more Princesses than they really need.

Despite its age, a Dragon is still a Dragon and is a powerful foe. His teeth and claws are as sharp and magical as any enchanted blade and he can breathe bolts of lightning at will. While its wings are still too small for it to fly, it can climb the sheerest surfaces with ease and even hold itself on the ceiling for extended periods of time. Its scales are tougher than armor, though its belly still has a few soft spots. The Young Dragon will be a true challenge for even the most experienced Heroes and will attempt to rescue every Princess.

The Rogues

As the last of the Rivals wander back out of the Merchant's Shop, several other tile doors slide open. You could swear that they had not existed a moment before. Those who enter through these new doors are a rough, dishonorable lot, here to do business with a truly neutral party. They say little to you besides insults and shouts to get out of the way. For none of them have come for frivolous conversation. The few that have more words than insults talk only to the Merchant himself, handing over coins for sinister looking packages of materials. Most look as if they would be happy enough to stick a knife in you at that very moment if it weren't for the Merchant's strict rules forbidding it.

You slip back towards your blue tile door and into the Garden before any of them get the bright idea to tempt fate. However, you cannot shake the feeling that in the press of the crowd, you saw a furtive figure or two slip towards your door instead of their own. Of course, you could have been imagining things. Surely the Dragon's magic would keep out those who intended to sneak their way past it. Right?

You may pick as many or as few Rogues as you wish. Rogues are not bound by the rules governing Rivals and are mainly disruptive forces. They each have their own methods for disrupting a Hero and some may be even less discriminate on who they target. Rogues cannot be dealt with in any kind of permanent manner, but can be killed or trapped to disable them for a while.

[+50 CP] The Raider from the Wastes - It is unknown which world this pale individual came from, but it must be a coarse and dangerous one. His leather pants are ripped, as is the jacket he wears and the shirt beneath, and his mind has nearly as many holes as all three garments combined. The Raider has only one thought on his mind, to inflict as much pain upon everyone else as every second of existence seems to cause him.

He comes armed with a trio of steel poles turned into rough spears. Each are tipped with an improvised, but powerful, explosive that detonates at the slightest contact. He will die. The Raider wants to die, in battle, preferably against you but he will target Rivals or even other Rogues if the opportunity presents. He will be reborn, again and again, coated in a little more chrome paint each time, but thankfully only once per Tower.

[+50 CP] The Street Rat - A scrawny young man covered in the grime and filth of a life in the gutters. He will eagerly offer his services as a Squire to the Hero. In fact, he will seem so eager and honest you will hardly be able to refuse. And while he has little training at the profession, The Street Rat is quite agile and a deft hand when it comes to locks. He will be friendly and charming and helpful right up to the moment when an opportunity presents itself a few Towers into the adventure.

Perhaps it will happen in a moment of furious combat or while you distracted with a trap or puzzle, but make no mistake, it will happen. And you will never see it coming. The Street Rat will use that moment to steal an item from you, the most valuable you have. A Favor if you have one. And like that he will be gone, taking off down the Tower like a shot. Should he make it back to the Merchant's Shop the item will be lost forever. But perhaps, if you catch him, you can offer him a better life than thieving and betraying.

[+100 CP] The Hungry Mimic - Ah, the bane of all adventurers, the mimic is a creature most have seen in their careers and one you will likely see several times if you climb more than a single Tower. While most you will encounter here are more than happy to remain in their Tower and wait for prey to come to them, this one is different. It has caught your scent and it was the most succulent smell it had ever come across. It must have you.

This mimic is larger and more crafty than is normal, able to take a huge variety of shapes from a simple door key all the way to pretending to be an entire hallway. The Hungry Mimic will stalk you, study your habits, and do its best to ensnare you. You can expect at least two attempts per Tower, though if it sees you coming to expect that number it will change tactics accordingly. The Dragon's magic seems to have had an odd effect on the creature, for it never stays dead or trapped for very long.

[+100 CP] The Trickster Spirit - This spirit arrives with a laugh as joyous as that of the first robin's call of Spring. It is a nearly invisible spirit of air and mischief, observable only as a swirling cloud of glittering dust motes in strong light. However, the being derives its joy from the pranks and tricks it plays upon others rather than anything more helpful. And it seems you have caught its fancy. For its own reasons it has taken to following you around.

It's tricks are rarely sinister in their own right. A flash of light or color or a sound. But it has a habit of exercising its whimsy in the worst moments. It might sound a deafening hunting horn right in your ear as your fingers are diving into a delicate and deadly trap. It will whisper warnings that sound uncannily like your own instincts warning you of an attack or foe that doesn't exist just as an ogre is swinging his club towards you. All this and an infinite variety of similar stunts will be pulled on the Hero during his time inside the Castle.

[+100 CP] The Shadow - While it is known that there is a man lying beneath the black leathers, any details beyond that are kept securely behind his tightly closed lips. A master of stealth, the bow, and the blackjack, one will likely never see more of him than a fleeting blot of darkness as he dashes from one darkened corridor to the next.

He comes armed with a variety of specially crafted arrows designed for clearing his way of light and enemies without directly confronting them. Expect noisemaker arrows to come streaking out of the shadows to draw enemies towards the Hero at regular intervals. He also uses Water and Fire tipped arrows to douse torches and light them again from a distance. Of course, he has long since found more inventive ways to use both. Expect to be plagued by hands in your pockets in the shadowed areas of the Towers, by having torches extinguished at the worst possible moments, and of an attempt at a blow to the back of the head should your collection of items and Favors grow too large.

The only saving graces are that The Shadow is relatively weak if forced into a direct confrontation and anything stolen can be regained. Also, The Shadow will harass Rivals if given the chance, but he will always favor you.

[+100 CP] The Man Who Rides a Meat Bicycle - This man, if the collection of massive muscles and shattered bits of an insane mind can still be called one, is the most talkative of the Rogues. However, nearly everything he says is gibberish. He screams that he is the conductor of the Poop Train and that he is ready for a Spine Tingler, among other equally colorful nonsense. It would be wise not to discount him just because of his insanity.

He wields a massive club with a saw blade fixed to the end that spins wildly in spite of the lack of power or moving parts to make it do so. With it, he is a danger not just to the Hero, but to anything living that he spots. He will charge from opponent to opponent, body regenerating constantly, the sheer rage exuding from his soul keeping him alive and making his blows powerful enough to shatter walls when swings slip wide.

Unlike other Rogues, he will attempt to rescue Princesses, if he happens to wander close enough to one and the puzzle is simple enough for his tiny mind to solve. But his reckless attitude towards battle could prove just as lethal to a Princess as it does to everything else.

[+200 CP] The Force of Chaos - A truly disturbing being has wandered into the castle through the tile door. This creature, nothing more than a head with a pair of feet attached where the neck should be, appears sweet enough despite its abhorrent physiology. It has a large, friendly smile plastered on its face and moves about with a gay, hopping gait. It will wander the Towers, the Hallway, the Garden, even the Rooms with seeming impunity. It can teleport from place to place as it wishes, always staring with unblinking eyes. Monsters will not attack and traps will just ignore it. Attempts to shoo it away will just result in it appearing in some comically suitable place. Give it a kick, it will be standing on your head. Toss it into a pit, it will be right behind you.

If this was all the monstrosity did it would be easy enough to ignore. An annoyance, to be sure, but a minor one. But no, this creature does not belong in the world and unlike the other Rogues, the world objects violently to its presence. The Dragon's magic perverts violently in its presence, strengthening in an unpredictable fashion. Guardians will suddenly grow in power and ferocity. Traps will twist into devices of truly sinister deadliness. Tier 3 is no longer the worst a Hero can expect to face in the Towers now.

And now such a creature only has eyes for you.

[+200 CP] The Villain Released - It is said that a person is their own worst enemy. That the blackness inside a Hero’s own heart can prove to be the most difficult to defeat. But few will have to face the dark corners of your soul like you will. This being is you, virtually identical in every physical way, except their eyes are a deep, dark black. And their smile holds the tint of madness in it. It will have everything you do. Your knowledge, your memories, everything you purchased here. The only thing it will have that you do not is a desire to see you broken.

Oh, no, it doesn’t want you dead. That would ruin its fun. This demon wants to see your hopes dashed, your dreams ruined, and your spirit snapped like a horse run too long. It will do whatever it to make that hope come true. It might even kill Princesses if it came to that. Just to see that last shred of hope in your eyes flicker and die. Only then will it slink back to whatever shadowed corner of the multiverse it slunk out of. The only saving grace is that he does not yet know he will respawn if killed and guards his own life as preciously as you yourself do. It is recommended not to let him discover this fact.

The Princesses

The preparations have been made. You are armed and armored, if just barely. Your Rivals have been introduced, possibly along with a few other colorful characters. There is nothing left to do but pick a Tower and head on up. At least the dragon was kind enough to tack sheets with some basic information about each Princess on the door. You can only hope there are no more surprises left.

[+0 CP] It's a Trap! - You feel like you've been misled somewhere, but it is far too late to turn back now. If you wish, you may choose to swap the genders of everyone, inside the castle and out. Princesses will become Princes, Kings will turn to Queens, Rivals become athletic young women (mostly), even the Rogues with traditional physiology will swap out for shapelier forms. Of course, should you desire, you can also apply this effect to yourself. No judgement here.

Nobody will have any idea, through a piece of evidence or memories, that they were any other gender before now. As a side note, this process may cause small changes to personalities along the way. Nothing major, people will still be essentially who they are, but little things.

[+100 CP] Uncooperative - Princesses are a widely varied lot, truth be told, with personalities and talents wandering the entire spectrum. Lumping them all under the 'arrogant and spoiled' category is just simply a disservice to the whole group. Some of them could be downright useful to a Hero set on climbing multiple Towers.

Except now, under the foul influence of the Dragon's magic, none of them seem particularly inclined to do so. Even the most battle eager Princess has lost their desire to do more than sit by and wait for this whole mess to be over. Oh, they'll still come with you and defend themselves when required, but they will bicker with you the entire time. All of your plans and techniques will earn a backhanded compliment, at the very least, and expect them to point out any flaws quite critically. Plan to waste a lot of time that could really be better used while climbing Towers with Princesses in tow.

[+100 CP] Argumentative - Let's face facts, a lot of these Princesses have funny ideas about love and relationships as well as their own unique views of the world. Cramming so many highly individualized, willful personalities together in a relatively cramped space is always a recipe for disaster at the best of times. And this isn't the best of time.

Princesses now seem completely incapable of getting along with each other for an extended period of time. Only your direct presence seems to calm them down and even that only works for so long. Thankfully there are a lot of rooms in the castle. Almost enough to go around. You didn't lock those off… did you?

[+100 CP] Clumsy - Lithe and agile these girls certainly aren't. It's not really their fault, the Dragon's magic being as insidious as it is, but it will continuously cause you problems. Princesses will have a horrible habit of accidently tripping traps or bumbling into dangerous situations no matter what kind of luck or brains they normally pack. Just don't think you'll be able to convince them to sit out the adventure. They'll be keen as mustard to accompany you everywhere and nothing you can say or do, short of physically tieing them up, will stop them.

[+100/+200 CP] Your Princess is in Another Castle! - That darned Dragon! It has gone just too far this time! The horrible fiend has switched all the Princesses out of their proper places! You can no longer count on the name, picture, and descriptive text tacked to each door to relate in any way to the Princess you will find at the top of it. The Tower itself will remain as described in each Princess' Profile, but the lady you find at the top will not be the one you expect. This will confuse your Rivals as much as it confuses you. Should they reach the top of a Tower and find it to be occupied by one of the Princesses they are not interested in rescuing, they will simply leave. Naturally, this means all Rivals will join you in every Tower now.

Of course, that is not all. It is once you have freed the Princess that the true trial starts. After you have released her and move to descend the Tower, you will find it to be completely changed from your ascent. The Tower will have shifted to its rightful state for the Princess that was held inside of it. Forcing you to battle your way back down a fresh, unconquered Tower. Each and every time.

If you rescue less than **10** Princesses, this Drawback is instead worth only **100 CP.**

Princess Index

Name	Race	Pg #	Brief Description
Jelita	Harpy	26	Silent, mischievous, affectionate
Priya Datta	Golem	29	A fixer-upper, loyal, durable
Avon Olney Salford	Human	32	Loud, confident, jack-of-all-trades
Eirlys Moss	Elf (Dawn)	35	Artistic, laid-back, personal space invader
Rosemary Timperley	Human	38	Straightforward, Strong, Prideful
Jha Komal	Kobold	41	Curious, naive, enthusiastic
Al'ea T'ch Ou'	Mermaid	44	Spoiled, temperamental, elegant
Mira Miheliĉ	Elf (Dusk)	47	Shrewd politician, manipulative, proper
Chloe Manderville	Halfling	50	Determined, driven, duty-bound
Jzair Salit	Drider	53	Introverted, intelligent, bookworm
Zanna Voidtekt	Elf (Reaper)	56	Harsh, cruel, cold
Astrid Kristin	Human (Spellwarp)	59	Cautious, inquisitive, honorable
Gisou Lamothe	Elf (?)	62	Mysterious, quick-witted, teasing
Bernib Bahur Banoub	Sphinx	65	Playful, clever, impish
Yū Hayami	Demon	69	Uncomplicated, practical, foodie
Riah-tli De'tli	Displacer	72	Kind, non-confrontational, hidden depths
Dailidė Chisholm	Human	75	Dominate, wild, fierce
"Captain Black Cat" Lise Myhre	Human	78	Tomboy, cunning, temperamental
Deirdre	Nightmare	81	Sadistic, hinedere, emotionally stunted
Chiomara Timperley	Human	84	Complicated, honorable, dark side
Anca Tkach	Dhampir	87	Tsundere, insulting, awkward
Itet Ah-Muzen-Colel-Cab	Bee Humanoid	90	Sweet, cheerful, homebody
Harappa Eva Vṛścika	Succubus	93	Manipulative, charming, witty
Staphyla Urodela	Salamander	96	Flaring temper, foul-mouthed, physical

Tapeesa Sammurtok	Humanoid (Polar)	99	Warm, mothering, cuddly
Lydia Angelidis	Medusa	102	Grey, well-spoken, snake charmer
Beatrix Vina	Humanoid (Slime)	105	Bubbly, invasive, odd
Caenis Magnesia	Centaur	108	Christmas cake, pleasant, doting
Eimhear Mac Carthaigh	Dullahan	111	Loyal, brave, forgetful
Alice Illias Horas	Lamia	114	Duplicitous, accommodating, secretive



Jelita

“The Harpy Kingdom lies far to the west where the mountains rise up above the clouds. Peaks appear as islands amidst a fluffy, white sea, bridged with delicate wooden constructions meant only for the lithe bird people’s weight. They dive below the clouds only to hunt or trade with the lower kingdoms.”

Tower: Heroes will find air a scare commodity inside the Tower, sucked away by bitter, whipping winds and the Dragon's magic. Designed to look like the mountain peaks the Princess was stolen from, falling from the platforms in this place will be no less deadly just because they are illusions. Heroes will be forced to battle the elements as much as the monsters and traps. In the east, the sun is already setting. The cold and the darkness will only grow worse with each floor climbed.

Guardians: Birds of prey circle the dark blue sky above. Only their wings blotting out the light of the dim stars give hint to their presence before they unleash their piercing cry and dive down upon their prey. They are patient beasts, willing to attack and withdraw to set the Hero on edge. The clever avians will even cry out without diving at times, forcing invaders to either jump at every sound or chance missing the screech that signals a true attack.

Traps: Besides the cold and the dark, those seeking to climb this Tower will have to contend with the gusting winds and narrow bridges. The height is certainly an illusion but a fall from the path will be just as deadly as the real thing. On top of all this, the air has been thinned inside of this Tower, causing all those not adapted to such an environment to tire quickly.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The air continues to thin as the Dragon strengthens their magical hold over the environment. Even hardy heroes will discover the need to stop and rest more often.
Tier 2 - The hunger of the Eagles grows and drives them to more ferocious hunting. They will be less subtle and clever in their assaults, but attack more often and in greater numbers.
Tier 3 - Trolls have taken up residence on the undersides of the bridges. Those wishing to climb the tower will now have to contend with hands grasping at passing ankles, weakened bridges, and the occasional riddle contest in the cold.

Princess' Entrapment: The Princess is held captive atop a column of stone jutting up from the sea of clouds that has no connecting bridge at the far end of the top floor. Heroes will be forced to leap to and then climb the rough rock face. Handholds are abundant, though a few will crumble if weight is kept on them too long. Atop the column, the Princess will be found with iron bands and chains around her wings. The key to her release rests just out of her reach and the gouges in the stone from her claws indicates she made no little effort to reach it on her own.

Once freed, the pillar of rock will begin to crack and crumble. Allowed the opportunity, the Princess will grab the Hero by the shoulders and attempt to fly back to the stairs. If complications exist and a climb is required, it will be a dangerous and hasty affair with a possible nasty fall should the Hero not reach the bottom in time. In either case, Eagles will sense a chance to attack and do so in force. In the air, it will fall upon the Hero to defend the vulnerable Princess, for the Eagles will surely focus their attacks on her wings to drop you both. Should the Hero be climbing, the Princess will do her best to defend the Hero instead, but it is not a task she is well versed in. The Eagles will cease their assault once the Hero and the Princess reach the stairs leading down.

Temperament: Like the eagles the Harpy race enjoys raising as pets and companions, Jelita is a calm, patient woman. She prefers to speak in short, clipped sentences or not at all, letting her eyes and body language say volumes. She has a fondness for springing surprises and inflicting light-hearted pranks on others, though she knows when and where such antics are appropriate. She can also be quite affectionate, if the other person has proven worthy of her attentions.

Combat Readiness: While Jelita comes equipped with sharp talons on both her hands and feet, she is not a violent creature by nature. She is well versed in a martial art common to her people, but it is strictly meant for exercise and not for combat. It could be turned to that use, but would likely take longer than a Hero would wish to spend in the midst of a rescue operation. Her ability to fly may prove useful, though many areas of the Castle and Towers will not allow her to use it.

Favor: Jelita will seem indifferent but her eyes betray the hurt. She will pull a primary feather from her right wing. It transforms before your eyes into a cape the yellow of a sunflower in full bloom. She explains that the cape will allow the wearer to glide like a hawk when both corners are gripped tightly. Given a little practice the wearer will be able to slow their fall as well as travel a fair distance while doing so.



Priya Datta

“A race of sentient Golems that makes their home far, far underground where the walls singe flesh and metal flows in molten rivers. They are hardy beings with bodies of steels bound together with magic. They are crafted, not born, by their fellow beings at a carefully controlled rate. Few remember the true origins of their race, but many whisper it must have been violent.”

Tower: The cruel Dragon designed the interior of this tower to mock the mechanical nature of the Princess housed within. Turning cogs mounted on metallic walls do little but attempt to confuse and disorient any heroes who would endeavor a rescue. The floor varies between treacherously oil soaked, rusted metal grating, and smooth steel, none of which make for sure footing. The corridors themselves are a maze that seem to shift when no one is looking. Traversing this tower successfully will require wits and agility.

Guardians: The monsters that roam these halls are pale imitations of the Princess, automatons without the true spark of life in them. They are hardy creations, resistant to cutting weapons as well as fire and ice magic. However, electricity magic can easily stun them and piercing weapons thrust into the vulnerable joints can cause them to snap. Thankfully they are not as numerous as some of the other Guardians and wander alone or in pairs.

Traps: Traps are rare in this tower, as the shifting corridors and powerful guardians make up a bulk of the defenses. Still, one should be wary of the turning cogs on the walls. They can easily catch on loose clothing, long hair, or stray fingers and causing serious injury or even death. The varied floor conditions are also a factor to keep in mind. Rusted out sections of floor can give way under intense stress to reveal the churning gears beneath.

Upgraded Defenses:
Tier 1 - The powerful Guardians of this tower will begin upgrading themselves using the very machinery of the Tower itself. At this stage, cogs will be ripped off the walls and transformed into thick slabs of armor.
Tier 2 - The Guardians will rip up the strips of metal that make up the stairs, wrapping them around their vulnerable joints and adding a new hazard in the process.
Tier 3 - A cache of fire-imbued crystals will be discovered and the Guardians will waste little time turning them into weapons. Each will now be equipped with an arm-mounted weapon capable of throwing short jets of flame.

Princess' Entrapment: The cage holding the Princess herself requires brains rather than brawn to open. It is a logic puzzle, based around aligning the gears so that when a crank is turned the door will raise. While this would normally be a simple affair if it only involved a few cogs, this puzzle involves forty-two of them. Priya is able to shout out helpful suggestions, but she cannot see the entire puzzle from inside her cage and will only be able to assist with about half.

Temperament: Initially, Priya will be reserved, polite, and will attempt to be as helpful as she can be. It may be easy to think of her as cold and unfeeling, but this is only because she was built shortly before being kidnapped. She simply lacks emotion. She will need to be coached in them before she becomes more than a smart robot. Given time and attention on your part, only her form will differentiate her from any other living being. Depending on the kind of attention, she could become a loyal ally like none other or a devoted lover.

Combat Readiness: Priya has no combat experience and very little desire to learn. Still, she knows the durability of her own body and will be quite willing to step into the path of blows and magic to protect you. Except electricity magic, which will cause her to short out for several moments. Don't do that.

Favor: When asked for her favor, Priya will offer several exterior plates from her own body. The Hero will find these plates snap together quite easily and very firmly to form an excellent breastplate. It is a tough and durable piece of armor, able to survive even a dragon stepping on it without denting... a few times at least.



Avon Olney Salford

“A kingdom of song, poetry, and literature sits nestled in small river valley to the south. While it has little military or economic might, artists and those who would patron them flock from all corners of the world. Walking the streets is like wandering through a living symphony. Musicians play on every corner and poets recite their lyrics in smoke-filled coffee houses.”

Tower: The twisted Dragon has created a dungeon that will test not only the agility of any who dare to climb it, but their sense of rhythm as well. Spectral bands play from behind walls, filling the entire Tower with a haunting melody guaranteed to crawl up the spine of even the toughest Heroes. The floors are lined with colored tiles, red, blue, yellow, and green. Watch your step should you wish to climb these floors… and mind the beat.

Guardians: For some inexplicable reason, skeletons have been drawn to the insidious beat of this Tower. They swing, dip, and twirl to it in a dance only they understand. They will not take kindly to any intrepid Heroes who dare to interrupt their eternal mambo, lashing out with tooth and bone and claw. A clever climber would find the pattern in the chaos and slip through by joining in the dance. Those who don't would do well to bring a blunt weapon. Skeletal dancers generally congregate in groups as few as four, but can be as many as ten.

Traps: The multi-colored tiles of the floor house more than just the four colors. Upon entering certain rooms and hallways, the tiles will flash out a sequence in time with the music. Those who wish to avoid flying arrows to spikes piercing their feet would do well to follow the pattern exactly. At least they are kind enough to repeat ceaselessly until an attempt is made.

Upgraded Defenses:
Tier 1 - The beat of the music, once a rather slow affair, will begin to pick up speed as the Dragon's magic strengths its grip on the Tower. The skeletons will grow a new spring in their step to keep up. It will also quicken all of their movements whether dancing or striking.
Tier 2 - Now the floor puzzles have gained a new dimension. The walls have been painted just as brightly, and in as many colors, as the floor. Those hallways and rooms that contain the traps will now require a more inventive approach to tackling them.
Tier 3 - The spectral band has been given several illegal substances and are playing at nearly double speed as the Dragon's magic reaches its peak. Keeping up will require a keen sense of situational awareness and a dancer's timing.

Princess' Entrapment: The cage that holds Avon is one made of pure sound and fueled by the constant music of the Tower. Breaking it physically is simply not an option. Instead, you will have to solve the riddle scribbled on a piece of parchment lying on a side table alongside a selection of tuning forks. Deciphering the puzzle will reveal which of the tuning forks should be rung against the cage to dispel it. However, guessing is not advised, as the cage itself lashes out violently at every wrong answer and grows more deadly each time.

Temperament: Avon is a confident and expressive person, who wears her emotions on her sleeve with a voice trained to carry over barroom brawls. Her adventurous spirit and less than stellar impulse control will drag her into trouble more often than not, but she won't always need a rescue. More than just a voice, Avon is a dabbler is all things, knowing a little bit on almost every subject. She is, perhaps, a little too eager to volunteer that fact at the slightest provocation

Combat Readiness: While Avon will gladly pick up a sword and leap into battle, she has less skill at it than she thinks and can quickly find herself overwhelmed if not watched carefully. Her real talent lies the empowering music she commands. When she sings and plays an instrument, she can strengthen those around her, giving them a slight boost to their physical prowess. Convincing her to maintain that magic instead of joining in the fight herself might take a little bit of effort though.

Favor: Avon will appear a little hurt when asked for her favor, but will slip a bracelet of silver trinkets from her wrist. A dozen charms in the shape of notes hang from the chain and tinkle musically unless shushed. When tapped, the notes issue forth a raucous and boisterous song perfect for encouraging all who hear it. As the charm plays its song it bestows a slight boost the physical attributes of the wearer and their allies. The music lasts for five minutes per charm tapped and recharges itself every dawn.



Eirlys Moss

“The Dawn Elves, also called Dryads by some, hail from the fruitful plains that can be found far, far to the west. Flowers and plant life of every stripe grow in and around their cities and suffuse the air with hundreds of fresh scents. While not rich, the Dawn Elves are a race content with their passions. What little they need from the outside world they trade for with the near-magical fruits and vegetables that stay fresh from months after picking.”

Tower: The merciless Dragon has crafted the interior of this tower as a dark and dangerous wilderness where light is scarce and the beasts housed inside are savage. The walls have been shaped into giant trees that sit so close together there is little hope of squeezing between any pair. The ground is dampened dirt, almost mud, that will cling to boots and make any fall extremely messy. Each floor consists of a small collection of grass covered clearings separated by dirt paths, each home to dangerous creatures that will attempt to pounce and maul the careless hero. Surviving here will take keen senses and superior might.

Guardians: All but invisible in the darkness, large black wolves wander the corridors and clearings in packs of between three and seven. While not individually dangerous to a seasoned adventurer, these wolves possess a keen hunting instinct and cooperative tactics. It can be easy to find yourself plagued by snapping fangs from all sides. They possess no special defenses, but fear fire magic.

Traps: While the clinging darkness of this tower would be hazard enough, the Dragon did not stop there. Dangling vines overhead seem to reach out and catch swinging weapons at the critical moments and more than a few of them are poisonous snakes in disguise. A single bite from these serpents would not be deadly, but several will leave any hero without an antidote too weak to fend off a gentle breeze.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Nature tightens its hold on the corridors, causing the dangling vines to multiply and choke off access to the quickest routes. Heroes will be forced to burn or slice their way through which will surely be a noisy affair.

Tier 2 - The leaves overhead huddle closer together, branches spreading until even the wan moonlight is cut off entirely. The darkness is absolute and a Hero will find little respite from it inside these walls.

Tier 3 - Nature, only barely tolerant of a Hero's intrusion up to this point, has had enough. The trees lining the walls will now reach out and slash at any movement in their vicinity. Their branches, though merely wood, are more than capable of inflicting painful cuts and slashes.

Princess' Entrapment: The Eirlys' cage is one of her own hubris and the Dragon's devilish cunning. She sits in the center of a beam of sunlight, a blank canvas in front of her, cursed to create a painting. But with every stroke of color she adds to the white slab, one fades away entirely. She will resist all attempts to pull her away from her task, magically anchored in place. But a second brush sits close at hand. A clever hero would copy her brush strokes, finally allowing paint to stick permanently. Nimble fingers will be a great asset here but even the clumsiest hero will be able to fill the canvas given enough time.

Temperament: Artistically eccentric and possessed with a laid back attitude that remains unruffled by her kidnapping, Eirlys is… interesting. She is a true artist and some will find her personality tiresome, while others will thoroughly enjoy her many quirks. She can seem vague and airheaded at times, but those who dig beneath the surface will find a truly gifted painter and creative mind. Heroes should be warned that she has very different ideas concerning personal space and modesty than most people.

Combat Readiness: Eirlys has the firm, lithe muscles of a gymnast but absolutely no experience in direct combat. She does know a certain amount of nature and plant-based magic, even if most of her power is sealed away by the Dragon's magic. She knows how to cure poisons, heal minor wounds, and harass enemies with vine whips and entangling roots. She will happily assist with her magic, so long as she doesn't get distracted.

Favor: Eirlys will offer up a small ring made from intertwined petals when asked. If asked politely, the ring will quickly grow a handful of blueberries once each day. They will be delicious and plump as only magical fruit can be. Beyond that, a single berry is capable of satiating the hunger of any who ingest them for a full day as well as healing any small wounds. These berries will be non-toxic to all and never cause allergic reactions.



Rosemary Timperley

“To the north, where the wind blows cold and the winters are dark, you can find a kingdom of Humans thriving in the valleys of a great mountain range. It is a land of blazing forges and ringing hammers, of trained soldiers and stiff resolves. Those who call that harsh land home are stern, practical people. Their warriors are consistently considered to be the bravest and best of this world.”

Tower: The callous Dragon created the inside of this tower in the style of a very traditional dungeon. The walls, floor, and ceiling are all carved stone bricks, so uniform that a wandering hero could mistake one corridor for another and become turned around. A good sense of direction and map-making skills will go far to ensure your success, but are by no means the only skills needed to survive the climb.

Guardians: Unlike many of the other towers, the Dragon did not place any Guardians in this one. The corridors are completely empty of wandering monsters. Suspiciously so.

Traps: This is where the true danger of the Rosemary's tower reveals itself. Certain stones in the floor will sink when stepped on, triggering pits to open underfoot that drop unsuspecting heroes onto deadly spikes. Others will trigger hidden crossbows, filling the corridor with a brief hail of arrows. Even more deadly, if more rare, entire sections of the ceiling will slam downwards in an attempt to turn a mighty hero into a mere blood stain. The traps are not limited to the floor. A hand is just as capable of finding a trigger as a foot.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - While the traps were numerous before, now they grow even more so. Heroes are all but guaranteed to find several in each hallway and rooms will prove even trickier to navigate.

Tier 2 - Saw blades have joined the lethal assortment of traps found in this Tower. When tripped, they spring out at neck and knee level to slice along the corridors or else spring from the ground to tear at unprotected feet.

Tier 3 - A number of mimics have taken up residence in the Tower and replaced a number of triggers for the many traps. Heroes will find themselves often confronted by both a deadly trap and hungry monster.

Princess Entrapment: The Rosemary's cage is one that cannot be beaten by force of arms alone, as she is quick to demonstrate. The steel bars are strong enough that it would take five brawny heroes to even start to bend them. Thankfully, the Dragon left the key dangling from the ceiling. So you just have to climb the cage, reach out, and grab it. However, the moment your weight touches the cage a slab of stone drops in front of the only door out. Seconds later, the entire room begins filling up with water. You have mere moments to climb the height of the room, grab the key, unlock the cage's door, and find the hidden keyhole inside the cage. It's a shame somebody greased the bars of the cage. Hopefully you work well under pressure.

Temperament: Rosemary is straightforward, blunt, and confident. She tends to respect physical strength more than magical prowess. Her pride can rub people the wrong way, but one cannot fault her loyalty. She will happily fill the role of loyal bodyguard in an attempt to thank you for rescuing her. Those who wish for a deeper relationship will find the woman behind the armor less confident when it comes to matters of the heart.

Combat Readiness: Rosemary is both highly capable with her sword and quite eager to showcase those skills. She will gladly stand in front of a hero who prefers the rear lines or fight beside a more martially inclined individual. Her armor is well-worn but still capable of stopping blows that would fell lesser men. You will find few other Princesses that can match her in raw combat potential.

Favor: Rosemary's objections to being sent away will be loud and fervent but will not truly refuse to leave. She will offer up her plate gauntlets as her Favor. They are fine creations of hardened steel with a blue gems set into the backs of the hands. Beyond being high quality armor, the gauntlets will offer a moderate increase to the strength of blows struck with a weapon while worn.



Jha Komal

“The diminutive Kobolds thrive in the scorching deserts across the small ocean to the south. They do so despite sharing the lethal landscape with Wurms that grow to thirty feet in length, along with other such massive predators. Travelers who dare to visit the cities built into rocky hills found at the desert's heart would do well to hire a native as well as their whole family as guides. A tough, united race who are surprisingly friendly to all they meet.”

Tower: The dastardly Dragon has arranged for the interior of this tower to prey upon the weaknesses of the Kobold race. Ice coats every surface of this otherwise richly decorated tower. Tapestries hang stiff and brittle, icicles dangle from candlesticks, and heroes will find their breath pluming from their lips. Large blocks of ice wall off a number of corridors. Only the scattered, frost-covered carpets offer sure footing here.

Guardians: Hidden in the rime that coats every surface, Ice Golems sleep, waiting for heroes to wander by to attack. The hardened ice that makes up their bodies is tough enough to resist most weapons and while they appear brittle, they are anything but. However, they are slow creations, so it is suggested heroes either be agile or bring a form of magic to help battle these Guardians.

Traps: While the slick floor and walls would be enough to give most heroes trouble, the Dragon has decided to twist the knife a little. Here and there, tucked into corners or half-barricading hallways are drifts of powdery snow. Some are just what they appear to be and while difficult to wade through, offer little enough resistance. However a few are magically enchanted to freeze solid when exposed to the warmth of a body, trapping feet, hands, and other limbs careless enough to get stuck inside. Falling into one of these headfirst could easily prove fatal and the time a hero spends chipping themselves out of the trap is more than enough for a Guardian to lumber up and attack.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The number of trapped snowdrifts grows ever larger as winter sinks its fangs into the stones of this Tower. Even the most athletic hero will find only a limited number of alternative paths through some rooms.

Tier 2 - The Ice Golems have begun to gather in force, bolstered by the growing cold, and will begin gathering in pairs or even small packs. While still slow, they will use their numbers and toughness to their advantage, blocking doorways if they can.

Tier 3 - Old Man Winter himself will seem to wander these halls. Truly biting winds will sweep up out of nowhere, buffeting those wandering the halls at random. This wind is a true cold that can easily freeze an underdressed hero within a surprisingly short amount of time.

Princess' Entrapment: There is no cage that holds Komal to her room, but the fact that the only source of warmth in the whole dungeon resides there. The entire tower and one small furnace keeps her captive enough, for any escape attempt without some source of heat involved will surely lead to her death. There are a number of possible solutions to this problem, but it will be up to the hero themselves to come up with it. No obvious traps or solutions present themselves. You only have the well-appointed bedroom, the small furnace, and Komal herself to work with.

Temperament: Jha Komal is quite the curious creature, interested in the world around her as much of it is new to her. She has seen little outside of her homeland before she was kidnapped. This lack of experience easily labels her as naive, but she is not stupid or silly. Enthusiastic, cheerful, and cuddly are all excellent words to describe her.

Combat Readiness: A prehensile tail and lengthy tongue are her greatest access, the former able to swing basic weapons and the latter capable of entangling limbs and tripping foes. However, she lacks any training in combat and will likely be more of a hinderance than a help if given a weapon. She will, however, be very happy to haul any treasure you pick up along the way and is stronger than she appears.

Favor: Komal will not hesitate to offer up a small ruby when asked for her Favor. The gem seems to glow of its own inner light and, if inspected closely, does indeed have a flame flickering at its center. It will offer a slight protection against fire magic of all kinds when held against the skin, as well as keeping the holder comfortably warm no matter how cold the wind or weather becomes. When asked why she didn't use such a useful object to get herself out of the tower in an easier manner, she will enthusiastically respond that she forgot she had it.



Al'ea T'ch Ou'

"While all the oceans of this world contain vibrant life, few sections are as picturesque as the Coral Sea to the south-west. The home of the Merfolk lies close to the surface in the crystal clear waters of the reefs the sea takes its name from. A carefree people that want for nothing, for all they could desire is supplied by the life around them."

Tower: Heroes will be horrified to find that the despicable Dragon has flooded much of Al'ea's Tower. The hallways of each floor drop away in places, forcing those who wish to progress to wade or swim along corridors. To make matters worse, the corridors twist and weave around each other in a way that makes little sense even when mapped. Surviving this climb will take a decent bit of luck, strong lungs, and plenty of stamina.

Guardians: The waters of this Tower are populated by all the creatures that lurk in the dark corners of the Coral Sea. Eels with needle-sharp teeth waiting for a bit of flesh to wander by, octopuses that blend into the algae covered stones to grapple and drag the unwary below the water, and even venomous snakes that glide silently above and below the surface.

Traps: Besides the flooded corridors and slippery footing from algae growing on every surface, there are no other traps to be found.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Large Sea Otters join the variety of ocean life to be found in the Tower. While not initially hostile, they are playful little devils and will take swimming Heroes as fair targets for their games. They are especially fond of tickling Heroes underwater with their whiskers as they dive past. But that is only one of their many routines.

Tier 2 - Kelp forests have sprung up in some hallways. While not dangerous on their own, these strands of plant life offer ample cover for the Guardians of this Tower to hide within. Heroes expecting to cut a swath through will be disappointed to find any damage caused to the kelp swiftly repairs itself.

Tier 3 - The tide has come in thanks to the Dragon's strengthening hold on the floodgates. Heroes will be hard pressed to find a single hallway or room that is not ankle deep in water. Formerly waist deep water will now lick at even the tallest chin. A greater number of corridors will be entirely flooded and finding a safe path much more difficult.

Princess' Entrapment: Al'ea's cage is guarded not by traps or clever puzzles, but a massive gelatinous blob who has already feasted upon the Princess. She can been seen inside the creature's semi-translucent belly, uncomfortable but clearly alive. While she does not seem to be in any immediate danger she is very eager to escape the monster. Slicing into the ooze will prove to be a near futile effort as any wounds heal over almost as quickly as they can be made. Several options would present themselves to a clever Hero besides that obvious one. Perhaps the creature's hunger could be tempted away from the Princess if enough seafood was brought to the plate. The venomous snakes could hold the key to another potential answer, especially to those of a chemical mind.

Temperament: Al'ea can best be described by likening her to the sea itself. Much of the time she is as sweet as a favorable wind and as bubbly as sea foam. But the Merpeople of the Coral Seas are not used to the hard edges of life and tend to grow confused or aggravated when confronted with such unpleasantness. Some would call them naive, while the cynical would label them as spoiled. Al'ea tends to rage like a summer storm when forced out of her comfort zone. But, like a clam, a little grit combined with time and patience may yet yield a pearl of this Princess.

Combat Readiness: Al'ea is trained in the traditional hunting techniques of her people, that of the net and the trident. Her tactics are mainly focused on surprise attacks that transform into retreats when the battle does not end there. Unfortunately, there will be very few places for her to showcase this talent, as her ability to walk on two legs is shaky at best. It is an ability she has had very little need to use in her life and it will take her time to adapt.

Favor: Al'ea's Favor is a small black pearl set on a golden stud, which she pulls from her own ear. It allows the wearer to resist natural poisons, such as those from venomous snakes, spiders, or frogs. It also gives the wearer the ability to inject a paralyzing venom with a bite once each day. The venom is potent and will slow down or stop all but the toughest of creatures for a short time.



Mira Mihelič

“Only a few days ride to the north lay the sun-drenched plains the Dusk Elves call home. They are a semi-nomadic people, wandering the plains and setting up cities for a season in locations they have done so since the start of written history. They live off the land, using the spear and their talent for stunning magic to take down the massive beasts that share their land. Firmly traditional and fiercely patriarchal, they are a hard people to grow close to but allies for decades once one does.

Tower: The barbaric Dragon has designed this Tower to test the claustrophobia of any Hero who would dare to climb its floors. The natural caverns are tight quarters with the ceiling only about six feet high. In some places it dips as low as three and will force even the shortest of heroes onto their hands and knees. Even worse, the corridor walls are set uncomfortably close to each other. There will be little room to swing large weapons here and more than a few spots that will need to be squeezed through. But at least it is well lit.

Guardians: Small goblins have set up shop in the few rooms and along many of the corridors of this Tower. They are red-skinned, mischievous, and more than happy to slip a knife between the ribs of an unsuspecting traveler. While they have little in the way of armor to protect themselves, they will make clever use of rock outcroppings, blind corners, and the shadowed nooks to blindside and surprise. Individually they are not much danger, but their cleverness combined with their tendency of gathering in groups anywhere between six and twelve makes them an aggravating foe to face.

Traps: While the tight hallways and small rooms do not allow much room for traditional traps, the goblins have done their best with what they had on hand. Nails litter the floor in places where the ceiling is low and traps of harmless white powder hang over the entrances to most rooms. The traps found in this Tower are intended to distract, annoy, and disorient, but are relatively non-lethal on their own.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The goblins have discovered a cache of short swords hidden in the back corners of the tunnels. Their improvised shivs and blunt daggers have been replaced with fine, sharp steel. They have grown bold with new weaponry in their hands.

Tier 2 - The traps of minor annoyance have gained a little bite since the Goblins have had time to apply their clever little minds. Nails have been sharpened to points that will bite even through boots and thick hide. Shards of glass have been mixed into the formerly harmless white powder. Who knows what else they came up with?

Tier 3 - The Dragon has strangled its hold on the Tower and has choked off many corridors in the process. Most tunnels will be completely sealed, forcing any who attempt to climb its levels to take the most circuitous, and dangerous, route. Expect to face nearly every goblin on a floor before being allowed to find the stairs upwards.

Princess' Entrapment: A simple and traditional sleeping enchantment has been cast over the Princess, one which any Hero worth their salt knows how to break. However, once awake, the Princess will refuse to leave the sheets she is shrouded in. She is... decidedly less than dressed for company and demands her clothing be returned to her before she could even think of leaving. A cage as simple and binding as modesty will hold the Princess in her place. Thankfully, as you glance around the room, you notice a few traces that indicate the goblins have been inside. One hopes you like scavenger hunts.

Temperament: Raised to be a proper lady by a father who wanted something better than the life of a hunter for his child, Mira has become the perfect example of an iron fist in a silk glove. An air of refinement surrounds her and she has the quiet mannerisms of one meant to be seen and not heard. But if one watched her eyes instead of her actions, they would see fire and intelligence there. She has a shrewd grasp of politics and social maneuvering that could only come from training and experience. Wed to any king, she would make a powerful advocate for the throne as well as a shrewd adviser. A relationship with such a complicated lady could travel in many different directions, but do not expect her to meekly serve unless she gains power and prestige in the process.

Combat Readiness: The skills Mira has been trained in do not translate to the battlefield directly. Given time and study her intelligence could be applied to the tactics of warfare. With a little training she would prove to be capable of learning a fencing weapon quite well. But for now there is not much she can do to help in a battle. Perhaps if one found her a frying pan...

Favor: Mira will quietly accept being asked for her Favor and hand over a lovely silver fountain pen. When kept in the pocket, it allows the holder to speak clearly and decisively no matter the situation or emotions being felt at the time. While a minor ability in and of itself, it can be best seen as a boost to the holder's persuasiveness and overall social skills.



Chloe Mandeville

“Most people would agree that the Halfings are an odd race of people. In ancient times their Kingdom was located almost a world away on a string of islands across the vast eastern sea. But these islands sank for reasons no Halfling was ever willing to fully disclose. So now they exist as a scattered people, making homes where they can in the lands of the other races, with the court itself continually travelling. It exists in a perpetual state of questing for a homeland in a world with no spare land to claim. Entire generations of the royal family have been raised on the back of a horse and fed on the dust of the eternal trail. But with the kidnapping of the only Princess and heir, the quest may soon be permanently abandoned.”

Tower: Making fun of a Halfing's height is a sure way to earn a headbutt to the groin, which is no doubt the least punishment the horrendous Dragon deserves after designing this Tower. All those who enter will find themselves shrunken to miniature size and forced to traverse this Tower no larger than mice. With the rooms and hallways created for use by normal people, any Heroes who dare enter should expect to spend a long time travelling them. The straightforward design is its only saving grace.

Guardians: While the Tower is occupied by "giant" men of ill repute, they will pay little attention to Heroes scampering around on the floor unless forced to do so. Of greater concern is the infestation of rats who have created nests in the wall. These normally minor pests will appear to be roughly the size of small bears at the Hero's current size and are just as vicious. Their tunnels would be excellent shortcuts, if one dares to brave the darkness flickering with beady eyes.

Traps: There are no traps to this dungeon, save the ever-present danger of being stepped on by the "giants" as they wander the halls and rooms. Should one manage to catch their attention they will be content to snatch the pest up and place them back at the entrance to the Tower.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The giants have grown tired of the rats wandering around at their feet and have laid traps in an attempt to catch the pests. Expect glue-covered paper to cling at your feet in places and temperamental spring-loaded traps to lay at the entrance of most rat holes.

Tier 2 - Heroes will find the giants much more numerous as their allies have spread the word that there is loot and wine aplenty. Tower climbers will have a much harder time dodging feet as the drunken stumbling grows more erratic.

Tier 3 - A sinister intelligence has crept into the beady eyes of the rats in the Tower. The Dragon's magic has transformed them into Moon Rats, a magical creature that grows more intelligent the more of its brethren are nearby. Heroes should expect truly stiff resistance should they desire to use the shortcuts in the walls.

Princess' Entrapment: Chloe's cage is that of a glass bottle and a shrinking spell that has made her tiny even by the already minuscule scale of the Tower. While it would be simple enough to uncork it and free her, the Dragon has complicated matters by filling the room with bottles of various shapes, sizes, and colors. Several dozen of them in all. Each time an incorrect bottle is uncorked, all the rest of them fill with a small amount of fine wine. A few wrong guesses will leave Chloe floating. A few more will see her pressed up against the cork. Eight will leave her with no more air to breathe. Breaking a bottle will not get around this vile enchantment.

There are a number of possible solutions to this deadly puzzle, though the truly clever Hero will see the solution without making a single incorrect guess. As a hint, one will quickly realize that all the illusionary Princesses react in unison with the real one.

Temperament: The Court, when being diplomatic, describe the Princess as a spirited young woman with a determined set of mind. The whispers among the common folk is that she is boyish and impulsive. The truth is somewhere in the middle, as it usually is. Chloe is an energetic woman who knows what she wants in this world. She understands the duties of her station and even has a basic grasp of politics, but clearly has more interest in the battlefield than the courts. Despite her rather masculine personality, few would dispute the fact that she is one of the cutest things to swing so large a sword.

Combat Readiness: Despite her size, Chloe is well trained in the use of a greatsword sized for a normal Human. She wields it in wide, sweeping strikes that focus more on power than precision, much to the hazard of those she shares a battlefield with. To compensate, her sword has been enchanted to not cut into her allies, though it will still leave impressive bruises. Sadly, most of her plate armor was left behind in the kidnapping, so she only has her gauntlets and boots right now. Even so she will still gladly wade into battle beside any Hero who would have her.

Favor: While Chloe would much rather help take down the Dragon than get sent packing, she will well understand wishing to fulfil a duty by oneself. She will hand over her own greatsword, magically enchanted in two ways. First, the wielder will never cut an ally with the weapon whether on accident or purposefully. Secondly, anyone who picks up the sword will find themselves able to do so despite how much the six feet of steel should weigh. This allows the wielder to use the greatsword with ease and agility, even if the Princess herself never shows that level of finesse.



Jzair Salit

“Despite their rather monstrous appearance the Driders are a quiet, shy race who dwell in the gentle sun of the Jordian Plains on the other side of the Coral Sea. They are deeply in love with knowledge both magical and mundane. Few places in the world will be able to answer as many questions as their Royal Library. Much of their economy survives on the creation and trade of papers, inks, and quills of such quality that they are prized by scribes the world over. Just do not expect much in the way of conversation among these skittish people.”

Tower: What at first appears to be nothing more sinister than a library quickly gives way to a Tower as dangerous as any other. The heinous Dragon has designed this library with a deceptively simply layout and given the bookshelves free reign to rearrange themselves. Maps will do a climbing Hero very little good this time around. And do not expect to be able to burn a path through. The magic suffusing this Tower will dampen all fires, no matter the source.

Guardians: Formed from the very substance of the library and held together by a sinister magic, as well as copious amounts of ink, Book Golems roam these corridors. Do not let the name mislead you. These golems are quick, agile creations capable to slipping through bookshelves as though they were nothing more than air. However, they are blind and depend entirely on keen ears as well as the silence of the library to track their foes. At least they are solitary hunters by nature.

Traps: Rather than the floor, one would be better served keeping an eye on the bookcases around them for surprises. Falling books are a double-edged danger. Being hit by one hurts quite a bit more than any Hero would suspect, but even when they miss the sound of them slamming to the floor draws the Guardians of the Tower in for a look. Opening the books is ill-advised as they tend to shout and scream when their pages are revealed.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The books have begun to whisper and giggle as the Dragon's magic permeates their pages. These bouts of random noise are more than just what they seem. Barely audible, they possess a subtle enchantment meant to unnerve even a stalwart hero. Those who linger near these hushed conversations will soon find fear creeping into their minds.

Tier 2 - With the lesser books all awakened the magic will turn to the dread tomes next. Dark tomes on knowledge best left asleep. However, tasting consciousness, they will make their presence known. These book exude vile curses that weaken, slow, or even harm any Hero who stumbles into the circle of their influence. Thankfully their curses do not cling and do not consider any to be their allies.

Tier 3 - As magic suffuses the air, it will activate the sigils and glyphs that the Book Golems absorbed during their creation. It has granted them a magical shield that makes them not just immune to such energies, but allows them to absorb and empower themselves with every spell cast on them.

Princess' Entrapment: Jzair's cage at first seems to be a simple one. An iron cage held shut by a series of chains locked in place by a series of locks with dials on their face. The dials are painted with numbers from 0 to 40 and can be spun easily to any of them. A series of number-based logic puzzles sit at a table close at hand, each more clever and mentally taxing than the last. Four in total will have to be solved to open the locks and free the Princess. While there is no penalty for blind guessing, doing so would take a some time, as each lock needs three numbers in the correct order to open. Of course, keen eyed or minded Heroes might find the solution easier to spot than it appears at first glance.

Temperament: It would be easy to slip Jzair into the "shy and quiet" category that fits much of her people if one only saw her in a public setting or among strangers. Placed in those situations, she speaks rarely and only when necessary. But those who watch her eyes would not see the quiet desperation of an introvert forced to mingle. They would see a mind holding back a flood of witty retorts and keen observations. It is only among treasured friends or close allies do these comments slip past her lips. Perhaps, given a shared interest of the secrets contained in a library and some time spent enjoying the quiet together, a Hero could be granted access to the soul behind the mask.

Combat Readiness: Jzair is unused to the sight of blood and will shy away from battles given all but the most dire circumstances. However, if pressed, she will reveal a talent for magic gleaned from years pouring over arcane tomes. While not directly dangerous, her talent for tangling foes in webbing and summoning small batches of venomous spiders is distracting at the very least. If one can convince her to lend a hand.

Favor: Jzair will anxiously consider what to grant the Hero for several minutes when asked for her Favor. Finally inspiration will strike her and she will reach into the Tower she was just freed from. Using several of the unusual tomes and a little magical ink of her own creation, she will craft a miniature version of the Book Golems that prowled the halls. It will be bound to you as a faithful servant. Despite being only two feet tall it has the amazing agility and keen ears of its larger counterparts, as well as a surprising resistance to magic. However, once destroyed, you will not get a new one within the walls of the Castle.



Zanna Voldtekt

“One does not wander the Deadlands of the far north-east. It is a cold, barren land trapped in perpetual twilight by the static orbit of this world's third moon. Only the Reapers have seen fit to settle there, for few others had the stomach to do what was required to survive. Rumors of bone and blood magic slip from the lands on the chapped lips of panicked traders. A few even claim the Reapers eat their own to survive the harshest times. Other rumors speak of glittering cities of ice staffed by the undead, ancestral bones reanimated to serve the living eternally. What is truth and what is fiction is hard to determine unless one walks the Deadlands.”

Tower: Rather than create their own horrors, the wily Dragon has instead imported the stories of the Deadlands themselves. True or not they will be real enough for those who attempt to ascend. The hallways and rooms intermingle black stone and deep ice in their construction. Dark shapes dance in the patches of frost, as if there are spirits trapped within. Worse still, the entire tower is shrouded in the twilight of the Reaper's homeland. Thankfully torches will be provided but a Hero would be wise to guard such a flame well. The chances to relight a failed torch diminish as one ascends the Tower.

Guardians: Ghouls, pale and terrifying and oh-so-thirsty, wander the corridors of ice and stone. They thrive in the darkness and are excellent ambush predators. Against stronger foes, they are content to strike and fade away into the shadows, letting the foul diseases clinging to their teeth and claws sap the strength of those infected. Fever, nausea, weakness, and more could easily be the fate of any Hero who does not keep a keen ear open for the whispers of movement in the twilight.

Traps: There are few Traps in this Tower, but they are uncommonly ferocious in nature. The Blood Bank trap starts off as a simple needle, shot from a distance into the flesh of a hapless Hero. Coated with an anticoagulant venom and a numbing agent, Heroes will often not even realize they are leaving a trail for the Ghouls to follow. One should also beware of trip lines tied to bear traps on the ceiling. A warning as to how poorly missing such a trap would go should not be necessary.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The Ghouls, not smart but clever, have realized that Heroes without a torch to see by are much easier prey. All who wander the twilight will find their sources of illumination targeted much more frequently.

Tier 2 - Cloakers have joined the Ghouls in their ambush tactics. Horrible aberrations capable of blending in with the ceiling they cling to before dropping down on the unwary in a flurry of biting teeth and strangling tentacles. Cloakers are, by nature, indiscriminate in their choice of victims and will take anyone who wanders beneath them.

Tier 3 - A foul wind has blown through the Tower, spurred on by the corrupt Dragon. The patches of ice are revealed to be the prisons they have been all along. Hands too horrible and monstrous to describe now reach from the formerly harmless frost. They are eager to rip and tear anything they can get their hands on. But do not be too eager to feed the Guardians who haunt this Tower to them, lest they gain the energy to break free and run amok themselves.

Princess' Entrapment: In contrast to the relative horror found in the levels below, Zanna's room is a luxurious dream world. Thick, soft, emerald green grass grows up from the floor, dotted thickly with blooms in all the colors found in nature. Here and there fruit trees stand ready to offer up their bounty despite the impossibility of apples being ready to eat alongside oranges. Placid, even friendly, rabbits and deer wander among the paradise, quite willing to let a gentle hand scratch behind fluffy ears. At the center of it all, like a blot of shadow too deep to be banished by the sunlight, sits Zanna. Her scythe lays beside her, greenery darkening where it touches the metal. Approaching her elicits no response and attempting to drag her away reveals that she is held in place by magics too powerful to break. However, putting an ear to her lips allows one to recognize the three words whispering from her lips, over and over again.

"Destroy it all."

Temperament: Zanna is as cruel and as harsh as the climate she was forced to survive in. She firmly believes in the survival of the fittest and that all those who cannot keep up should be left behind. She will endure the company of those she considers beneath her only so long as it is serving her purpose. After their usefulness is at an end, they will be tossed aside. That said, she is not cruel just for sport. Her every action has a purpose to it. There might be room enough for affection in her cold little heart, if a Hero can find a way to prove they have earned it.

Combat Readiness: Her large scythe is a magical focus, not a martial tool, despite its capacity to easily be both. And while the Dragon's magic has dampened most of her ability with the blood and bone magic of her people, she will still find small ways to be useful. Given a supply of bones she can turn them into magical missiles or a pair of aggressive skeletal servants. She can also staunch the flow of blood from a wound or cause it to flow more freely, saving or slowly draining life.

Favor: Zanna will disdain at the notion and likely hurl insults as well, but will do as tradition requires. Her Favor comes in the form of three small balls of flame that will hover about the Hero's head. Despite the deep black color to the fires, they can shed a bright green light when asked to do so. They can be sent a short distance ahead and behind the bearer but will always stay within sight. The three flames can be forced to coalesce into a small, black onyx gem when storage or subtlety becomes necessary.



Astrid Kristin

“If one went so far as to travel across the globe to the other side, one would find a kingdom nestled in the center of a range of small, rocky mountains. An unusual, magical place of carriages pulled by solidified wind instead of horses, of houses supplied with water by elemental means instead of streams, and of walls coaxed into rising from the earth for new houses. A talent for the arcane magics of this world run rampant among these people and they live quite the charmed life thanks to its influence. Just don't become hung up on appearances. They are an odd looking lot.”

Tower: The twisted Dragon has designed Astrid's Tower in such a manner as to give any cartographers a migraine. Instead of one set of stairs leading steadily upwards, each floor comes equipped with a dozen or more. Some lead up a single floor, other two or three, still others only lead down, and some even go nowhere useful at all. Even worse, the path to the Princess is as straightforward as the Tower's design. Be prepared to climb up and down more stairs than you cared to contemplate along the way.

Guardians: The very bricks of the walls and tiles adorning the floors are the guardians on this strange Tower. Bricks will launch themselves out of the walls in kamikaze assaults upon all who wander past, the holes soon filled in with brethren buried just beneath. While the tiles, thinner and brittle but no less dangerous, will twirl out of their appointed spots and fly towards those any who clamber by. The true danger in these Guardians lies not in their numbers, for they are no swarm, but the fact that the dangerous tiles and bricks look no different from their mundane counterparts.

Traps: Hidden enemies and the trudging up and down many, many stairs appears to be enough of a hazard to satisfy the Dragon. At least, at the moment.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Several of the stairs in each staircase have taken to wandering out of boredom while waiting for a Hero to climb them. They have left illusions in their place so the Dragon does not catch them goofing off. Climbers and descenders alike should take care.

Tier 2 - The tiles and bricks have been given a few lessons in flying during the free time. They've learned to curve and even circle around for a second pass, given enough room to maneuver.

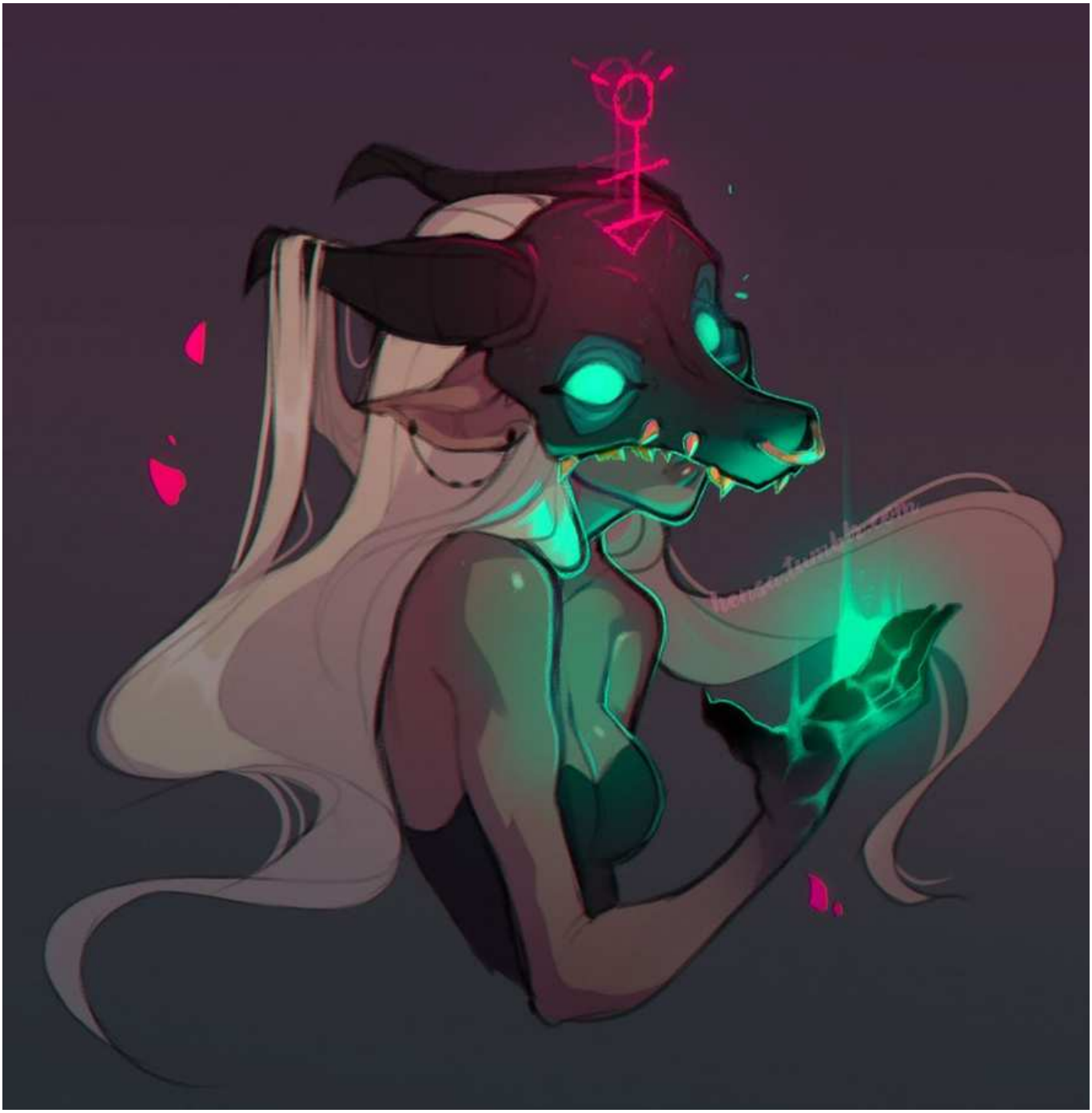
Tier 3 - Ignored for this long, the tiles and stones have learned a fantastic new trick. They have figured out how to roll their fragments together after being shattered from their headlong flights into Heroes. Gathered together, these shards of tile and granite form into powerful, if short, stone golems intent on avenging their fellow fallen masonry brothers.

Princess' Entrapment: Astrid's chains are naught but simple iron binding her to the far wall. Two massive, ugly gargoyles stand watch over her, malice in their cold eyes. It appears there are no tricks left in this Tower. Just a fight against two granite brutes, either of which would make a challenging battle on their own. Thankfully the Dragon did not think to bind Astrid's mouth. She will be able to assist occasionally with blasts of magic. Do not urge her to help too often, lest the gargoyles turn their wrath on her as well.

Temperament: Astrid is older in spirit than she appears in body. The result of too many harsh lessons due to curiosity without caution and the arcane magic she wields. The unusual transformations upon her body are proof enough of that. She is a cautious and careful individual in both deeds and words. She dislikes making promises she is not absolutely sure she can keep. Breaking promises is part of the reason she is the way she is now. But a Hero can rest assured that every word from her lips is as true as she knows it to be. Those who seek her affections will find them coming slowly, but will run bone deep when they do.

Combat Readiness: Like all the magically inclined Princess trapped in this Castle, Astrid's powers are greatly diminished from what they could be. The blasts of elemental magic is the crudest and least of what she is capable of but it is all she will be able to showcase here. Such raw eruptions will tire her quickly, however, as she is far more talented at the controlled, refined interactions her people have with the elements.

Favor: Astrid will clearly dislike being asked for her Favor if her face is to be believed, but will not openly object. She will pull off a silver bracelet inset with topaz chips and hand it over. She explains it is enchanted with a Shielding charm and will teach you the phrase to call it forth. The shield itself weighs nothing and sits on the arm like the lightest feather but offers protection against both blows and magic. It can be "shorted out" by taking too much damage at once, though it would take a swat from a Dragon's paw to manage that in one blow. Given an hour the bracelet will recharge itself, indicated by an audible chime, and be ready for action once more.



Gisou Lamothe

“It is a mystery to all but the dread Dragon itself where a being such as Gisou was kidnapped from. Ask the lady herself and you will get naught by cryptic answers such as, "From beyond the mists of time." or "Between the stars, that bright one there and the dim one above it.". As for the Dragon, well, I doubt you will have time to ask when you finally meet. All that can be guessed with any kind of accuracy is that it is a land far from here, near the ocean, for sometimes the scent of salt and coconuts drift from her hair.”

Tower: From the dark and murky corners of the tropical part of this world, the noxious Dragon has dragged forth a vile bog to infect all who would dare climb this Tower. The air here is putrid, humid, and still. Buzzing insects gather in swarms just waiting for soft flesh to wander by for a drink. The path through will require wading through murky, filthy waters as well as marching through mud that sucks at the boots. The very atmosphere here is nearly as taxing as the monsters lurking in the shade.

Guardians: Alligators, terrifying in size and the strength of their bite, float on the surface of the stagnant water. While tough, powerful opponents, they are a lazy lot and will be loathe to lunge at anything further than a short distance from their chosen vigil. Heroes would be wise to take a moment and check themselves after walking through the waters, for in addition to alligators, they hide leeches. They are hungry and exude a numbing agent with their bite. If a Tower climber is not careful these small beasts could suck them dry in just a few floors.

Traps: Heroes are encouraged to pay special note to the air that they breathe. In places the fumes of the swamp will be so vile and thick that it can make strenuous activity, such as combat, all but impossible to sustain. The Guardians of this Tower will suffer no such effects as they are well adapted to such odors. It may be of interest to note that these pockets of gas are highly flammable, so be wary of drifting embers from torches.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The trees that stand to the sides of the path with their roots jointed up out of the water have become infested. Palm-sized spiders have made their homes among the limbs, waiting to pounce on anything that wanders beneath their perch. While they do not possess a deadly venom, their bites are much more painful than they have a right to be.

Tier 2 - Inside the Tower, the still air has become all but sweltering. The heat and humidity will make traversing the terrain in any but the lightest of armors a risky proposal. Heroes are advised to bring extra water or risk dehydration, for there is none in here fit for drinking.

Tier 3 - Given time to tinker, the meddling Dragon has given the alligators a few steps up the evolutionary ladder. Each now sports a pair of fifteen foot long tentacles just behind the joint of the jaw. Coated with pale scales, the alligators are admittedly easier to spot now, but much more energetic and aggressive in hunting for their food.

Princess' Entrapment: Gisou can be found at the very heart of the bog, bound to an altar of stone on a small chunk of earth set just above the water line. As you approach, she will yell at the Hero to stay back, to keep away, that the altar is stealing her powers somehow. But one must if you are to free her from the iron chains that bind her.

As you approach, the altar lights up with a sickly green glow, runes and lines appearing where there had been none a moment before. The Princess will give a scream in pain as the same light fills her eyes. A figure will rise from the shadows behind the altar. It will be a figure crafted from the stuff of nightmares. Specifically, the nightmares of the Hero. Most specifically, the worst fear of the Hero, given form by the shadows of madness and raw magic. Be prepared to face a foe that will test your courage and strength of will.

Temperament: Gisou enjoys being a creature of mystery and secrets, of moonlight and shadows, and most of all, of gentle, teasing affection. Her elegant speech and agile mind are both well suited and trained towards answering direct questions with diversions and misdirection. She is a hard creature to grasp, but if one is patient and demands little, they may find her drifting towards them of her own accord. Do not expect her to speak of her past, her homeland, or even her family no matter how gently prompted. Such things are behind her now and she does not care to look back at them.

Combat Readiness: While she does possess magic of a fashion, it is ill-suited to the fast pace and rigors of direct combat. Her talent at binding and controlling spirits may prove useful once the Castle has been left behind, but for now she lacks both the proper tools and the time such rituals tend to take.

Favor: The mysterious Princess will hand over a bracelet crafted from finger bones if asked for her Favor. Whatever creature they were originally from had long fingers indeed. The bracelet allows the wearer to see spirits that would ordinary be invisible to the naked eye. It also allows the wearer to harm such spirits with ordinary weapons should the need arise.



Bernib Bahur Banoub

“Bordering the Kobolds' desert, even further to the south, lies a dried and dusty savanna that is home to the Sphinxes. They have body of a lion, wings of an eagle, and upper torso of women so beautiful the bards weep in their attempts to describe them. A matriarchal society of intrigue, half-truths, and betrayals all woven together into a massive game these women call Politics. Males attempting to travel through this land beware. The Sphinxes love their games and failing to triumph against one after being challenged results in a forfeit of their choosing. And they have no men of their own.”

Tower: The interior of Bernib's Tower is a rather strange affair. At first glance Heroes might be wildly confused, for instead of a dungeon or dangerous locale, there is a carnival. Brightly colored tents, booths of games and food, and even mechanical rides that look suspiciously modern. All them are open, running, and even staffed by hawkers doing their best to hide horns and spear-tipped tails beneath costumes. They'll be happy enough to take a Hero's coin to enjoy any of the amusements, assuming you have any. However one will soon discover the games are rigged, the food rather tasteless, and the rides elaborately disguised traps. However, the real test of this Tower lies not in the carnival itself, but under the red-and-white striped tent of the big top at it's center.

Guardians: Princess Bernib herself stands at the center of the center ring under the big top. Not chained, not bound, not held captive by any magic or malice of any kind. Indeed, she appears to have volunteered to the one who delivers the challenge of this Tower. She eagerly announces that the Hero, Rivals, and Rogues are all invited to take part in her Quiz Show. Bernib promises puzzles, riddles, and even the odd physical challenge mixed in here and there.

There is no convincing her otherwise or persuading her to drop the challenge. In fact, she will seem quite insulted at any insinuation her riddles are silly or a waste of time. Given that the Dragon's magic is laid over the big top so thick and oppressively that drawing a weapon or casting a spell are so draining they may as well be impossible actions, it would be best to play along.

The big top's seats will quickly pack with the demons that were running the rides, booths, and attractions of the carnival. At least they left a skeleton crew, literally, to run things in their absence. Bernib appears to be be quite pleased with herself in the way that cats frequently are.

Traps: The Princess makes it quite clear that those who do not know the answers to her questions and riddles should not guess blindly. Those who answer wrong will find themselves subjected to penalties delivered immediately. Pies to the face, in a variety of fruity flavors, are among the simplest and they range up to an electric shock from the podium equal to any lightning bolt.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The demons, formerly content to sit and watch quietly enough, will now shout jeers and insults along with false answers and, rarely, the right one just to throw you off the scent. The near riot is sure to make concentrating during difficult riddles a challenge.

Tier 2 - Being kept waiting so long has bored the Princess and she's going to make up for lost time. Every participant is dealt an immediate penalty, the intensity of it is chosen at random for each person involved, and then launched directly into the first physical challenge. So much for the easy questions.

Tier 3 - The questions are harder, the riddles trickier, the physical challenges more punishing. This isn't a Quiz Show any longer. It's Quiz Hell and Bernib is the Grand Quiz Master. At least she has an adorable evil laugh.

Princess' Entrapment: The questions will begin as simple, general knowledge questions that are more a test of reaction speed to hit the big, red buzzer on your podium than one of intelligence. Ten such questions make up the first round, with the points leader being allowed to sit out the physical challenge that follows. Should there be a tie in any round, everyone has to compete.

The first physical challenge is a game of Whack-a-Mole on a grand scale. Everyone is handed massive hammers and told to gather as many points as possible inside three minutes. Wacking your opponents is not entirely discouraged, but neither is it strictly punished either.

The next ten questions are more difficult and include riddles as well as logic puzzles. Each question is worth double points this time around, but guessing wrong not only earns one a penalty, but the loss of a point as well.

The second physical challenge is a large, messy, trap-filled obstacle course. Walls will suddenly snap out to plunge the less agile into pools of cold pudding. Ropes will need to be climbed as demons with pillows attempt to bat the contestants down. There are even massive, slime covered creatures tasked with assaulting and pinning down those too slow or unlucky to get out of the way. Everyone is all but guaranteed to be a mess by the end of it.

The third round of questions, as Bernib is happy to announce, is the Lightning Round. All wrong answers will be punished with electric shocks. Each contestant is asked as many questions as they can successfully answer within forty-five seconds, with the option to pass. Unlike the other rounds, these questions are more personalized to the knowledge base of each contestant. Listen closely and you might learn a thing or two about them.

And while Bernib would have been more than happy to let this contest continue for literal days, the demons will have grown impatient at this point and demand to know the victor. Whereupon the Princess reveals that she hasn't exactly been keeping track of the points. Angered and demanding an end to the tomfoolery, the demons storm down from the stands. Hundreds of them. Prepare yourself for a battle royale, with the last person standing claiming the prize. Thankfully with the Quiz Show over, the oppressive magic of the tower lifts enough to make combat possible again. Try not to kill the Rival(s). Knocking them out just this one is okay.

Temperament: As one may have guessed, Princess Bernib has an intense love of games and streak of cruel humor, but neither totally dominate her personality. She is clever though not quite as intelligent as her nearly eidetic memory makes her seem at times. She is also a bit of a poor sport when it comes to losing, alternatingly raging or pouting. Considering her normal insistence on "penalties" when she does win she may just not care for relinquishing control. Still, despite the rough spots she will display moments of intense, intimate affection for those she comes to truly care about.

Combat Readiness: Bernib does not have much in the way of combat instincts, nor much interest in learning. You may find a use for her cleverness when it comes to the puzzles you will face rescuing other Princesses. But that is all she is likely to contribute without additional training.

Favor: Bernib's smirk when she hands over her Favor will make one wonder just what kind of trouble she's passing off. It will appear to be a twenty-sided dice, if a large one, carved directly out of an emerald and with each number inlaid with silver. When tossed onto the ground, it casts a random magical effect on the person who tossed it based on which number was showing on its top when it stopped. There's no telling exactly what each number will do until you roll it, but thankfully each of the twenty spells will be beneficial in some way, if not always extremely useful for the situation you find yourself in.

The die can be cast once per hour and the effects on the dice switch which numbers they are linked to with each dawn, though thankfully the twenty spells infused within it are always the same. The die will always return to the holder's pocket once cast, though if stolen or given away it will return to that person's pocket instead.



Yū Hayami

“Walking into the lands of the Oni is like stepping into another world entirely. The border to their lands is clearly marked by the edges of their bamboo forests, found nowhere else in this world. One will always encounter the males first, red-skinned and massive with a brutish appearance. Should one prove their intentions to be friendly and truthful it will be shown that there are no better hosts to guest with. The courtesy and politeness exuded by the males is only matched by the seductive appearance and mannerisms of their women. Travellers should be warned the Oni expect their guests to keep their hands to themselves.”

Tower: That sneak of a Dragon has transformed Yū's Tower into a maze of bamboo, brightly lit and inviting despite the dangers that lurk within. The paths of the forest twist and turn, crossing and recrossing each other like a drawing of a pit of snakes. Eventually every path will end up leading to the next floor but some may take twice or even three times as long as the correct one. Having a careful eye for details at each crossroads would do well to set any Heroes attempting this Tower on the right path.

Guardians: Initially there will be few signs of those who guard the paths through the bamboo forests. A faint patter of footfalls through the underbrush or a bit of cloth snagged against a broken bamboo stalk will be the only hints. But soon they will strike. A needle shot from the shadows carrying a deadly poison. A knife carrying a cursed scroll wrapped around the hilt will barely touch skin, but that will be enough to invoke its crippling magic. Only once a Hero is weakened will those responsible openly strike. Ninjas with dark clothes hiding serpentine bodies of scale and toxins. They will strike like a passing breeze and disappear back into the underbrush, leaving only wounds behind.

Traps: The paths between the bamboo shoots seem oddly undefended. Only their twisting paths and invisible defenders seem to guard them… for now.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Clever hidden bamboo spike pits have been added to the many paths of the forest by the ninjas. While they are not deep, the bamboo is strong enough to pierce even leather boots when fallen on. Thankfully the ninjas did not think to poison these as well.

Tier 2 - Ronin, wandering bandits who plague the Oni lands, have travelled into the Tower and gathered in clumps along the path. While they are unarmored, a Hero would do well to not underestimate these foes. They have had years of experience using underhanded tactics with only sheer strength or speed to save them from new scars.

Tier 3 - A sinister growling has begun filtering through the shadows of the bamboo forest, hinting at the arrival of large, and very hungry, tigers. While less stealthy and less discriminating of their prey than the ninjas, they are much more dangerous and could easily spell doom for an inattentive Hero. They are, at least, solitary creatures and will not share their floor with another of their species.

Princess' Entrapment: Yū's cage is simple bamboo, built around her with no hint of lock or hinge visible to offer an easy solution of escape. An axe sitting nearby offers a simple, effective solution, while an oil lantern hanging from a branch could point towards a more dramatic option. However, the ninjas of this forest are not keen to let their prize go so easily. Upon freeing the Princess, the bamboo forest will be set ablaze with gunpowder and oil traps expertly hidden in the trunks. Escaping a forest fire intact will prove to be far more difficult a problem than freeing her is.

Temperament: Yū Hayami is a rather simple and uncomplicated person as far as Princesses go. She desires exquisite foods and the finest alcohol enjoyed in the most pleasurable surroundings available. And while she may sound spoiled at first glance, her father instilled a practical streak into her to prevent exactly that. She is an excellent chef in her own right and knows the methods to distilling hundreds of different kinds of spirits and liquors. She understands that the hard work that goes into creating meals and drinks of high quality make the end result taste all the better.

Combat Readiness: Yū has never show any interest in the magical or martial arts, much preferring the kitchen, garden, or distillery to any kind of combative art. She is, however, graced with the gentle magic all Oni women seem to possess that eases tensions between people. It is nothing overt and will not prevent opposing personalities from arguing, but her presence will help smooth over smaller misunderstandings.

Favor: When asked for her Favor, Yū will make a face like someone forced to suck on a lemon, but will not argue more than that. She will pull off the two red ribbons on her ankles and hand them over. Each one offers a slight boost to the speed of the wearer. The effect becomes more pronounced when both are worn, but they can be used separately as well.



Riah-tli De'tli

“The underground of this world is a many layered thing holding secrets of ancient civilizations long since lost as well as those still living. The Displacers are just one such race surviving in the darkness and they are certainly not the least dangerous. They are named for their natural skill at illusion magic so pervasive that even the smallest child can appear to be in two places at once if threatened. However, if one digs past their venomous attitude towards outsiders and monstrous appearance there can be found a people not that different from any other.”

Tower: Taking the illusory nature of the Displacers for inspiration, the perverse Dragon has crafted this Tower out of tricks and traps stolen right out of a fun house. Expect to stumble between mirrors designed to hide the true nature of pathways and into walls rendered imperceptible by magic. A Hero would do well to keep their cleverness close at hand as their eyes may do them little good along this path.

Guardians: There seem to be no monsters to hassle Heroes as they ascend. Then again, the Traps are certainly challenge enough. But if one gazes into their mirrored reflection one might discover that a few move of their own accord.

Traps: Beside the hallways of mirrors and the invisible walls, there are mechanisms embedded into the floor that will make climbing the tower a test of endurance. Some floors will suddenly become treadmills, requiring a mad dash to reach the end of them. Others will teeter and totter up and down at the slightest bit of weight. A few hallways are designed to flip upside down all of a sudden while others will rotate continuously, which is sure to leave all but the most nimble bruised.

Still, not all are as innocent as they appear. Some treadmills come equipped with fiery poles that must be hurdled over unless one cares to be burned. The teetering, tottering floors may suddenly spring up spikes in an attempt to catch those unable to keep their footing. Even a few of the rotating and flipping corridors hold the chilling surprise of sawblades that reveal themselves after they are triggered.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Sticky glue traps have joined the veritable cornucopia of devilish devices that coat the floor of this tower. While they are not strong enough to hold a Hero of even moderate strength for long, they are certain to slow anyone not agile enough to leap over them.

Tier 2 - Certains mirrors in the Tower have revealed themselves to be more than they first appeared. While most are still simple mirrors, some now house trickster spirits who reach out with the hands of those reflected in its reflective surface. If they manage to drag a Hero into the glass they will remain trapped there for a time. Don’t worry, they won’t do any damage, unless their giggling in your ear drives you mad along the way. They seem to hold a special interest for the Princess and will make an extra effort to try and pull her away from her rescuer.

Tier 3 - A few doppelgangers have wandered into the halls, taking the forms of anyone they happen across. The Hero themselves, Rivals, Rogues, even the Princess herself. They are very believable actors that only get better the longer everyone spends wandering the Tower’s halls. They will attempt to sow confusion, jealousy, even anger between everyone with their antics, but they will not care to risk themselves in a direct assault.

Princess' Entrapment: Riah-tli's cage is crafted from bars of smoke that can only be escaped when someone on the outside reaches through and takes her hand. Simple enough, but not the end of the Dragon's treachery. A note tacked to the wall will happily detail the true enchantment holding her in this Tower. Riah-tli's hand must be held from the moment she leaves the cage of smoke until she exits the tower, or else she will be whisked away back into her confinement. More challenging than it might seem, given the traps found in this terrible tower.

Temperament: Riah-tli has not seen many of the other races that inhabit this world due to her people's isolationist tendencies. Thankfully she has replaced the hatred of her clansmen with curiosity. Unfortunately, she has received some rather slanted teaching over the years that tends to make her sound… well… racist. Her entire knowledge base on the other races of this world is formed entirely on misconceptions and stories of the "evils" they propagate. She is open to correcting the mistakes in her knowledge, but until then she will tend to offend pretty much everyone.

In spite of the worlds that will come out of her mouth, Riah-tli has a kind spirit. She dislikes confrontation and arguments and tends to try to slip away when either are raging. Still, do not expect her to absorb abuse forever. There is a monstrous streak to her soul, even if she hasn't found it just yet.

Combat Readiness: Given her four, powerful arms tipped with retractable claws and two agile tentacles, plus a proclivity for magic capable of making her seem to be in two places at once, Riah-tli would make an excellent brawler with a little training. However, she has very little at the moment. She does have a sensitive set of ears and eyes capable of seeing in pitch blackness.

Favor: Riah-tli will look a little relieved if asked for her Favor and hand over an onyx cloak pin. Carved into the shape of a black orb, all one needs to do to release its magic is tap it three times. For thirty minutes each day, split up however you wish, the onyx orb will glow with a green light, revealing nearby invisible foes as well as those simply hiding in the shadows.



Dailidė Chisholm

“The Deeplings who live in the deceptively named Butterfly Forest are a strange bunch. They are Humans who long ago adopted certain Elven ideals and vanished into the deadly woods. Trained from birth in the sword and bow by necessity, other races see them as violent and territorial. Which they are. But the terrors of the semi-intelligent woods they have claimed necessitates a certain feral instinct if one wishes to survive long.”

Tower: Rather than invent her own challenges for you, the lazy Dragon has simply imported a section of the Butterfly Forest and allowed it to flourish with a little magical help. Heroes would do well to not underestimate this dangerous wood despite its apparent beauty. The vivid flowers and glorious swarms of blue butterflies that flitters between them hide poisons and acids potent enough to fel men and melt steel. But the true dangers are the creatures that are never seen.

Guardians: Fae Dragons are, like everything in the forest, named for appearances instead of their deadliness. With bright green scales and wide frills of brilliant orange, blue, or yellow, they easily blend into the forest's overgrowth as just another flower. They are keen ambush predators despite their size. The males average about four feet long, plus an additional two of whipcord tail, and weigh as much as a full-grown man with the females being only slightly smaller. Even worse, their bite is highly infectious and will cause fever, intense sweating, and even delirium within a few hours if left untreated. Thankfully the territory of the Fae Dragon is such that only one or two will stalk an entire floor of a Tower. It may be worth mentioning that these miniature dragons are drawn to bright colors and will seek those wearing them.

Traps: While the swarms of butterflies, called Jewelflies, and vividly bright colors of everything in the forest may disorient some, the true danger lies in the less obvious plants. The rust colored vines, in particular, which the locals named Brushers. They are passive, content to dangle across pathways until something wanders by and touches them, at which point it will spray a natural poison in a wide arc that is capable of paralyzing even a Fae Dragon temporarily. Cutting through them is not recommended as their sap is a powerful acid and will melt non-magical materials.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Tantalizing pools of water have appeared, hidden just off the trails but guaranteed to catch the sun in such a way to tempt those who walk the paths of this forest. But those who attempt to follow such glimmers of water will find themselves lost in the woods without a pond in sight. An easy enough temptation to avoid, if the pools were not subtly magical and supremely tempting as a result.

Tier 2 - The Jewelflies are normally content to flutter around from flower to flower, occasionally gathering together into a massive swarm as they roam between sections of the forest. But thanks to a particularly devious enchantment by the Dragon, all those who enter this Tower now smell exactly like the Jewelflies' favorite flower. Except to be very, very popular with, and distracted by, these brilliantly blue insects.

Tier 3 - The Fae Dragons have been gifted with an unusual mutation not normally seen on such beasts. Large wings resembling those of a massive butterfly not appear between their shoulders. While they are not confident or agile fliers, they will be quick to take advantage of the wings by gliding down from the treetops onto their prey.

Princess' Entrapment: Dailidė's cage appears simple enough at first. A leather collar around her neck and long metal chain holding her to the center of a clearing in the forest. It would be easy enough to cut the leather or snap the chain with one blow. Except the Princess has had her mind clouded by a savage enchantment, transforming her mind into that of a wild animal. Heroes will be forced to subdue the Princess by brute force before freeing her. The collar and chain will prove durable in the extreme until this is done, preventing Heroes from trying to find a more clever way around this challenge.

Temperament: Dailidė is a wild Princess from a savage corner of this world and as such lacks the refined manners one would normally associate with royalty. However she is no less used to her commands being obeyed and leading those around her. Her words are gruff, blunt, and usually monosyllabic when it can be managed. She is in many ways, an Alpha female and very committed to staying in such a position, no matter what social structure she finds herself in. However, she does respect strength of body and mind and will lend her, rather insistent, affection to those who prove themselves worthy in one way or another.

Combat Readiness: Dailidė is skilled with both the bow and dagger, as well as an expert at stealth and ambush tactics. She is more experienced at hunting monsters and animals than killing humans and will hesitate to do so even when pressed. She is ill-suited for pitched battle and prefers to strike and fade away repeatedly instead.

Favor: She will offer up her very own longbow, carved out of the magic-soaked trees found in the true Butterfly Forest. One needs to carry neither string nor arrows while wielding such a wonder. The string and wood will never break from regular use and each time the string is drawn a silver-headed arrow will appear by magic. The arrows will disappear a few moments after impact.



“Captain Black Cat” Lise Myhre

“The Eastern Sea is a warm, tempestuous bitch and any sailor who has set canvas in her waters will tell you the same. Still, it is an important avenue for trading, so it is dared despite the dangers. Pirates run rampant in these waters and prey on the traders like the sharks below the waves. The most feared of these are the women pirates, for they are crafty, organized, and rarely take prisoners.”

Tower: The horrid Dragon has turned this Tower into a nightmare for sailors of all stripes. A series of coral reefs littered with shipwrecks, all strung together by a tangle of decaying rope, slick wood beams, and mangled metal. Crossing from one ship to the next would be hard enough on a clear day. But as if to add insult to injury, heroes will find themselves drenched by driving walls of rain and blinded by bolts of lightning far too close for comfort. Navigating these ruins will take agility and a certain amount of raw daring to accomplish.

Guardians: Even were the seas calm and skies clear, swimming between the wrecks and reefs would be impossible due to the giants of the sea that claim this storm-tossed area for their own. A pair of giant, three-headed hydras, each head capable of smashing apart smaller ships on their own and bodies as large as houses, roam these waters on the hunt for flesh. One would do well to stay clear of their sight, for these are beasts that would each require an armada to defeat. Thankfully they are quick to pass by on their patrols of the wrecks if they do not smell blood or see movement.

Traps: The Dragon seems to believe her cousins the hydra coupled with the storm is enough of a deterrent to would-be Heroes. For now.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - As the seas continue to rage, a few wrecks find themselves unable to stand up to the extended batterings. Some of the network of broken ships have slipped beneath the waves. This will limit the number of paths all Heroes have to choose from unless one wishes to contend with ankle deep, stormy waters.

Tier 2 - Between the ravages of the sea, the sun, and the hydras, there are few skeletons for the spirits who haunt this graveyard to inhabit. So most have to make due with just a hand, a foot, or even just a skull. Expect to be harassed by these skeletal remains as you traverse these ships. Hands will clutch at your pants, feet will wander out when you least expect them, and the heads will shout insults or mimic the roar of the hydras just for giggles.

Tier 3 - The two hydras have each grown an extra head. This new mutation is not only larger than the others but covered in scales as black as night. While not as keen of senses as the other three heads, this black one sports a powerful electric breath weapon it unleashes in a general direction when prompted by its neighbors.

Princess' Entrapment: Captain Black Cat can be found at the helm of her ship, steering the wheel and shouting orders despite the fact she has quite clearly run aground. Her mind is muddled with a simple, but effective, enchantment. She will believe she is still aboard her ship, navigating the storm, so long as she remains on the wreck. There are a number of creative solutions to freeing her. Some more dangerous than others.

One could simply throw her bodily overboard, but the tempestuous sea would make such an option truly dangerous. Dragging her off would result in the skeleton crew, a literal term here, leaping to defend their "captain". While they aren't very durable, there are an awful lot of them. Or one could lure over a hydra and simply destroy the ship completely. But as one might imagine that has its own share of risks. There are a number of more subtle tactics as well.

Simply put, as soon as she sets a sodden boot onto another ship, she will return to the reality of the situation at hand.

Temperament: Comparing Captain Black Cat to the Eastern Sea is the most accurate way to describe her. She is hot-blooded and quick to anger, but just as fast to cool off and act rationally. She has a certain cunning when it comes to leading others and inspires courage in all those who follow her. Beyond being a skilled seaman, Lise is a tactician of no small measure, specializing in bold, brazen assaults. One would do well not to confuse Captain Black Cat with Lise Myrhe though, as the latter can be quite romantic when out of the sight of those she leads. Becoming her First Mate would require one to recognize the woman beneath the pirate and help both out with their desires.

Combat Readiness: Captain Black Cat is a capable warrior well used to pitched assaults on roiling seas. Between bow and cutlass she can prove a threat no matter where she finds herself on a battlefield. Getting her to join the battle is never a problem, it's getting her to give a little ground where the trouble lies. She is used to pushing forward at all times, never retreating or giving ground, and doubling down when everything looks its bleakest. Her recklessness will get her in trouble from time to time.

Favor: When asked, Lise is as likely to curse out the Hero as they are to understand, but she will kick off her very own boots in either case. This pair of enchanted leather boots will always keep your feet comfortable and dry even if a cold winter wave washes water over the rim. They also give the wearer's sense of balance and speed a kick in the pants.



Deirdre

“Few maps will let you find the kingdoms of the undead. One usually pays with their life to visit such a place. Still, there are ways to enter for those who are determined. Begin at a crossroads on the stroke of midnight during a night no moonlight shines upon. Make three left turns and one right. Then close your eyes and step backwards. Of course, finding your way back out is a little more difficult. The dead have ways to wring enjoyment out of the living who dare their realm.”

Tower: The truly devilish Dragon has stolen more than the Princess from the land of the dead. The levels of this Tower are designed as a massive series of open air graveyards, dark and winding crypts, and even features descents into mass graves. The smell of damp, fetid air will plague your every step, banks of fog will hide your own feet from view, and everywhere the sound of moaning undead will haunt you. Heroes will need more than their fair share of bravery to survive these floors.

Guardians: Skeletal and zombified undead walk these courts and hallways, seeking life to drain to satiate their bottomless hunger. These creations are simple, relatively mindless, and rather weak, but they come in numbers that could overwhelm the less cautious. Heroes should be warned that their foes won't always be standing out in the open either. Some have reburied themselves in the hopes of catching Heroes unaware with tooth and claw.

Traps: The very atmosphere in this place seems designed to demoralize both the body and the soul of all who dare its passages. The stale, dank air makes breathing a chore and can cause those with less robust constitutions nausea at times. The banks of fog that rise up from time to time in the graveyards will make navigation a chore. And the moaning of undead that fills the air will make it harder to detect the undead attempting a more stealthy approach.

Upgraded Defenses:
Tier 1 - A chill has settled into the air of these undead lands. It will be uncomfortable even those dressed for such conditions and laced with a bone-gnawing fatigue that will only add to the general malaise plaguing of this Tower.

Tier 2 - The chill had deepened and sunk its claws into even the walking dead. Their forms become tougher as ice begins adding layers of protective armor to their delicate frames.

Tier 3 - As the cold gains the bite of true winter it has turned the banks of fog into sheets of ice that will make traversing the open areas of this place a true test of balance and skill. Even worse, it has sharpened the edges of the ice clinging to the walking dead, giving them terrifying claws.

Princess' Entrapment: Deirdre's prison is a cage of pure light and holy energies that is guarded by a literal angel. Seven feet tall, impossibly beautiful, impossibly male, bulging with muscles and armed with a sword of pure flames, the angel makes for an impressive guard. He is an honorable combatant and follows that code to the letter. He will not strike from behind, attack an unarmed opponent, or attempt to deceive any foe. A tough fight, to be sure, but one that is straightforward with no surprises involved.

Temperament: Deirdre is a hard creature to read for more reasons than her general lack of facial expression. Between the flowing black shadow she wears that covers the lower half of her face and her raven hair that conspires to hide her eyes at times it can be easy to believe she is naught but shadows. She is by her very nature a nightmare incarnate, after all, used the seeing the very worst humanity and dark magic has to offer on a daily basis. Very little surprises her in that direction and her haunted eyes show that clearly. But she lacks the flair one would expect to find in so black a villain. Her voice is quiet with a disquieting echo to it, though it lacks menace of any kind. Some describe it as her whispering directly into their ears while still being a room away.

She is capable of tenderness, compassion, even love, but is unused to expressing any of these for obvious reasons. She easily grows embarrassed and shy if confronted with observations about these feelings. Growing closer to Deirdre will require a light touch, lot of patience, and a rather tolerant stomach. She is still a monster after all and likes to “play” at times.

Combat Readiness: Deirdre is not equipped for direct combat, but is well versed in ways to cause pain to beings of all kinds. She will know where, when, and how to hit the various monsters that can be found in all the Towers and will happily, almost lustfully, share this knowledge in the heat of combat.

Favor: Deirdre will not react at all when asked for her favor, other than to say that the two of you will “still meet at the end all beings eventually reach”. She will pull a small onyx set in a silver stud from the blackness of her shadow-cloak. The earring will allow you to call a trio of undead to your side for a single battle each day. While the three undead are mere skeletons, they are each as tough as any armored knight and wield blades of pure shadow that leech life away from their foes with each strike.



Chiomara Timperley

“In the kingdom of knights, in the cold, snowy north, a darkness was bred beneath the veneer of honor and nobility. One that infested the very house of the King itself. Disgusted with the path his younger daughter chose he exiled her into the wilds. She swore her father would come to respect her strength, but strangely did not swear vengeance. Instead she disappeared into the dark corners of the world, honing and refining her strength by any means she could. Only by catching her asleep could the Dragon have caught so dangerous a Princess.”

Special Event!: In a strange turn of events, the Princess has freed herself from the cage meant to hold her prisoner. She will be waiting at the end of the first hallway impatiently as if all involved were late somehow. She will then dismiss absolutely everyone but the Hero themselves, declaring that only the summoned Hero is worthy of her attention. Other Princesses included. Some will naturally object to this dismissal, but none will be willing to take up the challenge when the Princess herself offers to personally duel any who balk her will.

In the end, the Princess and the Hero will be alone and she will reveal her name as well as the reason she had dismissed the others. She has left her sword behind in her haste to escape and barely made it to the entrance on her own. Indeed, she has several injuries that were not immediately visible to attest to the close calls.

Chiomara will demand the two of you return to claim her lost blade. She begrudgingly admits that without her sword much of her powers have deserted her, so she will act as your shield maiden for the climb. If you have a shield on you she will snatch it from your grasp. Otherwise she will rip a large wooden door off its hinges with a small effort to use as a tower shield.

Tower: There is no deceptive design or unusual tricks to this Tower, as the adaptive Dragon has realized such tricks are useless now. The Princess discovered them all on her way down. Instead, each floor has been replaced with an arena straight out of ancient Rome. Each a massive, sand-floored coliseum with stands rising up to dizzying heights on all sides. Every seat filled with bloodthirsty citizens of a forgotten, likely imaginary, empire.

Chiomara will welcome such a challenge with a laugh and a smirk.

Guardians: Each arena will task the Hero and Princess with defeating professional gladiators, entire squads of half-trained slaves, or even monsters straight out of the myths and legends themselves. Three-headed dogs, hydras, minotaurs, and centaurs may come charging out of the gates set in every wall of the colosseum. One will never know what the next match holds until it is already out of the gate and glaring in your direction.

The fifth and tenth bouts will hold a special treat for the audience. Two mighty heroes of ancient lore have been captured and promised freedom if only they survive the arena. The first is Polyphemus, the cyclops son of Poseidon, a giant standing fully twenty feet tall. The second, Hercules himself, stripped of his treasures but no less dangerous for that. Defeating both is possible, but may leave Hero and Princess wishing for a rest.

Chiomara will taunt the slaves and gladiators, but will take the monster more seriously. She will take great delight in the opportunity to defeat both living myths. Those she considers challenges worthy of her strength.

Traps: The edges of the arena are littered with trapdoors that contain lions on long metal chains, invisible beneath the coating of sand until the first time they spring out as someone wanders too near. They are indiscriminate, but deadly, hungry predators willing to fight to their last breath if it means the chance to inflict pain on another living creature.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The professional gladiators have been given a wider range of equipment to choose from to make the wait more tolerable to the crowd. Nets are replaced with spiked metal versions and several will come charging out of the gates astride chariots with an archer at their backs.

Tier 2 - Several lion pits have been hidden under the sand of the middle of the arena as well. They are scattered around so guessing where one might be will be hard, though the very observant may suspect where the traps lay.

Tier 3 - The Great Aias, besieger of Troy and second only to Achilles himself in strength and bravery, has claimed the final arena of this Tower for himself. His rage is only equal to his thirst for blood and his blows will stagger even the strongest of Heroes. Take caution when battling this one, as he gives even the Princess a reason to pause.

Princess' Entrapment: Upon completing every arena, the next set of stairs will lead to a small room that the Chiomara had originally been trapped in. She will quickly retrieve her sword from where it lies buried in the belly of a griffon. One of six, each of them brutally destroyed.

"At last, my arm is complete again." She will say with an almost seductive tone to her voice, before realizing the Hero is standing near enough to hear. She will attempt to cover up the lapse with a backhanded compliment about the Hero's skill in battle. But then insist the pair of you leave before the Dragon considers restocking the arenas.

Temperament: Chiomara is… complicated. She desires to become the strongest warrior that has ever existed and has performed a number of profane rituals in an attempt to reach that goal. Her sword is imbued with enough dark magic to make any priest worth their salt cringe at its very existence. And in the process she was forced to hunt down and slay some very particular targets.

But she still retains a strong sense of loyalty and fair play, believing that debts of all sizes need to be repaid in kind. She does not lightly ask for, or grant, favors but will never try to weasel out of a deal once struck. Perhaps the most surprising of all is that she still gets along fairly well with her sister, who is also one of the kidnapped princesses. While the two see the world very differently, they are still sisters and can come to an understanding… eventually.

Combat Readiness: Chiomara is a wild, reckless combatant who will leap upon her foes with zeal to prove her superiority over them. She can be reigned in by those she respects, though expect a vocal argument if you attempt to hold her back too much. While her talent for dark magic meant to empower her blows even further is dampened while the Dragon still lives, her blows are still capable of slamming through armor.

Favor: When asked for her favor, Chiomara would likely be quite insulting to a Hero, their parentage, their linage as a whole, and likely the entire reality that eventually resulted in them. But she would still hand over a small, well-worn, journal. It contains many dark secrets and rituals which will need decades of research to fully unlock, but in the short term it can teach you how to fire bolts of pure magical darkness at foes in rapid succession. This will rapidly prove tiring if done in quick succession.



Anca Tkach

“The system of caverns run deep and winding under this world and are home to as many races as the lands lit by sunlight. Those who explore the depths speak of a race of humans who have managed to survive despite the hostile conditions. But they also say not to trust them. For all their clever words and charming personality, they are not entirely what they seem. The armor crafted directly onto the skin of their arms and legs is proof of that.”

Tower: The ghoulish Dragon seems to have outdone herself decorating this Tower. A Gothic-style castle straight out of a horror story stretched out in all directions. Richly appointed halls with tapestries and plush carpet on every wall and floor, dining halls capable of seating a hundred at a time, even libraries with more books than seem to have ever been written. Unfortunately, it all seems to have been left unmaintained for a very long time. Cobwebs are strung thickly between nearly every doorway and all over the place as well. The windows, though illusions, show a dark, dank swamp and a stormy sky that occasionally erupts with a bolt of lightning and crack of thunder. Usually when it would be the most startling or appropriately timed.

Guardians: While the halls and rooms seem empty, any Hero worth their salt should know better than to trust that. Werewolves howl in the distance and can be heard with their claws clacking down hallways. But they are smart, crafty hunters, willing to find a hiding spot and lurk there until the opportune moment to leap out and attack. While on need not worry about having silver on hand or contracting the virus yourself, they are fast foes equipped with claws and teeth that can rip and tear with the best of them.

Traps: While not truly Traps, they're not exactly Guardians either. Disembodied hands crawl, scamper, and wander in small packs of two to five. They can often be seen attempting to tidy up the rooms, or mess it up further, or any number of additional odd actions that make little sense to others. They cannot speak and will, at times, latch onto anyone who walks nearby in an attempt to trip them up. Sometimes they will attempt to make off with an item out of the pockets of a Hero.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Poltergeists have begun to infest the ancient castle to toy with anyone daring to wander the halls. While not overtly violent, they are mischievous spirits keep to play pranks designed to scare. Books will fall from their shelves with a tremendous bang, furniture might suddenly move, curtains will billow out to form humanoid shapes around corners. Those sorts of things.

Tier 2 - Coffins have begun replacing a number of tables and other flat surfaces. Some of them have even been built right into the floor and walls. Most of them are empty, decorative, but some house ghouls waiting for just the right moment to spring out and scare those walking nearby. They are scrawny things, uninterested in doing more than scaring, but they provide a useful distraction that the more deadly Guardians are keen to exploit.

Tier 3 - The spider webs have attracted a new host of arachnids to their strands. While those that initially made the webs were content to abandon their post if disturbed, this new batch is larger, more aggressive, and much more poisonous. All Heroes would be wise to tread carefully, lest they find eight legs and a pair of fangs digging into their skin. A word of caution, their poison is particularly toxic and not one that can be easily ignored.

Princess' Entrapment: Anca has been trapped by a devious little enchantment invented by the Dragon to test the Hero's wits as well as their courage. A series of potions are lined up, each marked with a blood type on the vial. A short note reveals that drinking one will change the Hero's blood type temporarily to the labeled one. A second paragraph offers a logic puzzle that will allow the Hero to correctly identify which vial should be imbibed.

The reason for all this, is that Anca's cage can only be opened by the correct type of blood being spilled into the lock. Quite a bit of it actually. I hope you have a healing potion handy or the trip back down the Tower might be more hazardous than the way up was.

Temperament: Anca is a tightly closed book wrapped in thorny vines. She will be civil enough, but never friendly and often her words will have the bite of insults to them. She has a habit of looking at people as if she were wondering what they tasted like and which wine to use as a pairing. But should one look deeper, they will find sadness under the hunger. She will always prefer being around others to being alone, even if her words make it seem as if she would rather be anywhere else. Due to her eating habits, she simply doesn't trust herself when it comes to intimate contact and pushes people away in an attempt to keep them safe. There may be a way past the thorns, but expect to be pricked a few times along the way.

Combat Readiness: Anca has some skill with a katana due to the necessities of living in the depths. She prefers not to use it unless she really has to and that hesitation shows in combat as well. The armor grafted to her arms and legs affords her excellent protection as well as rather damaging unarmed attacks, though she had no training in brawling. Overall, she is a poor combatant, but better than having no one.

Favor: Anca will simply glare at the Hero when asked for her favor, but will quickly shove her own katana into their hands. It is a fine, serviceable weapon on its own, only revealing its true power when fed a portion of the wielder's blood. Given a few drops, the sword becomes capable of cutting through steel as if it were flesh, but flesh becomes as difficult to cut as steel. Give it a few more and the enchantment will switch off. An odd enchantment, but a clever Hero could find many uses for such a weapon.



Itet Ah-Muzen-Colel-Cab

“Alongside the Dawn Elves live the insectoid race known as Asalari. A gentle people who are content to harvest honey and tend to their gardens. Though some are wary of them due to their appearance, few deny the quality of their nectars. They live in massive family homes capable of, and often managing to, house hundreds of individuals at once. A harmonious, diligent, hard-working people.”

Tower: The immature Dragon seems to have designed this Tower around several Asalarian children's tales. The Tower itself has taken the shape of a massive beehive's interior. Corridors are lined with sticky, honey-covered walls with wax caps holding back pockets of the sticky amber fluid the size of a man's head. While the floor is solid enough, a stray blast of fire or wide swing of a weapon are sure to cause honey to flow. Heroes are advised not to try to ingest it, as it is the product of a wasp-like race called Apocrita and is fiercely bitter.

Guardians: The wasp-like humanoids known as Apocrita, nothing more than a tale meant to frighten children into behaving, have come to life in these corridors. They are a tall, lanky people covered in chitinous plates and wielding spears tipped with pain-inducing poisons. Their delicate looking limbs are actually quite powerful. They are more than capable of zipping around the high ceilinged corridors with extreme agility. If forced to the ground the Apocrita are much more awkward.

Traps: While there are no obvious traps inside these halls, the honey itself can be just as lethal a deterrent. Though bitter, it remains intensely sticky to all but the Apocrita themselves, a fact they will be more than eager to exploit if a fight turns against them. They will sacrifice some of their food stores if it means slowing down a foe enough to strike them down.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - While normally the Apocrita will travel the halls alone, or rarely in pairs, they have begun to sense something is wrong in their hive and sought the safety of numbers. They will now be encountered in twos and threes.

Tier 2 - The Apocrita have taken to coating their hands in the same pain-inducing poison that coat their spear tips. While their hands are not coated in claws or even sharp nails, the contact of the poison to bare skin is enough to set nerves alight with the poison's effect.

Tier 3 - Up until now, all the workers and warriors encountered have been simple drones, but now the massive Apocrita males have begun to wander the halls. While there is only one on each floor any Hero would do well to avoid attracting their attention. They cannot fly, but stand a massive ten feet in height and can punch their spears through solid plate armor. Avoidance is the wisest course for these brutes.

Princess' Entrapment: Itet is not bound by steel or magic, but by dozens upon dozens of vines that hold her against one wall of her room. A pair of Alraune, abominations with the lower bodies of plants but the upper body of lovely women, hold her thus and will not release her until they are defeated. They will attack with flailing vines and blasts of magic but are not much for direct, physical combat. Of course, if a Hero should happen to get too close they have… other ways of defending their charge.

Temperament: Itet is as sweet as honey and just as capable of rotting teeth at times. She makes friends easily and tries to always be helpful, even if the other person is uninterested in either. She also likes to be in the midst of things, hunting down groups to attach herself to or flurries of activities to lend a hand. This might make her come off as clingy or a busybody to some, but that is simply the way of the Asalari. To stay busy and helpful. When one has several dozen individuals living together under one roof there is always something that needs doing.

Itet is most at home performing household chores and cultivating truly fantastic gardens. She doesn't believe her title of Princess exempts her from contributing to what needs to be done and Asalari as a whole don't really believe in the idea of servants. While she will always be one to share her affection with more than one person, there is a special place in her heart reserved for the one she truly cares for.

Combat Readiness: Though Itet has many talents, combat is not one of them. Even given patient training and a weapon suited to her temperament she will be only a passable warrior. Her heart simply isn't in it. However, she is stronger than she seems and her wings aren't just for looks. While not a fast flier, she has precision on her side and can even hover. Inventive Heroes may find a use for her yet.

Favor: Itet has little at hand that could be offered as a Favor, a fact that distresses her almost as much as being asked for it, and will look around for several minutes for something worthy. Eventually, reluctantly, she will produce a seed the size of a man's fist from beneath the leaf-like skin. She will explain that an Alraune heart is highly magical, even after death. It can be used in a wide number of enchantments as a power component. With this in mind, a Hero could keep the item for themselves for use at a later date, or trade it into the Merchant for a 100 CP Item of their choice. A poor deal but the best one will get while trapped inside the Castle.



Harappa Eva Vŗścika

“Succubus. A dirty, demonic word in most any world. But to the devilish people who live among the Red Mountain Steppes one could not pay a higher compliment. It is the title of their most esteemed negotiators and diplomats. So shrewd and clever and witty of tongue that governments from around this world pay a hefty sum for their services as intermediaries in a wide range of disputes. Behind any peace treaty between nations, you can rest assured a Succubus, or Incubus, was employed.”

Tower: The artistic Dragon seems to have spared no expense in decorating this tower. The walls are pure white marble bricks set with thin lines of white mortar. Elegant repeating tile patterns coat every floor as well as run around every window. The windows are large, but instead of glass they are filled with delicately carved marble sheets into patterns of circles and stars that admit the light. Gold tracing and plant motifs line each door frame. The whole Tower has the feeling of a work of art.

Guardians: Nagas, women with the lower bodies of snakes, have been attracted by the beauty and warmth of this Tower and seem very keen on keeping out intruders. But only once disturbed. Otherwise they seem content to lounge in the sun in small piles of flesh and scales. So tread quietly or one might find themselves set upon by several of these venomous creatures intent on biting or slashing at those they find.

Traps: Some of the plant motifs on the walls hide a deadly secret. Linked to a nearby floor panel, the flowers will fire out a barrage of needles at anyone who gets caught in their path. While not poisoned, the sheer number of needles that are fired from each of these traps is impressive. A careless Hero could be forced to take a very painful recess to remove them.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Small snakes, less than a foot in length and only pencil thin, have begun wandering the halls in search of their own patches of sunlight. Non-poisonous and skittish to a fault, these snakes are not any threat to the Tower climbers directly. They are, however, quite clumsy and someone seems to have left precariously piled stacks of metal plates here and there. Which would surely rouse the Nagas in a wide radius if knocked over.

Tier 2 - Given so much time to bathe in the sun, the Nagas have become even lighter sleepers than normal. Once woken, they will not return to sleep either and begin roaming the halls of the Tower restlessly.

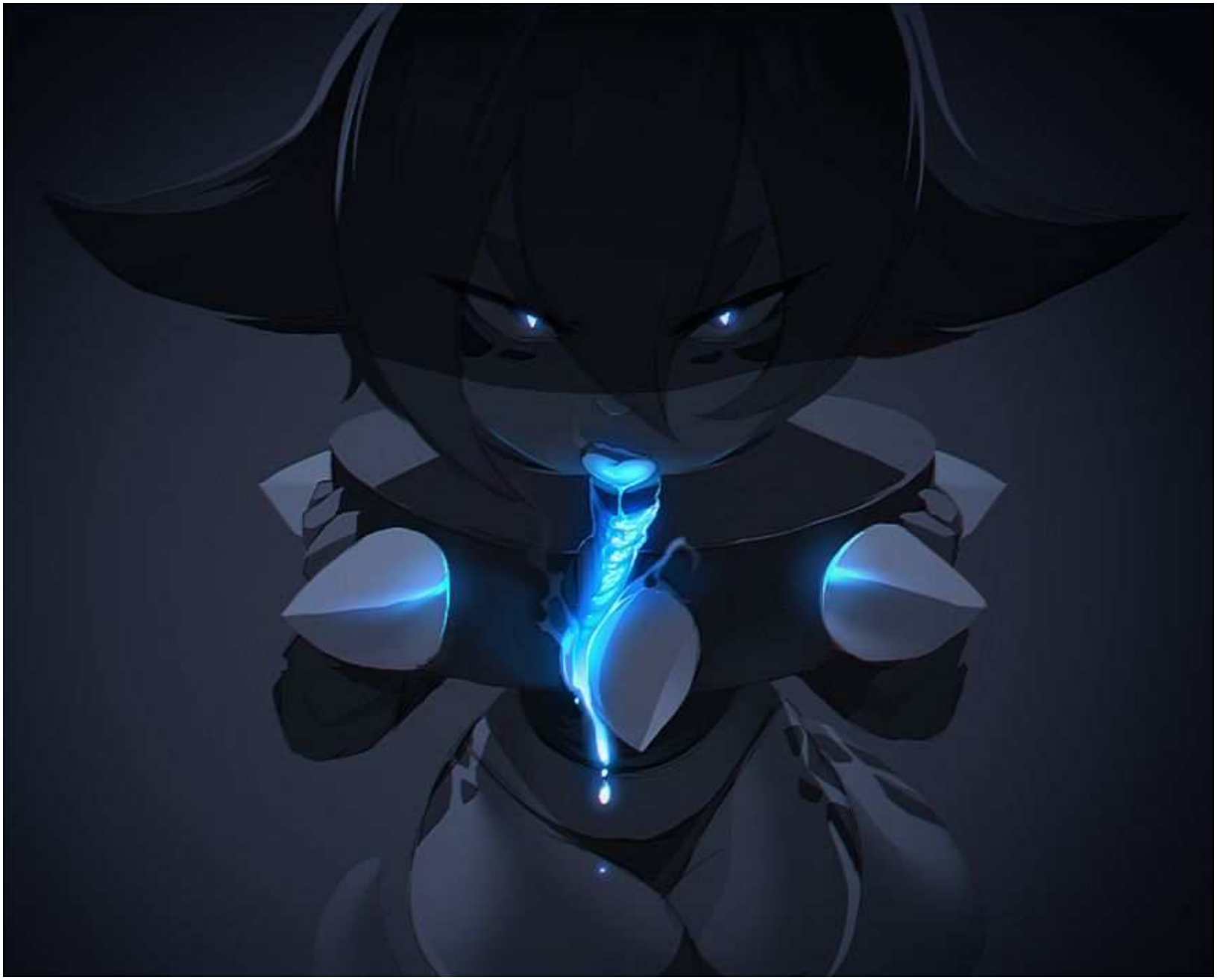
Tier 3 - With so much time on their hands the dread Dragon added… nothing? No, that's not quite right. A large number of the sunbathing Nagas seem to have gone missing. But any intrepid Heroes had best keep their eyes peeled. The colorful tilework and motifs seem to have gained a little more dimension than normal. Where did those Nagas get to anyways?

Princess' Entrapment: A four armed demon, each hand holding a wickedly curved scimitar stands guard over Eva's cage, utterly immune to her charming tongue and entreaties for release. The demon will prove to be a skilled combatant more than capable of holding off even two or three strong fighters at the same time. Outwitting, rather than overpowering, such a foe would make the fight much easier.

Temperament: Harappa, who prefers to be called Eva, is a skilled diplomat and manipulator of others who maintains a charming face no matter the situation. That is not to say she doesn't tell the truth, she simply knows there are shades of truth and uses those to her advantage. Trying to verbally spar with her will leave most others with a headache. But beneath that, she is quite witty and snarky, though only someone who has found a place in her heart will ever see that side of her for long.

Combat Readiness: Eva does not have any place in any combat situation. She has no training in such matters, though she does seem to have a certain enthusiasm for watching such contests. Her clever tongue may prove useful as a distracting force when it comes to Rivals and some Rogues though.

Favor: Eva will be very clearly disappointed if asked for her favor and will launch a few biting comments at the insinuation. But nevertheless she will obey the convention. She will produce a small dagger made for throwing with a topaz sliver embedded into the steel. When thrown, the dagger transforms itself into a miniature lightning bolt in mid-air, striking the target with electrical energy instead of sharpened metal. This dagger will always return to the thrower and is quite hard to lose.



Staphyla Urodela

“The Salamanders are a reptilian people, used to the warm depths of the underground. They remain a reclusive kingdom not because of their location or xenophobia, but because of their tempers. Describing them as volcanic might be too passive a word. But just as suddenly and fiercely as they flare, they cool off again and continue on with their day. They are an interesting people, should one be able to put up with the shouting matches, who have long since found ways other than violence to channel their aggression. ”

Tower: The sadistic Dragon has really turned up the heat this time. The interior of this Tower has been crafted into the likeness of an active volcano. Stone walkways pick their way over and around active lava flows. While there is magical protection in place to keep the temperature down, allowing a Hero to traverse the halls without instantly blackening to a crisp, it is still beyond hot. Those wearing heavy armor should beware that their own protection might doom them to dehydration. But those wearing too little will be in just as much danger from the embers dancing in the air and the sheer heat of the floor. Perhaps the Merchant will spare a few canteens if a Hero were to ask very politely.

Guardians: While there are no obvious Guardians to this dungeon, several of the pools of magma bubble ominously when stepped near. It is suggested one doesn't linger too long beside any.

Traps: Beyond the stifling atmosphere, there are Flame Gout traps buried here and there in the hallways and rooms. They are all but invisible to the naked eye. Thankfully, they emit a very particular snap-crackle-popping series of noises when a foot trods nearby. Unless one enjoys having their hair and clothes set alight one would do well to listen closely to the noises and step carefully.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Several hordes of bats have been set loose into the halls, which have all burst into flames. This has greatly displeased the winged rodents. They now fly about the halls blindly, squeaking in terror and sharing their flaming existence with anyone they happen to bump.

Tier 2 - The protective magic keeping the noxious fumes of the volcanic flow at bay have been allowed to weaken somewhat. Heroes will find some hallways will leave them dizzy within moments. There will always be a clear path to the next set of stairs, but it will take much longer.

Tier 3 - Those bubbling magma pools have finally woken up under the incessant squeaking of flaming bats. Lava elementals have surged forth to wander the halls, grumpy and irritable at having been awoken. They will lash out at anything that disturbs them but will rarely give chase. Anyone who hopes to bring down one of these behemoths had best bring magic as ordinary steel will just melt with the first strike.

Princess' Entrapment: Judging by the number of thick steel collars and bindings scattered around the room, the Dragon's attempts to hold Staphyla back with conventional means was less than successful. So they came up with something a little more inventive. The Princess is bound in place by her own anger. A devious enchantment that binds her to the wall so long as she remained even a little angry. Which, considering her entire race, is damn near impossible for her to achieve on her own. Her inability to escape her bonds only stokes the flames of her anger higher and higher. As it is, she is nearly mindless with rage. But, thankfully, all it would take is one good, forceful distraction to get her attention and break the cycle.

One is sure any Hero worth their salt knows how to distract a Princess.

Temperament: Staphyla is not a complicated person when one looks past the crown and the temper. She flares up and cools down just as quickly as others of her race, has a particularly wide vocabulary for insults and curse words, and absolutely hates being embarrassed. Calling her short or teasing her are short paths to getting punched. But she is wildly unskilled when it comes to romantic matters, which ends up leaving her embarrassed, which circles right around to punching. Persistence and durability are both key to winning this little firecracker's heart.

Combat Readiness: Staphyla has no formal combat training, but has brawled for years with her many brothers. While most Salamanders try to shift their aggression into other directions she was not to be deterred. She's also far stronger than she looks for her diminutive height and could dent plate with a good punch. Also, her saliva is strangely corrosive when she wills it to be, which has a whole host of uses. All told, she is a fair combatant, but her nature makes it quite easy for her to end up injured in a real fight.

Favor: Oddly, Staphyla will seem disappointed instead of angry when asked for her Favor. She will reveal a metal helmet enchanted to allow the wearer to make particularly vicious headbutts while protecting the wearer from the repercussions of using it.



Tapeesa Sammurtok

“Far, far to the north, past the lakes that never thaw, over the hills of ever-frozen trees, to the very edge of the world where the sun never sets in the summer, you’ll find the Polar Bears. While born and bred to survive the brutal conditions and extreme weather they are a warm people. They are especially friendly to any traveller who makes the trek so far to visit and trade. Thick fur breeds warm hearts, as they say, always with a smile. ”

Tower: The wild Dragon has designed a truly unusual challenge for those who wish to rescue Tapeesa. Instead of corridors and stairs, the interior of this Tower is simply one wide expanse of arctic plains. The temperature inside is uncomfortably cold but not truly dangerous unless one goes in underdressed or tarries too long. Ice, snow, and the environment will be the chief dangers here. A map will be provided to all to show them the way, but little else. Heroes with keen eyes and a little knowledge of tracking would do well here.

Guardians: While there are few predators out in these cold wastes, one would still do well to step lightly. For under the frozen soil slithers the massive Frost Worm. Over forty feet in length and possessing a numbing cold that oozes off their skin to make even the frigid air of this Tower feel warm, they are not Guardians to be trifled with. Thankfully, only a handful wander the entire landscape of the Tower. But Heroes who rouse the anger of one had best be ready for a true test of their fighting skills.

Traps: The landscape itself is difficult enough to traverse that they Dragon saw no need to lay additional traps. One must simply follow the path marked on the map. Over snow coated hills, along frozen rivers, even across lakes with thin spots in the ice. One would also do well to keep an eye towards the skies, as the weather inside this Tower is wildly erratic. Clear skies can turn into a blizzard and back again inside a half hour or a chilling fog could spring up to make visibility an issue.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Ice flowers, delicate and beautiful, have sprung up in patches around the frozen landscape. A type of magical ice that grows like a plant by using wickedly sharp petals to draw blood from the creatures that brush too close. While the patches are easily avoided when the visibility is good, they blend in quite well during fog and it is easy to stumble into one during a storm.

Tier 2 - Given extra time to tinker, the Dragon has had fun in her little icebox of a Tower. While the path was several hours of hard trekking before, now it has lengthened. It will be a truly grueling and challenging hike and now includes a rock wall climb. At least they were nice enough to supply climbing gear.

Tier 3 - The cold, which before was merely biting, seems to have finally overpowered the protective magic the Dragon left in place. Warm clothes or protective magic is going to be necessary to survive the trek without losing a few fingers and toes to the chill. Maybe the Merchant will be nice enough to let you root through his pile of discards again.

Princess' Entrapment: Tapeesa's entrapment is a straightforward one, a fight intended to finish off those already weary from a long hike. A trio of large snowmen shaped into the forms of fantastically terrifying beasts stand guard over the Princess. While strong and highly durable, they are just snow and any Hero smart enough to bring the ability to cast fire into this battle with find it laughably easy. Those who don't might be clever enough to use the snowmen's wild aggression against them.

Temperament: Tapeesa may as well be a spokesperson for her people's saying for how well she fits it. She has a smile for everyone she meets and a desire to offer a warm meal to everyone within range of a greeting. She tends towards being the den mother when in a group of friends, the responsible one cheerfully looking after her little ones. Still, for those who manage to capture a special place in her heart, she would be quite happy to show them how to stay warm during the long, cold winter nights.

Combat Readiness: While one might not know it from looking at her, Tapeesa is a skilled hunter and her powerful, fur-covered arms are for more than just show. Like all her people she is capable of hunting caribou and bringing one down with nothing but her strength of arms and wits. While she is less enthusiastic about applying these skills against any foe with intelligences, the Polar Bears have a second, less famous, saying. Don't come between a mother bear and her cubs.

Favor: While Tapeesa's crystal-blue eyes will betray the hurt and disappointment she feels at being asked for her favor, she will quickly obey without complaint. She will peel the wide, fuzzy collar off of her neck with a few moments effort. She explains that it will offer you a mild protection against any cold or ice magic you might encounter, as well as keep you cool no matter how hot the temperature around you will get.



Lydia Angelidis

“The Medusa are a much maligned people who prefer to live under the mountains far to the west. Rumors abound of their ability to turn people to stone with a single glance and of their venomous snakes entwined in their hair. And while the latter is somewhat true, the former is not. The rumor is born from the earth magic they use to create their underground cities. They are an odd people, but one who braves the depths may find they are deeper than expected.”

Tower: The dour Dragon has reached into the myths and legends of this world and has stolen more than a few ideas to keep this Princess safe. Classic stone walls and a maze most devious have been set into place, though neither are the true dangers of this Tower. Interestingly, there is no roof to the mazes of each floor, but one would be unwise to attempt to bypass the maze entirely by hopping onto the tops of the walls. The gravity reverses suddenly as soon as one's body rises over the height of the walls. Do be careful. It is a long way up.

Guardians: Massive, bull-headed minotaurs roam the twisting, turning passages of this maze. Gifted with muscle-bound bodies of men, these creatures are quick to attack and even quicker when it comes to a chase. While they do not corner well don't expect them slamming their heads into solid stone to slow them down much. Armed with axes befitting their giant stature, they are not combatants to be taken lightly, simple-minded as they are.

Traps: The gargoyles built into the walls are small, almost cute, creations that seem attached to nearly every corner or corridor. However, some of these stone winged goblins house a deadly secret. Pressure plates hidden in the floor cause those to spray out a jet of fire in the direction that they face. Even more devious, the gargoyle you most suspect will launch fire may not be the one that actually does. The Dragon spent a little extra time and created a number of false traps just to throw those who can detect such trickery off the trail.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - Pit traps have been dug under several corridors and filled with venomous snakes. While the venom in these particular snakes are not lethal, they do have certain paralytic properties that will make climbing back out a much more laborious task.

Tier 2 - Given this additional time to tinker, the Dragon has added corridors galore. While they are no more dangerous than the rest of the Tower, all Heroes should expect their trek through each floor to take quite a bit longer than they normally would. The Minotaurs especially appreciate the elongated corridors.

Tier 3 - It appears that the skies are no longer content to be empty. Gryphons, strangely immune to the gravity reversal enchantment, have taken to wandering the blue expanse. With the keen eyes of an eagle they can easily spot those in danger or already weakened to pounce upon. And with those lion claws on their front legs, they make for a dangerous foe. They are, thankfully, few in number and content to hit and run if they cannot take out their target in a few swipes.

Princess' Entrapment: Lydia's room would be considered rather plush by most standards. A lovely, comfortable bed along with all the accessories a young woman might want to make her stay more tolerable. However, there are a few oddities that one would instantly note. The first is that several items around the room are crafted not from their normal materials, but from stone. The second is that Lydia herself is merely blindfolded, but not bound.

She will quickly explain that the Dragon instead cursed her with the stoning gaze that the more sinister rumors about her kind claim exists. So the blindfold and her lack of desire to escape were not due to any binding, but a desire to protect any Heroes who might be climbing to save her.

Leading a blind woman through a minotaur filled maze is likely to be enough of a challenge to suit any Hero. Thankfully, once she is rescued, the curse breaks and she will be able to look around without turning everything to stone.

Temperament: Lydia is neither quiet, nor talkative, not shy, but not outgoing either. Many things hold her interest, but do not kindle true passion. She is a woman of greys and middle grounds and half-measures. But she does have a particular fondness for reptiles of all stripes. And when she does speak her words are exquisitely formed and well thought out. Perhaps she simply hasn't seen enough of the world to know yet what she wants. A kind Hero interested in growing close would do well to help her discover her passion for life.

Combat Readiness: Lydia has no desire towards entering into physical violence at all. But the snakes in her hair are quick to leap to her defense in moments of danger. Those who venture too close with ill intent will discover that the rumors of their deadly venom have only been slightly exaggerated.

Favor: Lydia seems to have no particular feelings about being asked for her Favor at all, but her snakes hiss at you in lieu of her response. She will pull the ornate charm off of her necklace and hand it over, explaining that it can cause small, but intense, earthquakes when held aloft and shaken vigorously. The quake will last for only a few moments, but it will never trip up the holder of the charm, and is powerful enough to knock all but the most nimble enemies off their feet. It can be used twice each day, recharging at sunset.



Beatrix Vina

“In eras past, slimes were little more than monsters that beginning adventurers cut their teeth on. But that all ended when an experimental spell stuck a slime. They were all gifted with sentience, personality, and shapeshifting powers in that magical accident. Magical scholars are still attempting to untangle exactly what convergence of natural and magical led to such a phenomenon, but the Slimes themselves are less interested in such questions. They have been quick to define themselves as a people, establish a kingdom, and even distinguish themselves as expert alchemists. For so young a people, they have done much with their time.”

Tower: The filthy Dragon has decided to make things quite difficult for Heroes with this Tower. Mud coats every floor ankle deep and even drips from the walls and ceiling in fat, cold, streams. Slogging through this mess is going to require not just strength, but a fair amount of agility. Be careful looking up, as a dollop of mud to the eye is sure to make seeing anything quite difficult.

Guardians: There doesn't seem to be any Guardians in this Tower. At least, not yet. Has the Dragon simply forgotten to include some?

Traps: Besides the ankle deep mud making travelling this tower a true test of endurance, it also hides another danger. Pit traps, utterly invisible with the uniform layer of mud, are scattered about the hallways and ready to suck those who don't watch their steps down. Those who trip or slip in the mud beware where one grabs onto the wall, as some of the stones are actually triggers for arrow traps. Pressing one's hand in the wrong spot could find a trio of arrows zipping in your direction.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The halls have begun showing some signs of life beyond the mud and the traps. Those globules of mud dropping from the ceiling will on occasion morph into grasping hands. Should they fall onto the floor they will be easily enough to ignore or trod on, but if one should happen to land on a Hero, they become truly dangerous. They will attempt to choke or blind those they fall onto. While not strong, they can be enough of a distraction to cause a Hero to wander into one of the other dangers found in this Tower.

Tier 2 - The simple arrow traps have grown both more numerous and more deadly. Not only does each trap now launch five arrows down the hall towards any Hero who trips them, but some have been hidden under the layer of muck coating the floor. The Dragon seems to have taken particular glee in lining the edges of the pit traps with these triggers. Though thankfully there is still only one arrow trap per hallway.

Tier 3 - The true Guardians have finally shown themselves. Mud golems, rising from the very ooze coating the floor, have begun to shamble their way around the Tower. They are easily cut down, but hard to permanently kill. There is a small core the size of a marble in each one and only by smashing it will a Hero be able to keep these golems down for long. They seem very uninterested in actually killing Heroes, but those they catch will be dragged back to the entrance if they can manage it. A gang of several mud golems may just be able to manage it with even the strongest of Heroes.

Princess' Entrapment: Beatrix is being held not by any chains, but by the very floor of the dungeon itself. While she is very grateful for the rescue she absolutely refuses to step "foot" in the mud. It would take days to fully clean out of her body and tastes absolutely horrible. She compares it to licking the underside of a mud-covered boot that has been worn for three years.

You're not entirely sure you want to know how she knows what that tastes like.

In any case, she will have to be carried. She will be able to shrink herself down to the size of a large housecat to make for easy carrying, and she is light enough that it will not be that much more taxing to do so, but she cannot be dropped. Should she touch the mud, the enchantment of this Tower will whisk her back to her room at the top and one will have to trudge back up to get her again.

Temperament: Beatrix is a bubbly, bright, and cheerful person. While she isn't terribly bright, she does have a colorful way of expressing herself that shows a certain cleverness. She is quite happy to joke about her own shortcomings. She also has absolutely no concept of personal space, claiming it comes from not having skin and being able to taste everything she touches. Which doesn't make much sense, but Beatrix encourages people not to think about it too deeply. These half-joking, half-serious statements are very standard for her. One will have to learn to roll with the frivolity if one wants to get closer to this Princess.

Combat Readiness: Beatrix has no taste for combat, but her unusual anatomy offers some unusual benefits that can be of use in other ways. Her shapeshifting powers are pretty potent, allowing her to shrink down to the size of a large housecat or grow to double her normal size with ease. She can add arms and hands, legs, claws, teeth, even morph her features into those of another. But she doesn't change color or consistency through all this. Manifesting claws doesn't make them magically tougher or sharper. Still, if an inventive Hero has some use for her, she will be quite happy to help out.

Favor: Seeing Beatrix smile while being able to see her insides literally bubble in anger is a little disconcerting, but that's what a Hero can expect if they ask for her Favor. She will, however, pull the gems out of her crown and hand them over. She explains that they can be thrown to make them explode like an impressive fireball spell. Each one of the three can be used once each day and will always return to the pocket of the person they were thrown by. She warns against throwing all three at once unless one can throw particularly far. Apparently the results multiply when more than one is thrown at once.



Caenis Magnesia

“Centaurs can be found all over this world, but their homeland lies in the rich grasslands to the east of the Great Southern Desert. They are a matriarchal society, but one would never guess that by the way their women dote on the men. That has something to do with how few of them choose to stay close to home. Many males end up wandering to other lands in search of adventure and find somewhere else to settle. This has lead to no few of their women taking off on adventures of their own to bring wayward husbands and fiances back home. The tales the bards record of such adventures are popular for both their humor and exploits of daring.”

Tower: A single hallway with no side passages of any kind greet the Heroes who enter this Tower. Everyone, Summoned Hero, Rivals, and Rogues alike are forced to walk it to where it ends at a large open area. A dirt floored arena surrounded on all sides with rough wooden stands. A fence runs down the center of most of the arena, five feet tall and sturdy enough that it would take dedicated effort to break. A voice, high and piercing and seeming to come from nowhere at all, announces that all of you are invited to take part in a grand jousting tournament. Each will be given a steed, armor, and as many lances as they need to knock each other around.

Of course, the winner will receive the favor of Princess Caenis Magnesia and the right to rescue her.

Guardians: Your fellow Rivals and Rogues will be your challengers in this jousting tournament. But just in case you only have a few of those to fill out the ranks, the Dragon has helpfully recruited enough to bring the full total up to sixteen. Each of them powerful knights in black armor riding black steeds. While they are not true master jousters, they know more than enough to knock a careless Hero from their mount.

Each jousting match consists of both riders charging at each other and using their lances to score points. Strike your opponent with your lance to earn a point. Break a lance against your opponent to earn three. The first to five points or first to unseat their opponent entirely from their mount wins a contestant the match.

The loss of a single match disqualifies a contestant from the tournament entirely. The Summoned Hero is the exception to this rule. Should they fail to win a match, they may attempt to challenge their foe in a no-holds-barred duel using all the tools at their disposal. Be warned that the black knights are more competent with a greatsword in their hands than they are with a lance. Should the Summoned Hero succeed in the duel, they will be allowed to continue jousting.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The Dragon seems to have toyed around with the horses during the wait. They are all larger, faster, and stronger than before, making it slightly more likely that the rider will break their lance even on a glancing hit. Of course, the Summoned Hero's mount remains untouched.

Tier 2 - The black knights seem to have had the local blacksmiths working on their armor while they were waiting. Flat plates have been given subtle angles that will make it harder to snap a lance against. Hitting a joint, or the helmet, will be the only sure best for breaking a lance now for all but the very strongest.

Tier 3 - Having been forced to wait this long, the black knights have rioted. The center divider is on fire, the horses are rampaging out of control around the arena, and everyone has greatswords. Prepare for a battle royale instead of a jousting match. Keeping an eye on the flames and stampeding horses will prove just as vital to surviving as watching the swinging weapons.

Princess' Entrapment: Having battling through the tournament seems to be enough of a challenge to satiate the Dragon's bloodlust. Caenis can be found sitting in the royal box, rather embarrassed at the fancy clothes she has been pressed into wearing. She will happily leave with the winner of the tournament.

Temperament: Caenis is a bit older than is traditional for Princesses, which is not unusual for her people, but is still very much in the prime of her life. At her heart, she is a kind and decent person who had reserved her love for one special person. Which *is* quite odd for her people. She has a deep interest in growing plants of all kinds, but prefers crops and useful herbs. Those who wish to grow closer to this lovely Princess should probably understand just what they are in for first. She dotes quite fiercely once she has given her heart to someone.

Combat Readiness: Given Caenis' nature, one would assume she knows little of the combative arts. However, all Centaurs are given training in at least one weapon during their formative years. Many keep up their training as a useful form of exercise if nothing else. This Princess has chosen the shortbow as her weapon and she can be quite a crack shot with it. She isn't a quick shot, but given a chink in a foes armor or gap in the joint and a moment to aim and there will be an arrow there every time.

Favor: Caenis will look neither hurt nor particularly bothered by being asked for her favor. She simply assumes the time has not come for her to fall in love. Her favor is a curious ring inset with a series of silver metal balls capable of rolling around in their band without falling out. When worn, this ring allows the wearer to slip out of holds and grapples much easier. It also works on traps that try to inhibit movement, but not nearly so well.



Eimhear Mac Carthaigh

“It is not known just what confluence of magic and biology formed the Dullahans in the distant ages of this world. Surely no race could have evolved to have such a link to the spirits or the ability to remove their own head freely. It is whispered that they are linked with death. That everywhere their footsteps tread a mortal is sure to die. Superstitious nonsense. In fact, Dullahans take their honorable traditions very seriously. Any order of brave knights would be happy to have one of their kind leading the charge. To those who look past their unique physiology, they are brave to a fault and loyal to those who earn their trust. ”

Tower: The fetid, chill fog that fills the air of this graveyard seems as if it could be filled with every possible horror. And while the ruthless Dragon has done an excellent job of cultivating the atmosphere there seems to be something… missing. Large swaths of the Tower have been left unguarded either by trap or guardian. Unless Heroes were intended to be bored to death, there must be some other trick to this place. Keep a wary eye on that rolling fog.

Guardians: Spooky scary skeletons wander between the tombstones in small clumps of three to five. Their swords may look rusty, but they have a devilishly keen edge. The way they can twist and turn without muscles or skin to hold them back will send shivers down your spine. While not durable, if one doesn't battle these groups with care, they will seal your doom tonight.

Traps: The graveyards aren't entirely for show. Some of them house more of the walking dead, zombies that will reach up out of the grave dirt grasping for any feet that happen to wander nearby. They may look decomposed, but their grip is far stronger than it should be. Separating the hand from the arm is the only sure way to free oneself without some serious wrenching and twisting.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The skeletons have found a voice rattling around in their skulls and it will scare you out of your mind. They speak with such a screech that even the most hardened heroes will find their nerve fading from the intensity. Their rhythmic chattering is almost musical in a strange and haunting way, but those who hear it firsthand will hardly think so.

Tier 2 - The poor skeletons are really just misunderstood. They just want to socialize. Pity nobody else thinks they should. Still, expect to find the groups of spooky skeletons twice as large as they used to be and screaming out their haunting tune all the louder.

Tier 3 - A hideous, thumping beat has begun reverberating up from underground. The zombies in their crypts have been awakened by the skeleton's shrieks and they are now more restless than ever. While it will make the hidden undead easier to find, a hero will discover simply avoiding the graves will not save them. Hands will erupt from the ground by the half dozen and heroes will find themselves surrounded if they should so much as wander nearby one of these thudding graves. Avoiding the passages containing them is possible but will add a lot of time to a Hero's travels.

Princess' Entrapment: The master of this graveyard is a cruel, yet rhythmically talented, lich who had surrounded himself with a whole host of skeletal undead. He shrieks and cackles as soon as the Hero has entered the room before suddenly vanishing into a puff of smoke. The skeleton horde gets lefts behind and are eager to use the moment of confusion to their advantage. Should a Hero defeat them they will find Eimhear waiting for them. Well, part of her at least. Specifically the head.

It appears that the lich ran off with the body. Even worse, he seems to have left an entirely new tower in his wake. Exactly the same as the one you just conquered. Filled with more skeletons, more zombies, more everything. And at the top, the lich waits. If you listen closely one can hear him laughing from here.

Don't forget to bring Eimhear's head with you. It wouldn't do to leave a lady alone.

Temperament: Eimhear much prefers to be called Emmy and will gladly, and repeatedly, correct anyone who uses her real name. Not because she is trying to be annoying, but because she tends to forget who she has told her preference. She tends to be rather forgetful. And due to her body being able to operate without her head, even seeming to have a mind of its own at times, she does end up forgetting her own head at times due to it not being attached. That said, she is likely one of the most loyal and brave people to be found in this world. Once she has attached herself to someone, which she does rather quickly, she will move heaven and earth to help them out when they need it.

Combat Readiness: Despite her personality, Emmy is quite the warrior. Her plate armor and bastard sword aren't just for show. She doesn't depend on simple swordplay either, just as capable of breaking noses and grabbing sword with her reinforced gauntlets. While she will hesitate to fight other people she has absolutely no issue striking the first blow against a true monster.

Favor: Emmy will give a sigh and look rather crestfallen at being asked for her Favor, but she will pull off her armored boots all the same. The plates are thick and strong enough to protect the wearer against even the sharpest spikes and cutting traps that would attempt to take out a Hero's legs.



Alice Illias Horas

“Accounts vary as to the true temperment of the Lamia that inhabit the warm western mountains. If one inspects their laws, they would find them unfairly biased against outsiders. If one peered into their libraries one could call them enthusiastic arcanists. Should one spend a little time in their taverns and hookah bars, they would call them the best of friends. However, one should spend a little time with these serpentine people out of the public eye if they wished to learned the truth of what lies behind their masks. ”

Tower: Everything is pink. The truly evil Dragon has painted the walls, floors, ceiling, even the very Guardians that guard this Tower a bright, eye-blistering pink color. Which has a disconcerting effect of making it hard to distinguish turns in the corridors from a swinging monster's fist. A keen eye will serve serve an aspiring Hero well here, but it will likely leave them with a splitting headache.

Guardians: Stone golems wander the corridors, all but invisible due to matching the walls and floors of the Tower almost exactly. Thankfully they are heavy enough that their footfalls make it fairly obvious when they are nearby. These are powerful, tough creations that will require a lot of brute force or magic to reduce to rubble. However a clever Hero will lead one into the other. They seem to have just as hard a time seeing each other as everyone else does.

Traps: While there are no traps in this Tower beyond the wild color slapped all over everything, the hallways are not simple pathways either. They rise and fall with nearly invisible hills and dips that will test the agility of those who climb these halls. A clever Hero would use these to their advantage.

Upgraded Defenses:

Tier 1 - The stone golems have learned to step a little softer as they wander around these halls. While one will still be able to hear them coming, one will have to be significantly close before their presence becomes apparent.

Tier 2 - The bright pink color has been toned down to a less drastic version of itself. While your eyes will likely thank you, the change brings nothing good with it. The new deeper color now hides pressure plates containing ink splattering traps. The ink is not only quite capable of blinding those who get it in their eyes, but poisoning anyone silly enough to open their mouths and ingest even a small amount of it.

Tier 3 - Shattering the coral colored golems just once is no longer enough to keep these creations down. The broken pieces will slowly draw themselves together into a golem a quarter of their normal size. While smaller, they will be no less tough and quite a bit faster than their larger counterparts. They are sure to make the downward climb much more of a challenge.

Princess' Entrapment: Alice is being held, not by a cage, but her own refusal to leave her treasured staff behind. The Dragon seems to have shattered it into several hundred small pieces and scattered them all around the room. While she has already completed a small section herself, she clearly has no talent for puzzles. A Hero will have to assist her in tracking down, then pressing the pieces back together. Thankfully the enchantments imbedded into the wood allows the staff to repair itself as each fragment is pressed against its correct neighbor.

Temperament: At first glance Alice appears to be a delightfully straightforward and earnest young woman. She is eager to learn everything she can about you and do anything she can to be helpful and useful. In fact, she seems a little too perfect sometimes. Almost as if she is anticipating your needs and desires and altering her actions accordingly. Which, as it turns out, may be exactly what she's doing.

Getting to know the real Alice underneath the mask will be a tough road. Between her subtle magic and her desire to remain behind it, she will work hard to keep her inner self hidden. But be persistent, patient, and understand that this is a part of her culture that is going to be hard to overcome, and you might just see who she really is.

Combat Readiness: Alice doesn't care for combat in the slightest, though she is more than happy to use her staff to shove people out of her way when necessary. Still, she knows a fair bit about the subtle art of reading and influencing minds. And while most of her magic is sealed while the Dragon still lives, she can still offer a bit of help to the clever Hero. For instance, she can detect the presence of other minds and even project small distractions that only they will be able to hear.

Favor: Alice will appear all too calm and collected when asked for her Favor. Though if one watches her eyes they will be able to see the fury underneath. While she will adamantly refuse to offer up her staff, she will hand over golden ornament adorning the tip of her tail. It can be slipped over one's middle finger quite easily and will fit there very comfortably. It will offer the wearer a slight resistance all three basic elemental magic types: Fire, electricity, and cold.

The Final Battle

Which of the following Endings you will encounter depends on certain conditions being met before you challenge the Dragon in their lair.

The time has come. Facing the large iron doorway once again, you are confident that now is the moment to challenge the Dread Dragon. One hand reaches for the unlocked handle. The latch clicks open and both doors swing wide open with barely a push. An impossibly long hallway stretched out on the other side of those doors. But there is a light at the end of it.

So you begin walking. The sound of the bubbling brook in the garden vanishes instantly as soon as you cross the threshold. Curious, you look back to discover the door has disappeared and been replaced with a solid stone wall. Whatever the outcome of the battle with the Dragon, it appears there is no way back to the castle now. Not until it is finished.

Should you have rescued a Princess (or Princesses), they will join you in the hallway unless you expressly forbid it. They are as interested as you to see their captor slain but realize they will be able to do little to help. Only the Summoned Hero can kill the Dragon. Still, the moral support might be appreciated.

Any Rivals or Rogues you had encountered during your time here will not follow you here. If you were on pleasant terms with your Rivals, they may offer you well wishes and be eagerly awaiting your return. If not, they will merely sniff and frown in your direction as they watch you enter the doorway.

The only sound in that long, clearly enchanted hallway, is the sound of your own shoes against the stones and your heartbeat in your ears. But as you draw close to the far end, a process that takes either no time at all or an eternity (though which one you're never quite sure), a warm, intermittent, breeze fills the hallway.

While you may have guessed the source, it isn't until you stand in the threshold into the large chamber that you see the scourge at the heart of this whole endeavor. The Dragon. It stands twenty feet tall at the shoulder with an additional fifteen feet of tail and neck at each end. Powerful claws tip each of its four feet and wings that seem hardly large enough to lift such mass off the ground lay folded up along its back.

Many Dragons in the legends are of a single color, but that doesn't seem to hold true for this world. The one before you has scales in three colors: a brilliant snowy white, a vibrant rose red, and a clear sky blue. As it turns its large eyes in your direction, you see those eyes have all three colors as separate, thin bands within the white of the sclera. It seems very, very displeased to see you.

Ending 1 - If you have rescued **0** Princesses and arrived here directly from Page 5

You? The Dragon's voice rings directly into your mind. It is crouched in the middle of a massive circle of glowing purple runes, each pulsing in a rhythm that threatens to hurt your head. Thirty tendrils of energy connect to the larger circle and lead off in the direction of each of the Towers.

You should not be here yet. You must not. This is not how the story goes! There is a note of panic in the Dragon's voice at the last words. But it makes no move to flee or attack. In fact, it makes no move at all. That is when you realize that the runes of the circle are laced upwards into the Dragon's scaled feet. As you watch, it attempts to pull one foot off the ground in an impressive rippling of muscle beneath scales, only to see it dragged back into place.

It is trapped there, forced to feed the very prisons it constructed. Had you broken even a single link, it likely could have freed itself. But as it stands…

Whatever your emotions on the subject, this is an excellent chance to end this entire spectacle and you take it. A single sword thrust to the Dragon's forehead is all it takes with its defenses down and trapped in place. With a loud hiss like air escaping from a balloon, the magic circle on the ground fades out. The smell of burning lemons fills the air. **Your powers and abilities from other worlds come flooding back as the prophecy is fulfilled.**

After a few moments of silently congratulating yourself for a job well done, you spot a new door. One hidden behind an illusion now fading with the end of the Dragon's life. A short walk later you tug open the door to reveal a treasure hoard unlike anything you could have possibly imagined.

Coins of every size and made out of every kind of material. Large gems that look more like pieces of fruit due to their size and cuts. Jewelry of every style imaginable. All of it spilling out of rows and rows of piles of glittering, disorganized, wealth. The astonishment doesn't wear off for several moments but when it does, you can't help but grin.

One looting spree later you are in much better spirits and heading back towards the entrance you first came in. Whatever you grabbed as your preferred treasure, it is safe to say you're carrying as much of it as you possibly can. You also found **1000** of those **CP coins** that the Merchant wanted. However, your cheerful whistling is interrupted by a loud shout coming from the hallway back to the castle.

An entire gaggle of Princesses stand there. And absolutely none of them appear very happy, despite their sudden freedom. They accuse you of a whole assortment of crimes that basically boil down to you not playing by the rules. They worked hard to be kidnapped and the least you could do as the Summoned Hero was play along with the game a little bit.

They aren't in the mood to hear about your excuses or concerns about your personal safety. Instead they pull out a variety of weapons. Wait… does that Princess have a grenade? Well, good luck. Looks like they're not letting you out of here without a fight after all.

Roll **2d8+4** random Princesses. You will now have to fight them if you want to keep your treasure and not get beaten up by a bunch of girls. Even normally non-combatant Princesses will join in the melee, though they will be as laughably easy to defeat as you might think. Beyond your treasure, the 1000 CP to spend at the Merchant, you may also take the Favors of any Princesses you defeat. Try not to kill too many of them. They are still women after all.

Ending 2 - If you have rescued less than **8** Princesses, whether you took their Favors or not.

Ah! The Dragon's voice rings inside your mind. It sounded of anticipated victory and a hunger waiting to be sated. It crouches in the center of a massive magic circle of purple runes, tendrils of energy reaching off in all directions. There had once been thirty, but for every Princess you rescued, one line now lies dead, a blacked line of char on stone.

I was just beginning to get bored sitting here. So good of you to show up. With a shivering, slippery sound of metal rubbing against scales the Dragon stands, neck rising higher and higher as you watch. The purple tendrils woven into its claws flicker and shatter like metal chains before disappearing entirely. Still, you sense that the effort of breaking free from the ritual has cost the creature something as it slumps ever so slightly.

Summoned hero, do that think that simply because you were brought here to slay me that I will go quietly into the night. I will have your blood on my fangs! I will feel your bones shatter against my claws! Its voice all but shakes your head with the power they are shoved past your ears. With a roar, this one aloud, its head snakes down to try and end your life.

This battle will be no simple fight with any other monster. The Dragon will assault with you tooth and claw, both capable of ending your life should they connect solidly. Still, much of its energy was sapped breaking free of the ritual it created, so it will have no magic to throw at you and will be slowed significantly. The Dragon is no easy fight, but neither will it be a taxing one for an experienced Hero.

The deed is done. The Dragon lies slain at your feet, its empty eyes staring off into oblivion. Even as you watch, it shrinks in on itself until it is little more than a pile of multicolored scales. But even these soon disintegrate into sand. And with those scales go the last bits of mana holding the Towers, and indeed the Castle, active. You can feel the tingle of it in the air die away by inches.

You will find the doors now open to you, all of them, including the main doors that lead outside. Any traps or monsters in the Hallway will have vanished. The Towers still remain dangerous due to a number of mechanical traps and monsters caught inside when the magic failed, but they are much reduced in both number and deadliness.

And, as the Kings predicted, a number of local Heroes who have arrived in the time since you first arrived have begun climbing the weakened Towers. Attempting to climb them now would be pointless, as most of the Princesses will be rescued long before you could make it. Still, there is nothing stopping you from making the attempt if you truly wish.

You are free to take any Princesses you rescued along with you on your journey. Many will be glad of the opportunity, but they will have to go along willingly. You will also be allowed to keep anything you bought or Favors earned during your time here. Additionally, the Kings will gift you with a small tower of your own. A modest structure, four stories high and solidly built, it has one room for each Princess you rescued, decorated in a style that suits her. Princesses may be treated as Companions, or Followers, at your decision. Your powers return and all Drawbacks are voided.

Ending 3 - If you have rescued less than **16** Princesses, whether you took their Favors or not.

Ah! The Dragon's voice rings inside your mind. It sounded of anticipated victory and a hunger waiting to be sated. It crouches in the center of a massive magic circle of purple runes, tendrils of energy reaching off in all directions. There had once been thirty, but for every Princess you rescued, one line now lies dead, a blacked line of char on stone.

I was just beginning to get bored sitting here. So good of you to show up. With a shivering, slippery sound of metal rubbing against scales the Dragon stands, neck rising higher and higher as you watch. The purple tendrils woven into its claws flicker and shatter like metal chains before disappearing entirely. It seems the effort of breaking free of the ritual has cost the Dragon little, as it glares down at you.

Summoned hero, do that think that simply because you were brought here to slay me that I will go quietly into the night. I will have your blood on my fangs! I will feel your bones shatter against my claws! Its voice all but shakes your head with the power behind it. With a roar, this one aloud, shards of ice shoot out of its mouth in an attempt to end your life.

This battle will be no simple fight with any other monster. The Dragon will assault with you tooth and claw, both capable of ending your life should they connect solidly. Still, some of its energy was sapped breaking free of the ritual it created, so it will have no magic to throw at you other than its icy breath and will be slowed moderately. The Dragon is no easy fight even for an experienced Hero.

The deed is done. The Dragon lies slain at your feet, its empty eyes staring off into oblivion. Even as you watch, it shrinks in on itself until it is little more than a pile of multicolored scales. But even these soon disintegrate into sand. And with those scales go the last bits of mana holding the Towers, and indeed the Castle, active. You can feel the tingle of it in the air die away by inches.

You will find the doors now open to you, all of them, including the main doors that lead outside. Any traps or monsters in the Hallway will have vanished. The Towers still remain dangerous due to a number of mechanical traps and monsters caught inside when the magic failed, but they are much reduced in both number and deadliness.

And, as the Kings predicted, a number of local Heroes who have arrived in the time since you first arrived have begun climbing the weakened Towers. Attempting to climb them now would be pointless, as most of the Princesses will be rescued long before you could make it. Still, there is nothing stopping you from making the attempt if you truly wish.

You are free to take any Princesses you rescued along with you on your journey. Many will be glad of the opportunity, but they will have to go along willingly. You will also be allowed to keep anything you bought or Favors earned during your time here. Additionally, the Kings will gift you with a tower of your own. A modest structure, eight stories high and solidly built, it has one room for each Princess you rescued, as well as a pair for your own use. Princesses may be treated as Companions, or Followers, at your decision. Your powers return and all Drawbacks are voided.

Ending 4 - If you have rescued less than **30** Princesses, whether you took their Favors or not.

Ah! The Dragon's voice rings inside your mind. It sounded of anticipated victory and a hunger waiting to be sated. It crouches in the center of a massive magic circle of purple runes, tendrils of energy reaching off in all directions. There had once been thirty, but for every Princess you rescued, one line now lies dead, a blacked line of char on stone.

You certainly took your time. Enjoyed playing the Hero, did you? With a shivering, slippery sound of metal rubbing against scales the Dragon stands, neck rising higher and higher as you watch. The purple tendrils woven into its claws flicker and shatter like metal chains before disappearing entirely. The effort of snapping so few tendrils is as easy to the Dragon as breathing and it smirks down at you.

Summoned hero, do that think that simply because you were brought here to slay me that I will go quietly into the night. I will have your blood on my fangs! I will feel your bones shatter against my claws! Its voice all but shakes your head with the power behind it. With a roar, this one aloud, tendrils of purple energy snake from its claws and shoot towards you.

This battle will be no simple fight with any other monster. The Dragon will assault with you with a multitude of weapons. Its teeth and claws are dangerous enough, but with so much of its energy reclaimed, it can now unleash its devastating icy breath weapon and dark magic as well. Empowered as it is, The Dragon will be a challenging fight for even the most experienced Hero.

The deed is done. The Dragon lies slain at your feet, its empty eyes staring off into oblivion. Even as you watch, it shrinks in on itself until it is little more than a pile of multicolored scales. But even these soon disintegrate into sand. And with those scales go the last bits of mana holding the Towers, and indeed the Castle, active. You can feel the tingle of it in the air die away by inches.

You will find the doors now open to you, all of them, including the main doors that lead outside. Any traps or monsters in the Hallway will have vanished. The Towers still remain dangerous due to a number of mechanical traps and monsters caught inside when the magic failed, but they are much reduced in both number and deadliness.

And, as the Kings predicted, a number of local Heroes who have arrived in the time since you first arrived have begun climbing the weakened Towers. Attempting to climb them now would be pointless, as most of the Princesses will be rescued long before you could make it. Still, there is nothing stopping you from making the attempt if you truly wish.

You are free to take any Princesses you rescued along with you on your journey. Many will be glad of the opportunity, but they will have to go along willingly. You will also be allowed to keep anything you bought or Favors earned during your time here. Additionally, the Kings will gift you with a small castle of your own. A modest structure, with four large floors and two taller towers, it has one room for each Princess you rescued, as well as a whole suite for you. Princesses may be treated as Companions, or Followers, at your decision. Your powers return and all Drawbacks are voided.

Ending 5 - If you have rescued all **30** Princesses and took **AT LEAST ONE** Favor.

Ah! The Dragon's voice rings inside your mind. It sounded of anticipated victory and a hunger waiting to be sated. It crouches in the center of a massive magic circle of runes, now blackened and dead, as are every tendril that once led off to the Towers. With all the Princesses rescued, the Dragon has had time to regather itself from powering the exhausting ritual.

You certainly took your time. Enjoyed playing the Hero, did you? With a shivering, slippery sound of scales rubbing against scales the Dragon stands, neck rising higher and higher as you watch. Black ash flakes from the scales of its feet and the glittering steel of its claws. The Dragon was not being held in place. It was simply waiting for you.

Summoned hero, do that think that simply because you were brought here to slay me that I will go quietly into the night. I will have your blood on my fangs! I will feel your bones shatter against my claws! Its voice all but shakes your head with the power behind it. With a roar, this one aloud, tendrils of purple energy snake from its claws and shoot towards you.

This battle will test every ounce of your ability. The Dragon will assault with you with a multitude of weapons. Its teeth and claws are dangerous enough, but with so much of its energy reclaimed, it can now unleash its devastating icy breath weapon and dark magic as well. Empowered as it is, defeating the Dragon in this state will take all the determination, skill, and power a Hero can possible muster.

The deed is done. The Dragon lies slain at your feet, its empty eyes staring off into oblivion. Even as you watch, it shrinks in on itself until it is little more than a pile of multicolored scales. But even these soon disintegrate into sand. And with those scales go the last bits of mana holding the Towers, and indeed the Castle, active. You can feel the tingle of it in the air die away by inches.

You will find the doors now open to you, all of them, including the main doors that lead outside. Any traps or monsters in the Hallway will have vanished. The Towers now lie dormant, summoned monsters awaiting the magic they need to reappear and traps left inert. A number of local Heroes have been waiting impatiently for the doors to open and are reduced to a crowd of surprised, irritated spectators as they discover all the Princesses already rescued.

The Kings, sensing the total defeat of the Dragon, have shown up in person to reunite with their daughters. They are as shocked and surprised as anyone to find that you managed to complete the deed all on your own. They seem a little annoyed by that fact, but congratulate you all the same. They are, understandably, quite eager to learn your plans for the future. After all, you will likely be one of the most powerful Kings, should you wed all those Princesses.

You are free to take any Princesses you rescued along with you on your journey. Many will be glad of the opportunity, but they will have to go along willingly. You will also be allowed to keep anything you bought or Favors earned during your time here. Additionally, the Kings will gift you with a small castle of your own. A modest structure, with four large floors and two taller towers, it has one room for each Princess you rescued, as well as a whole suite for you. Princesses may be treated as Companions, or Followers, at your decision. Your powers return and all Drawbacks are voided.

Ending 6 - If you have rescued all **30** Princesses and turned down **ALL** Favors.

Ah! The Dragon's voice rings inside your mind. It sounded of anticipated victory and a hunger waiting to be sated. It crouches in the center of a massive magic circle of runes, now blackened and dead, as are every tendril that once led off to the Towers. With all the Princesses rescued, the Dragon has had time to regather itself from powering the exhausting ritual.

You certainly took your time. Enjoyed playing the Hero, did you? With a shivering, slippery sound of scales rubbing against scales the Dragon stands, neck rising higher and higher as you watch. Black ash flakes from the scales of its feet and the glittering steel of its claws. The Dragon was not being held in place. It was simply waiting for you.

Summoned hero, do that think that simply because you were brought here to slay me that I will go quietly into the night. I will have your blood on my fangs! I will feel your bones shatter against my claws! Its voice all but shakes your head with the power behind it. With a roar, this one aloud, tendrils of purple energy snake from its claws and shoot towards you.

But it never reaches you. Five different kinds of barriers spring to life in front of you and the dark magic explodes against them. You glance towards the hallway you came in front to find the Princesses boiling out of it. With the Dragon's magic fully broken, their magic and abilities are no longer hampered. And while they realize that the Dragon can only be slain by you, that doesn't mean they can't help in the battle.

Even with so many eager volunteers to do whatever they safely can to assist you in battle, this battle will be difficult. While the Dragon will not directly harm the Princesses, they are still in danger from the devastating icy breath weapon it will unleash as well as the dark magic it employs. It will be less inclined to use its claws and teeth, but should it connect with a clean blow it will mangle even solid steel.

The deed is done. The Dragon lies slain at your feet, its empty eyes staring off into oblivion. Even as you watch, it shrinks in on itself until it is little more than a pile of multicolored scales. But even these soon disintegrate into sand. And with those scales go the last bits of mana holding the Towers, and indeed the Castle, active. You can feel the tingle of it in the air die away by inches. The Princesses are ecstatic, in their own fashions, and are very eager to show you their appreciation for your efforts.

You will find the doors now open to you, all of them, including the main doors that lead outside. Any traps or monsters in the Hallway will have vanished. The Towers now lie dormant, summoned monsters awaiting the magic they need to reappear and traps left inert. A number of local Heroes have been waiting impatiently for the doors to open and are reduced to a crowd of surprised, irritated spectators as they discover all the Princesses already rescued.

The Kings, sensing the total defeat of the Dragon, have shown up in person to reunite with their daughters. They are as shocked and surprised as anyone to find that you managed to complete the deed all on your own. They seem a little annoyed by that fact, but congratulate you all the same. They are, understandably, quite eager to learn your plans for the future. After all, you will likely be a mighty Emperor of this world, should you decide to wed all those Princesses. Which they will seem very amenable to… once they get a sharing schedule worked out.

You are free to take any Princesses you rescued along with you on your journey. Many will be glad of the opportunity, but they will have to go along willingly. You will also be allowed to keep anything you bought during your time here. Additionally, the Kings will gift you with a large castle of your own. A massive structure, with eight large floors and four taller towers, it has two rooms for each Princess you rescued, as well as a whole suite for you. In addition, there are spaces set aside for all the amenities a King could ever want for. The Princesses may be treated as Companions, or Followers, at your decision. Your powers return and all Drawbacks are voided.

Ending 7 - If you have rescued all **30** Princesses and took **ONLY** Favors.

Oh look who finally decided to show up! The Dragon's voice rings inside your head. It is full of exasperation and blunt sarcasm. It crouches in the center of a massive magic circle of runes, now blackened and dead, as are every tendril that once led off to the Towers. With all the Princesses rescued, the Dragon has had time to regather itself from powering the exhausting ritual.

You certainly took your time. And you couldn't even be bothered to play the game right! Confused, you stand there ready for an attack or threat that never comes. The Dragon stands up, black ash from the defunk ritual flaking off its scales, and towers over you with an intense air of disappointment and anger.

Look at you! You look like you rolled around in a wizard's tower armory. All you had to do was rescue one Princess. Just one. But no! You'd rather have these… these… things! The Dragon's head abruptly dives down, jaw open wide as if to snatch you up, but is slams shut less than a foot from your face.

I can't even do it. What's the point?! You're just interested in things. How on earth could those Kings muck things up so badly? All they had to do was find a stupid Hero from another world with just a trace of ambition and lust in its head. The Dragon mutters all of this into your head with an insulting tone as it pulls back, moving away. As you take in its posture and tone, you realize it's sulking. Like a child denied a favorite toy.

Now I won't get paid, the Princesses won't get rescued until they hire another Dragon to set all this up again, but at least you get your stuff. It accuses you, as if you're the source of all the woes in its world. Then again, maybe you are. But you are surprised to hear the insinuation that the Kings pay Dragons to kidnap their daughters. Or that Dragons were willing to be killed for money.

Oh, don't be naive! We don't really die. A few contingency spells and a little fancy illusion magic is all it takes to weave a believable lie. I've done this half a dozen times already and the Kings still believe I'm a different Dragon each time. It snorts a blast of icy breath towards the far wall in disgust, brushing the stones with a hint of winter that quickly fades.

But no. All you wanted were things. Treasures to take home and money to buy yourself some temporary happiness. The Dragon's tail flicks out irritably, like a cat's, to slam open a hidden doorway it would have taken you days of careful snooping to discover. A pure, golden light pours from it, promising treasure unlike anything you could possibly carry home.

Well? Go on. If all you want is things I've got more than I can possibly contend with. Just take what you want and get out. All the door are open and the spells holding your power will disappear as soon as you cross the doorway. Just tell them you killed me and get out of my sight.

Was that… hurt in it's tone? Sadness creeping into those last few sentences seemed oddly out of place for a ferocious monster like the Dragon. If you wanted, you could stop the Dragon and ask. Or you could take it up on its offer and pillage its treasure vault. Decide carefully, for you will not be able to do both. One step towards that vault with greed in your eyes and the Dragon will vanish in a disappointed snort.

Ending 7A - If you decided to raid the Dragon's treasure vault.

You stride towards the treasure vault with greed in your eyes and a desire to fill your pockets more powerful than any desire to indulge a temperamental Dragon. With a disappointed snort and a muttering of arcane words, the Dragon vanishes. Teleported away to somewhere to sulk, no doubt.

Coins of every size and made out of every kind of material. Large gems that look more like pieces of fruit due to their size and cuts. Jewelry of every style imaginable. All of it spilling out of rows and rows of piles of glittering, disorganized, wealth. The astonishment doesn't wear off for several moments but when it does, you can't help but grin.

One looting spree later you are in much better spirits and heading back towards the entrance you first came in. Whatever you grabbed as your preferred treasure, it is safe to say you're carrying as much of it as you possibly can. You also found **1000** of those **CP coins** that the Merchant wanted. His door will still be there so you can trade them in on your way out. You doubt they hold any value in other worlds beyond that of interesting trinkets.

As you head outside, you discover a large crowd waiting for you. Disgruntled Kings, disappointed Daughters, and annoyed Rivals all stare in your direction. You feel decidedly unwanted. After a moment of staring, Warrior King steps forward along with a stalwart Rosemary and seething Chiomara.

"Summoned Hero, as you have 'rescued' our daughters for us, we acknowledge your skills and appreciate your efforts. While not in the spirit of the order we gave you, you have done as asked by the letter of the agreement. As such, we now wish to know your intentions." Warrior King, despite his diplomatic words, cannot hide his true feelings any better than the rest of them can. You've disappointed them and they would like you gone from this world. Still, if you would like to stay, you may and will be treated as well as any other Summoned Hero who decided to settle down among them. Though you will find your reception cold in any kingdom and among any people of this world as the tales spread.

Your powers and abilities have returned and all Drawbacks have loosened their hold upon you. You may still choose any of the four final options, but should you desire to stay you will find your reputation tarnished among all the Kingdoms. You will be treated well, but find a cold reception waiting for you most anywhere you go. While this can change in time, it will be an uphill battle.

Your reward is as much gold, platinum, gems, jewelry, and other assorted treasure as you can carry, in addition to 1000 CP to spend at the Merchant now. You may also keep everything you have already purchased.

Ending 7B - If you decided to talk to the Dragon.

Don't toy with me. The Dragon does halt at your words, but refuses to turn around and face you. *Nobody cares about the Dragon. We just take the sword to the throat, get paid, and head off to count the new addition to our treasure hoard. Everyone knows that.* It turns around. A tear glitters in its massive, tri-colored eye.

Nobody ever wants to rescue the Dragon. The words fall like an executioner's axe, final and lacking even a single shred of hope. In a rush of realization, you understand that while its words might be the truth for any other Dragon in this world, it desires something different. Time after time it has watched Princesses get rescued by a valiant Summoned or Local Hero and find love through that act.

It begins to mutter the arcane words that would teleport it away, but stops as steel clatters to the ground. Your weapon lies on the stones, forgotten, as you step forward and rest one hand on the tip of its massive tail. No, her massive tail. For there can be only one reason for a Dragon to want to be rescued like all the other Princesses.

She's a Princess herself.

She looks startled at the action, but makes no move to shift her tail out from your grasp. What words you say, what passes between you two in those moments, that is for two sets of ears alone. But, disbelieving as she begins, the Dragon Princess eventually realizes that you desire to give her the treatment you have denied the others.

In the end, you head towards the front door with a still rather stunned Dragon Princess in your arms. Somewhere during the argument she transformed into a mostly humanoid form in an attempt to argue to you on your level. She seems rather happy, beneath the disbelief, and is even smiling for the first time since you two started talking.

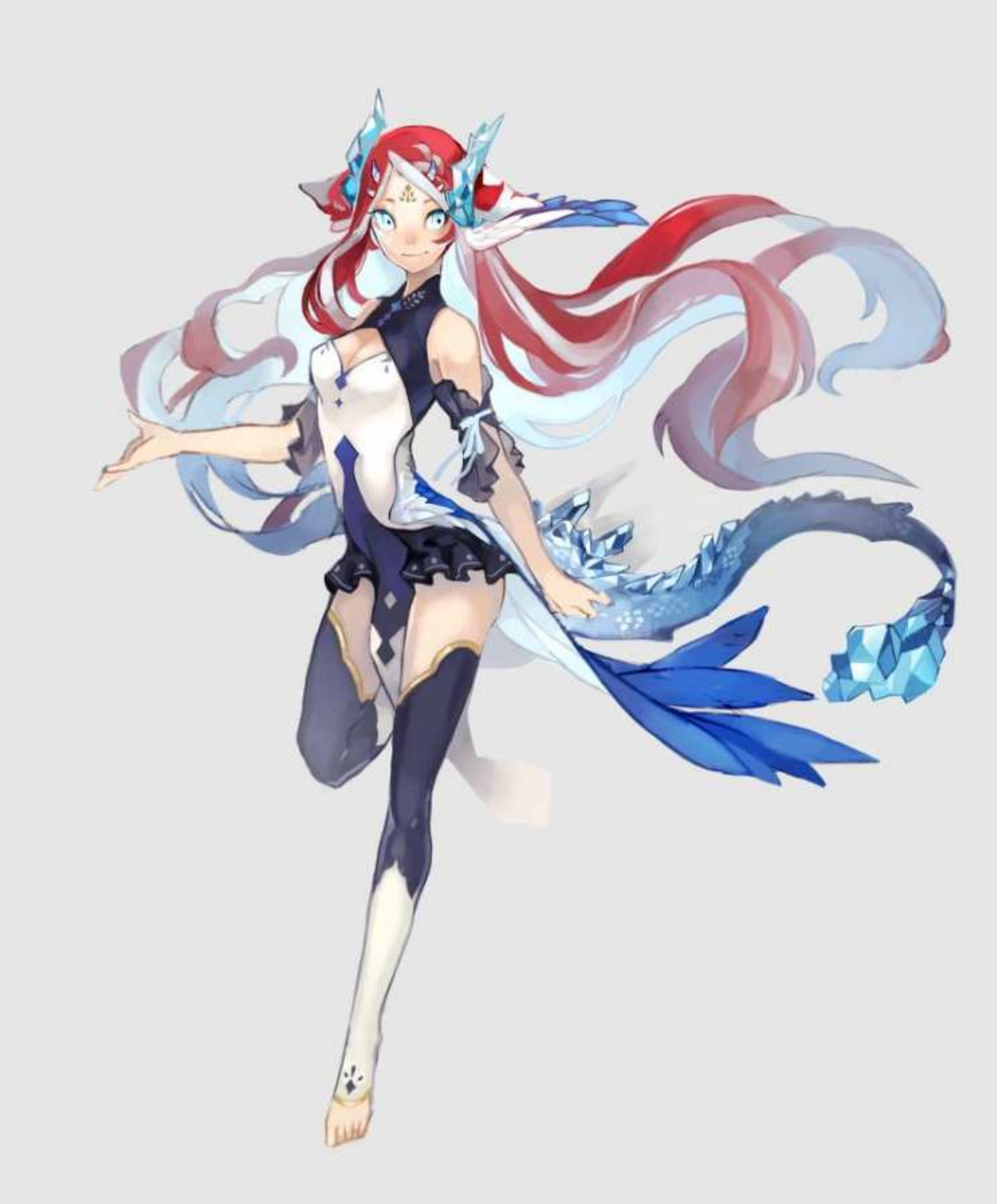
With an easy kick the massive front doors give way. To reveal a very angry group just waiting for an explanation of your deeds. Disgruntled Kings, disappointed Princesses, and annoyed Rivals and Local Heros all stand there. However, the anger turns to shock as they realize who is in your arms. More than a few of the Kings, it seems, recognize Dragon Princess's humanoid form as the one they initially made the contract with.

But before you can say anything, the Dragon Princess hops out of your arms and stares out at the assembled group.

"I am Dragon Princess Rarrier!" She shouts, ice crystals forming in her breath with her passion. "Your little game has been cancelled. You'll all be repaid what fees you are owed. Find someone else to play referee next time because I'm done with it."

The Kings are, understandable, a little angry to hear those words, but that's nothing compared to the assembled Princesses. Apparently they had not been told what exactly was going on before they were snatched and trapped in their Towers. Even the Rivals are outraged to discover the whole event was just a set-up to ensure good marriages to noble and powerful Heroes.

It seems the Kings are going to have little choice but to go along with your desire in this matter. The Dragon Princess seems quite pleased with herself as she looked over to you.



Rarrier Selluth

“The Dragons of this world are a secretive, greedy lot who seem content to indulge in their vices to any of the other races. They are seen as nothing more than monsters to be slain for quests or manipulated when needed. But this couldn’t be farther from the truth. While they are content to play up such a face for the rest of the world, they are in fact a tight knit community of near immortals. Everyone tends to know everyone and they act far more like family than rivals or enemy clans. They may argue at times but they never war among themselves. ”

Because you have chosen the Dragon Princess above all others, you will find her very willing to come along with you on your journey. She must be treated as a Companion. She will come with a wide mastery of arcane magic, including the darker arts, as well as her full Dragon form. Needless to say, even in her human form she packs quite a punch.

As an additional reward for taking the long and dangerous path, you will be allowed to bring the whole Castle with you into other worlds. Including the thirty Towers. Though until you find a way to supply them with magic they will be little more than storage space. The Dragon Princess could do it, but admits the ritual is too draining to use for simple training exercise.

Your powers and abilities have returned and all Drawbacks have no more hold on you. You may keep anything you have bought and all the Favors you gained during your adventure here.

No matter how your time in the Castle went, how many Princesses you rescued, or what became of the Dragon in the end, there is still one final choice to make. And be warned, it may very well affect the rest of your life.

1. **“I wish to stay here.” -** Overjoyed, or perhaps less so, the Kings have offered you a place in their world. A little spot of land for yourself, and your Princess(es)(?), and the right to raise a new Kingdom upon it. Whether they are giving you such to keep you out of the way or because they eagerly wish for a new neighbor, the Kingdom will be yours to rule as you wish. They will provide a group of capable advisors, should you wish for them, and many will donate necessary goods in return for promises of repayment at a later date. You are, or will shortly be, a King in your own right. Congratulations on choosing this world and may you have a happy life here.

2. **“I wish to go back home.” -** While not an entirely unexpected response, the Kings are sad to see you go. They offer you their best wishes, along with a few threats to take care of their daughters properly, and usher you back to the summoning theater you first appeared in. They send you back to your home world, with everything you have gained on your strange journey so far. You are wished good luck, a long life, and much fortune for your efforts in this world.

3. **“I wish to tour this world before I go.” -** The Kings are quite happy, or perhaps less so, at your decision to see their world before you head along your way to the next. You will be offered all you could need to travel this world by any King you meet along the way. Additionally, you will be warned about any regional dangers and given guides when necessary. This is still a wild, monster-filled world after all and the land in between kingdoms is less than safe for random wandering. You will spend ten years in this world before the Kings warn that the magic holding you here is wearing thin. They offer to send you along your way to the next world before it does and you lose everything you have gained here thus far. They offer you safe travels in your other worlds.

4. **“I wish to continue on my adventure.” -** The Kings are sad to see you go so soon, but will usher you back to the summoning theater you first appeared in with all due haste. There they will send you on your way, back along your path to other worlds with everything you have gained in this one. They wish you safe travels on your journey and wish you fortune in all your endeavors.

A Few Notes for Clarification

The notes below are meant to clarify bits of the Adventure Document to the Player and is not knowledge directly given to the Hero.

Rescuing a Princess: A Princess is considered Rescued after they have been returned to the Garden. There you will have a choice to make. You may keep the Princess close at hand, to aid in your further Tower ascents, help battle the Dragon, and/or to take with you in the end. Or you may send the Princess away and receive her Favor instead.

Favors: While you are honor-bound only to rescue a single Princess, some Heroes feel compelled to go the extra mile. But even for the most charismatic Hero juggling thirty Princesses may prove as troublesome as battling the Dragon itself. Or perhaps there is another reason you wish to part from the company of such lovely young ladies. A personality conflict or a lack of mutual interests or perhaps even a severe case of arachnophobia. Whatever the reason, the Hero need not feel trapped with those whose company they do not relish.

Should the Hero wish, they may request the Princess's Favor once they have been freed from the captivity of their Tower. Exactly what the Favor is varies from Princess to Princess, but it will always be designed to aid the Hero in some way. Once the Hero has taken the Favor, the Princess will be teleported back home. A Princess cannot use her own Favor if you keep her.

As with everything else in life, there are a few guidelines that must be observed.

1. The choice is permanent and binding. The Hero may not change their mind and take the Favor at a later time nor can the Princess return.

2. Should a Rival or Rogue rescue a Princess they will make the choice. Rivals will always choose to keep the Princess, while Rogues will keep the Favors instead.

3. If the Hero "rescues" a Princess or Favor from a Rival or Rogue at a later time, or vice versa, they do not get to change the choice.

Upgraded Defenses: Maintaining so many Towers and keeping thirty Princesses trapped at once is draining to the magic of the Dragon. Because of this, the amount of magic it can offer each individual Tower is limited. As Princesses are freed the Dragon is able to reroute that mana into the still active Towers. After several, additional defenses become active thanks to this increase in magical power.

After 8 Princesses have been rescued, Tier 1 activates.

After 16 Princesses, Tier 2 kicks in as well.

After 24, Tier 3 turns on as well.

Should you have taken additional time to reach the Castle, you'll find one or more Tiers of additional defenses have already been activated and they will upgrade from there.

If you were forced into an extended quest to reach the Castle, or the Rogue "The Force of Chaos" is active, the Defenses you will find inside the Tower will be upgraded very quickly. Annoyances will eventually become deathtraps, monsters will turn into mini-bosses, and etcetera. Your climb up each Tower will be much, much harder and those options are only recommended for the most experienced Heroes.

A Note on the Endings

The text of each Ending is meant to only represent an approximation of what might happen. You are no more bound to the specific series of words and actions anymore than you are during the rest of the Gauntlet. If you believe the fight with the Dragon ends in a draw, or could be talked into a peaceful solution, you may feel free to do so. However, the rewards will not change.

You are, however, free to fanwank whatever you want as your ending. Take the Dragon Princess and all 30 of the other Princesses despite every bit of common sense suggesting that all of them want nothing to do with each other. Likewise, I will be unable to answer or show any interest in what you do should you deviate from the endings significantly.

A Note of Towers

The towers/castles you receive as part of your reward for finishing this Gauntlet may be placed in each new world you visit, or you may attach it to your Cosmic Warehouse directly.

A Note on Rivals and Rogues

If you arrived at any Ending, save the first one, you will have the opportunity to convince any Rivals who you maintained good relations with to come with you as well. Either as Followers or Companions. You will also have a chance to do the same with the Rogue "**The Street Rat**" if you took them. The Rogue "**The Shadow**" could possibly also be convinced to come along, but it will be a tough road. None of the other Rogues will show any interest in tagging along.

A Note on Dragon Princess

If you need a frame of reference for the level of her power, she is equivalent in power to an Elder Dragon from Dungeons and Dragons.

List of Princesses each Rival and Rogue is interested in (normally):

The Colorful Knights
- + Every Princesses, but will stop their efforts once they rescue 4.

The Archer with the Feathered Cap
- + Bard, Dryad, Knight, Dark Elf, Halfling, Arcane, Voodoo, Ranger, Pirate, Dark Knight

The Shining Knight
- + Dullahan Princess only, but must climb both towers twice.

The Forgotten Princess
- + Every Princess

The Boy In Green
- + Every Princess, but will attempt to rescue Mermaid after his first success.

The Grey Knight
- + Harpy, Golem, Knight, Halfling, Displacer Beast, Ranger, Pirate, Bee, Vampire, Dullahan, Lamia

The Suspiciously Feminine Warrior
- + Dryad, Arcane, Dark Elf, Kobold, Gorgon, Salamander

The Reborn Hero
- + Every Princess, except Drider, Reaper, Voodoo, Ghost, and Salamander.

The Plumber
- + Every Princess, but expect him to put much more effort into rescuing the following:
- + Bard, Knight, Arcane, and Pirate

The Golem Knight (In order)
- + Golem, Mermaid, Salamander, Dryad, Harpy, Lamia, Bee, Ooze

The Burly Hunter
- + Every Princess

The Young Dragon
- + Every Princess

Many thanks to BeedaciousAnon for the edited and colored picture of Bee Princess.