

What Lies Beyond The Standing Stone

by Jeremy Johnson

1 - The Verdant Spire

You stand still, focused, your feet rooted to the earth. Your adversary extends her weapon toward you. Her feet are spread slightly, mirroring your stance. You exhale.

Slowly.

The attack is coming.

She slides toward you closing the gap in an instant. Her head dips slightly. Were it not for that, you may not have had enough time to react.

But you do.

Slide to the side to avoid the direct assault - Turn to 3

Leap backward and buy more time - Turn to 4

Step forward and close the gap faster - Turn to 5

2 - Turn of the Windmill

You raise your blade to meet hers. You tilt and rotate, guiding the other weapon over your head without stopping its momentum. The girl pivots on her heel and brings the blade around again, continuing its arc.

Quickly retreat backward out of range - Turn to 4

Surge forward to too-close range - Turn to 5

3 - Water Rolling off the Tableland

She thrusts, but you are no longer there. You turn and flow into another stance, positioning your own weapon to threaten.

Perhaps she sensed you might do this, because she hasn't fully committed herself. The girl shifts her body, and her blade turns and sweeps in an arc toward you.

Deflect the weapon with your own - Turn to 2

Leap backward to dodge the blow - Turn to 4

Duck under the blade and prepare a counter attack - Turn to 6

4 - Darting Crustacean

As quickly as she moves to attack, you slip away. But she presses on. You have bought time and nothing more.

Again she signals this with an imperfect movement, but something has changed. Her wrist is turned. She is disguising her true intention. The hand will come forward, but the blow will sweep in from the side.

She is growing clever. Dangerous.

Slide forward and close the gap even faster - Turn to 5

Duck under the blade and prepare for a counter - Turn to 6

5 - Gust Topples the Altar

You surge forward. Your bodies collide. Your daughter's attack falters, but she remains on her feet. You release your blade, grab her wrist, and twist. You are both disarmed.

The wooden weapons clatter on the ground. The girl twists and slips out of your grasp and then crouches, ready to resume combat.

You hold up your hand and show a signal.

Wait

Davu has battled you to a draw. She has learned far more of the The Art than you had at fifteen, but she is headstrong. She loses focus and misses signs. Your father was headstrong too. It got him killed.

The sun is low at your back your back. The Verdant Spire's shadow stretches past you and falls off The Tableland onto the wastes that lie far below.

Tell Davu how much she has learned - Turn to 8

Point out her impatience - Turn to 10

6 - Bird Harvests Mollusk

You bend forward and place your hand on the ground. The *whoosh* from the wooden blade passing over your head is the signal.

You push up hard. Your blade swings at her exposed side. The girl's eyes narrow and she shifts to Wind Spins Vane. Her sword comes across her body and intercepts your weapon with a loud *clack!*

She then uses the momentum from your weapon to reverse direction. The girl has gotten fast and has learned to use the attack of her enemy against them.

You barely have time to react.

Stay still and deflect the blade with your own - Turn to 2

Leap clear of the next attack - Turn to 4

7 - A Sturdy Escort

“Davu, I need you to get the blade and wait at The Stone, I will bring the Augur.” Davu’s brow furrows. “I won’t be long, I promise.”

She nods, and you fan out in different directions. She’s going to the heart of the Settlement and will stand guard while you return with the Augur from his dwelling in the far reaches, out beyond The Verdant Spire.

The Augur lives in a conical structure made entirely of clay and covered in strange curved designs. The entrance is triangular, and painted a bright golden yellow. None but the Augur is permitted inside.

As you approach, the Augur steps out over the threshold. He’s a tall man, the tallest in the Settlement. His skin is greyish and his wrinkles are carved deep. It is said that he has been alive for generations. Those who believe in the Great Upheaval say he was alive even then. It hardly seems possible, but there is so much of the world that you don’t understand. If it is true, then something has changed. The Augur has aged dramatically in your lifetime. He has gone from an elderly, but hale man, to a withered creature. His checks are sunken and his eyes are impossibly deep-set.

“Augur, the Stone...” you say.

“I know why you are here. I can still hear the bells,” he croaks. “Let us go, but carefully.”

You take the old man’s arm, and walk along the path. You would carry him, if it were appropriate. Instead, you creep toward your destination like a mollusk.

When you have covered maybe half the distance, you hear a scream. It doesn’t sound like Davu, but then you have never heard Davu scream. Your daughter is not yet ready to face one of the things that killed your father.

“The Stone will wait for us,” the Augur says.

You’re not so confident.

Trust the Augur, and continue creeping toward the Standing Stone - Turn to 11
Grab someone to escort the Augur while you hurry onward - Turn to 13

8 - Admiration

“My daughter, you have learned The Art well,” you say, gazing at the dimming horizon. You put your hand on Davu’s shoulder.

She pulls away.

“You toy with me. I could feel you anticipating my every attack.”

“That is The Art. It is focus, calmness. It is learning to believe what you feel when you cannot believe what you see. You anticipated me as well. You did not topple to the ground as you might once have. You are strong and fast, but your mind is where true strength comes from. I wasn’t yet as skilled as you when my father fought the beast.”

You stand together at the precipice of the land in silence.

A low gong comes from the far side of The Tableland. It repeats four times before a break. Then it starts again. It’s a pattern you’ve not heard since you were your daughter’s age. It’s a signal that The Standing Stone is opening.

Davu’s eyes are open wide. There is likely little time. You are the Tableland’s guardians. One of you must gather the True Blade, your father’s weapon, and the other must escort the Augur to the Stone.

It is your duty to stop whatever may come through. You must stop the things that killed your father.

Send Davu to collect the True Blade while you escort the Augur - Turn to 7
Get the True Blade, and send Davu to bring the Augur - Turn to 9

9 - The Strongest Defense

“Davu, bring the Augur. I’ll be at The Stone.”

She nods, and you fan out in different directions. She’s going to the far corner of the Settlement, and you are going to its heart.

People clear the way to let you pass. Some are hurrying to shelter. Others gather with loved ones in the streets. You can feel them searching you for reassurance, as you run to your dwelling.

There is one rock wall at the back of the cob structure. On it hangs the weapon—a long, slightly curved sword. There is a shifting iridescent quality to the blade. This weapon belonged to your father. There is nothing else like it on The Tableland. You take the blade off of the wall, and fill a sling bag with a few green and orange tubers.

You run to the clearing. The Standing Stone dominates one end. The grey of the stone peeks through its coat of moss. Several deep grooves lead toward a hollowed-out region in its center. It’s like a great crude bowl thrust into the ground sideways. In the center of the bowl, there is a dancing, crackling light.

You are the Verdant Spire.

Guard the Standing Stone - Turn to 15

10 - Tempering

“You are still pushing too hard,” you say, looking at Davu. “You have to calm your rage. Only then will you be able to anticipate my actions. Only when you are calm will you see.”

You stand together at the precipice of the land in silence. She squints at the clouds moving far below.

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11 - An Excruciating Journey

You push steadily onward, crawling past each structure standing beside the path. People are watching and murmuring. You squint at the path ahead but you cannot see The Stone yet. A few people are running, some to the commotion, and some away from it. You move slowly past a purple tuber paddy.

“Do not concern yourself with The Stone. It’s part of the cycle,” he says. “It will wait for us, because that is the way of things.”

“Why? Why must it be so?”

“Because, that is the way it has always been.” The Augur smiles slightly with his lips pressed together. The Augur seems certain, and calm.

Continue on to the Standing Stone - Turn to 17

12 - The Biting Gale

In a moment you cross the short distance and strike the creature through the doorway. It explodes into a black cloud of black. You wait. There is no movement other than the haze drifting slowly away on the other side.

You lean through the glowing doorway. The air here tastes like blood and your nose itches as you breathe it. On the ground lies a weapon nearly identical to the one you're holding, and a small pyramidal form no bigger than the last knuckle of a finger. The weapon could use some care, particularly the wrap on the handle, but it seems serviceable. The smaller item looks like it could have been part of the thing that was there before. But, while that was just a dull husk, the crystal is shiny and appears solid. The items share the same strange iridescence of the blade you hold. Even in this dimly-lit place, they reflect a rainbow of colors.

"Davu, come here. Take this." She takes the True Blade from you, so that you can lean through and gather the items.

In your right hand, you grasp the sword. If Davu has your father's sword, where did this come from? Could it have belonged to your grandfather?

"Tell me, is there anything left of the beast?" the Augur asks. His tone is usually calm and detached. Now he sounds concerned, insistent. You hold up the stone. "Give it to me!"

Hand the stone to the Augur - Turn to 19

13 - A Crisis of Faith

“I’m sorry, Augur. Davu is not ready.”

You wave Danali over and instruct him to bring the Augur to The Standing Stone. You place the Augur’s hand on his arm and run. You don’t look back to see the Augur’s expression, but you suspect it is a scornful one.

You arrive at the clearing. The Standing Stone dominates one end. The grey of the stone peeks through its coat of moss. Several deep grooves lead toward a hollowed-out region in its center. It’s like a great crude bowl thrust into the ground sideways. In the center of the bowl, there is a dancing, crackling light.

Davu stands before it. She is the Verdant Spire, upright, calm, focused. Her attention is fixed on the Standing Stone.

“Davu, I am here.”

“Where is the Augur? Did you not find him?”

“Danali has him. They’re about four stades back.”

“I will fetch him.” Davu hands you the weapon, and runs to find the Augur. You become the Verdant Spire.

Wait at the Ready - Turn to 15

14 - The Verdant Spire

You stand upright, focused, your feet rooted to the earth. Your adversary stands just beyond the doorway. The form on the other side. It's hard to tell what it is, but it looks strangely like a man, but larger, dull black and covered in jagged protrusions. It doesn't move.

You have seen this exact scene before. It is said that the fight was always between your father and the creature, and he drove it back through the portal. But in this moment, your memory is clear. The creature had gotten past your father and attacked the Augur, striking him in the abdomen. It only lashed out at your father when he dealt it a mortal wound. Then the creature stopped, limped to the portal and threw itself over the threshold. It collapsed in a heap exactly as it is now. Each of the three of them lay dying. Then the doorway in closed. The Augur recovered, but your father did not.

You keep your blade at the ready and approach. Time passes and everything is still save for the shifting light of the doorway. You reach through the stone and place your hand on the dark form. It crumbles and blows away. Apparently the beast didn't survive either.

You lean through the glowing doorway. The air here tastes like blood and your nose itches as you breathe it. On the ground lies a weapon nearly identical to the one you're holding and a small pyramidal form no bigger than the last knuckle of a finger. The weapon could use some care, particularly the wrap on the handle, but it seems serviceable. The items share the same strange iridescence of the blade you hold. Even in this dimly-lit place, they reflect a rainbow of colors.

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In your right hand, you grasp the sword. If Davu has your father's sword, where did this come from? Could it have belonged to your grandfather?

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Hand the stone to the Augur - Turn to 19

15 - Intense Focus

You breathe and time slows. You can now clearly see the shifting and indistinguishable shapes that the light makes as it crawls over the Stone.

A murmur arises amongst the few who have come to witness. Davu has arrived with the Augur.

There is a flash. The crackling light fills the bowl in the face of the stone. It then recedes from the center to leave a shifting ring around its edge. The bowl has become a doorway to another place, one darker than this one. You father once stood where you now stand. This is what it looked like then. That was when the beast came through.

This time, nothing moves.

But then you see it, at the bottom a shadowy figure covered in crystalline spikes sits absolutely still.

Lunge forward and strike the beast through the doorway - Turn to 12

Wait for the onslaught - Turn to 14

16 - Finding the Water's Source

You walk upstream for days resting and drinking the waters as the need arises. The tangle of thick stone brambles loom overhead occasionally offering the tiniest sliver of purple sky as you wind around their trunks. There are more strange creatures below the surface of the water. Some are like that first creature, but there are others too. It's hard to say how long you have been following this stream as it has narrowed. It could be days, it could be weeks. The world down here hasn't changed as far as you can tell, but it all seems slightly different.

Eventually you walk into an opening. The swirls of rock are absent in a vertical column leaving a clearing about half a stade in diameter. Near the center of the clearing, there are two things, a standing stone, and an odd tower that looks grown rather than constructed. It reminds you of the Verdant Spire back in on The Tableland. There is movement at the top of it.

Investigate the standing stone - Turn to 47

Climb the spire - Turn to 56

17 - Escort Complete

You arrive at the clearing. The sun has set and only a dim glow remains. The Standing Stone dominates one end of the clearing. Its grey color peeks out through a coat of moss. Several deep grooves lead toward a hollowed-out region in its center. It's like a great crude bowl has been thrust into the ground sideways. In the center of the bowl, there is a dancing, crackling light.

Davu stands before it. She is the Verdant Spire, upright, calm, focused. Her attention is fixed on The Standing Stone.

The Augur's steps become more secure as you approach. Eventually the Augur no longer needs your support. You move past the few people too curious to seek shelter.

"Go to your daughter."

You leave the Augur to stand beside Davu. "I am here," you say.

Davu blinks as if coming out of a trance. She softens her posture and holds the sword out to you, hilt first. You take it and fall into position. You breathe and time slows. You can now clearly see the shifting and indistinguishable shapes that the light makes as it crawls over the Stone.

There is a flash. The crackling light fills the bowl. It then recedes from the center outward leaving a shifting ring around its edge. The bowl has become a doorway to another place, a place darker than here. You father once stood where you now stand. This is what it looked like then. That was when the beast came through.

This time, nothing moves.

But then you see it. A shadowy figure covered in crystalline spikes sits absolutely still.

Lunge forward and strike the beast through the doorway - Turn to 12

Wait for the onslaught - Turn to 14

18 - The Second Blade

“But the blade,” you begin. “I want to know why it was here.”

“What does it matter? You must journey beyond the Standing Stone,” says the Augur.

“To what end?”

“For this,” he says and holds up the small stone. “The beasts have been a plague on this village. Yes.” he lowers his voice. “What none know is that they are also a blessing. The reason we continue to thrive on The Tableland, and haven’t suffered the fate of the wastes is in these stones. They are plentiful on the other side, and the beasts bring some with them when they come. Since there was only this long dead creature with a single stone, you will have to go find more.”

“Is this why my grandfather was on the other side?”

“Yes.”

“I thought he slew a beast. If he was successful, why did he go through?”

“In the past we had many more guardians, because many more beasts attacked. As the number of beasts diminished, there was less of a need for Guardians. Now your family are our only protection. Almost. I am the one who keeps the Standing Stone closed, and the beasts at bay. But I can’t do it without this. We’ve talked long enough. The way will close soon.”

The Augur places his hand on your shoulder and turns you toward the Standing Stone. The explanation makes some sense, but raises more questions than it answers.

Try to understand - Turn to 20

Prepare to journey beyond The Standing Stone - Turn to 22

19 - The Remains

The Augur snatches the stone and turns it over in his long fingers.

“It’s not enough,” he whispers.

“Enough for what?” you ask.

He looks up from the stone toward you, almost surprised that you’re there. “To keep the Settlement alive.”

You turn the blade over in your hand. “My father said our grandfather journeyed to the other side. Is this grandfather’s blade?”

“It appears so.”

“Why is it here?”

“Perhaps he was waiting for the stone to open. Perhaps he left, or was scared off by the beast.”

“And dropped his blade?” Abandoning ones weapon is not something a practitioner of The Art does lightly.

“I don’t have the answers. If they exist, they can only be found beyond The Stone. You must go if we are to have any hope of survival. You must go now.” You can’t determine exactly why, but it seems that the Augur is anxious.

Surely there’s time to ask about the Blade - Turn to 18

Prepare to journey beyond The Standing Stone - Turn to 22

Surely there’s time to ask about the small stone - Turn to 32

20 - Search for Explanation

“This doesn’t lay flat,” you say. “If you are protecting us from the beasts, why not just let one through more often? The guardians can stop them.”

The Augur wrings his hands. In his agitation he expresses more vitality than you have ever seen in him. “There is so little that you understand. I have guided your family, and they have helped keep the Settlement alive by keeping me strong. We cannot leave this up to chance.”

You look to Davu. She looks back at you questioningly. You make a subtle signal with your hand.

Wait

She will be silent and still.

“You must go now! When this is gone, the way will close.” The Augur holds up the stone, which is now the size of a bead.

Resist the Augur’s plea - Turn to 23

Prepare to journey beyond The Standing Stone - Turn to 25

21 - Dropping Below the Jagged Surface

You climb down the twisted fingers of rock. The stone reminds you of the skeletal husk left behind from the spike plants along the northern edge of the tableland. Only this isn't a regular pattern, and it isn't confined to a cylinder. After about a quarter of a stade of descent, you find the bottom. There is almost no light down here, but you can walk on a more-or-less flat surface.

You step in an icy pool of water. You cup your hand and taste it. It's strangely metallic, but refreshing. You take several swallows and then sit and rest a while. As you rest and your eyes continue to adjust, you realize it's not a pool at all, it's a slowly flowing stream.

Then an odd light catches your attention. It's hanging just below the surface of the water. You still yourself and focus. You can see more. The light is coming from some kind of creature, but it's like nothing you have ever seen. It stays underwater like a mollusk or a crustacean, but it swims more elegantly and effortlessly. It has the grace of a bird, and flat, transparent appendages. You observe this creature for a time, and notice that it is holding stationary by resisting the flow of water, which tells you which direction the water is flowing from.

Follow the water upstream - Turn to 16

Catch the strange creature - Turn to 24

Follow the water downstream - Turn to 27

22 - Preparation

You collect your supplies and grandfather's sword. You present Davu with the True Blade.

"Davu. Keep training, and keep your focus. I promise, I will return. Look for me when The Stone opens again."

You turn to the Augur, "Is there anything that you can tell me about the other side? Where do I find these stones?"

"I do not know. In fact, there's very little I can tell you."

You nod and turn away.

Step through the Stone - Turn to 28

23 - A Stalwart Refusal

“I will not go,” You say. “I sense that you are not being honest.”

The Augur strikes you with the back of his hand. You sail through the air toward The Standing Stone. “Who are you to defy me?”

You roll over and rise to your feet despite not being able to breathe. The Augur moves toward you.

Your vision goes fuzzy for a moment. If you can't draw a breath, you will pass out of consciousness. There's one chance.

Strike at the Augur's exposed head - Turn to 26

Slash at the Augur's robed body - Turn to 65

24 - Plunging Your Arm In

You thrust your arm into the water to grab this creature. You careful to thrust below where you see it. You are swift and manage to grasp the creature. You pull it above the surface to admire it. The swimming creature is covered in small plates that make a regular pattern. They have the same iridescent quality as your blade, and in this light, your hand.

You recoil in shock and drop the creature back into the water. It was just a trick of the light.

Follow the water upstream - Turn to 16

Follow the water downstream - Turn to 27

25 - Preparation

You collect your supplies and grandfather's sword. You present Davu with the True Blade.

“Davu. Keep training, and keep your focus. I promise, I will return. Look for me when The Stone opens again.”

You consider asking the Augur something, but you're not sure if you would trust his answer.

Step through The Stone - Turn to 28

26 - Harvesting the Reeds

You bring your blade across level with the Augur's head. He seems not only unconcerned, but almost seems pleased in the moment before impact. The blade stops at his temple. The Augur steps forward, and grabs your hands in his own. You are weakening and the world is fading.

Then you are shoved backward. The Augur releases your hands and you are sent flying once more. You are dizzy and confused, but before you lapse into unconsciousness, you have one final thought. How did he shove me if both of his hands were occupied?

You wake up. The sky is a dark violet, the air tastes like metal, and your eyes are burning. You are on the other side. A large stone slab juts out of the ground beside you. On it's back, there is a small triangular notch, but it is otherwise flat and smooth.

You stand up. The world around you is twisted and jagged. The rock is sculpted into an endless network of loops, spikes, and tunnels. It's almost as though you are an insect in a field of brambles. It would take someone a very long time to traverse this terrain.

There is a yellow glow beyond the horizon in one direction. You may be able to move faster if there is a flat surface below all of this. However, if you're going to head for that light, you'll need to stay near the top.

Then you notice a faint sound. It sounds like the Settlement's bell in a strong wind. It's muted, but you know that sound. It's coming from another direction, but again you'd have to stay topside to follow the sound.

There is one other option. You could go down. If there is a bottom, and enough of this dim light reaches it, you might be able to get somewhere before you die of starvation or dehydration.

Climb down into the dark - Turn to 21

Follow the sound of the bell - Turn to 30

Go toward the dim glow on the horizon - Turn to 38

27 - Finding the Water's Destination

You follow the silently-flowing stream through the dim and twisting rock masses. You wind your way onward stopping to drink or rest less and less frequently. The light never changes, so it's hard to say how long you've been here. It could have been days or weeks. There are more strange creatures below the surface of the water. Some are like that first creature, but there are different ones as well.

Eventually the endless silence is broken. Something is shuffling and scratching up ahead. It is an animal of some kind.

Locate the animal - Turn to 29

Sneak past and continue following the water - Turn to 31

28 - Through The Stone

You step through the stone. You turn toward Davu and send a signal.

Love

Davu nods.

The way closes, and you're staring at a large stone slab jutting out of the ground. Just in front of your face, there is a small triangular notch in its otherwise smooth surface.

The sky is a dark violet, the air tastes like metal, and your eyes are burning. The world around you is twisted and jagged. The rock is sculpted into an endless network of loops, spikes, and tunnels. It's almost as though you are an insect in a field of brambles. It would take someone a very long time to traverse this terrain.

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29 - Finding the Creature

You move toward the shuffling sound, and then you see the eyes of a creature. Four gently glowing orbs watch you unblinkingly for several moments. You take another step forward, and they are gone.

Where they were there appears to be a den, but when you put your head inside, you see an enormous cavernous space. There is a crack in the wall of a huge tunnel. The tunnel runs off in two directions, and you have no way to choose, so you settle on the direction that is nearest to your previous heading. The only illumination is from the crack where you entered.

That's when you hear another sound, the second in a very long time. It's a distant the gong of a signal bell. Like the one in the Settlement. This could be the same one you heard when you first arrived. It must be close if you can hear it down here.

Follow the tunnel - Turn to 40

Look for the gong - Turn to 42

30 - An Endless Tangle

You stay above and walk on the endless tangles of stone tubes of a diameter so that two people could scarcely touch fingertips around one. They sweep up and down, branch, and rejoin. Sometimes they end in a curved horn, sometimes there are holes bored through them. Occasionally one has broken off and fallen into the darkness below.

The sound is faint and intermittent. There are long stretches of time where you hear nothing at all, and can only navigate by using the glow on the horizon to keep your heading.

It takes weeks before you see something. Can it have been weeks? You have scarcely rested and haven't eaten since you can remember.

Above you, something flies toward the sound of the bell. It's hard to tell how large it is, but it seems huge. It's a bird, but it's not like the bird you know.

You hear something else shuffling and digging below you. There is an animal down there.

Continue toward the bell - Turn to 42

Investigate below - Turn to 44

31 - Avoiding and Encounter

You pause until you're certain of the direction of the sound. It can be tricky with all these columns to know exactly where the creature is. You move silently around the beast, and continue on. That's when you hear another sound, the second in a very long time. It's a distant the gong of a signal bell. Like the one in the Settlement.

Look for the bell - Turn to 42

32 - A Small Iridescent Stone

"What is this that?"

The Augur smiles down at the small stone. "The beasts have been a plague on this village. Yes." he lowers his voice. "What none know is that they are also a blessing. The reason we continue to thrive on The Tableland, and haven't suffered the fate of the wastes is in these stones. They are plentiful on the other side, and the beasts bring some with them when they come. Since there was only this long dead creature with a single stone, you will have to go find more."

"Is this why my grandfather went to the other side?"

"Yes. He made it back to the far side of The Standing Stone with this one crystal. Perhaps he couldn't wait and left it behind here. Your father was felled by the beast here, and never made the journey."

"We've talked long enough. The way will close soon. You must go."

The Augur places his hand on your shoulder and turns you toward the Standing Stone. The explanation makes some sense, but raises more questions than it answers.

Try to understand - Turn to 20

Prepare to journey beyond The Standing Stone - Turn to 22

33 - An Empty Promise

I had planned to use all the entries, but I failed. Or did I?

THE END

34 - A Cracked Cylinder

The cylinder is twice as tall as you are, and vaguely cylindrical, but it narrows at the top before rounding off. It's covered in the same swirling patterns that decorate the Augur's dwelling. You discover a large crack on the back side of the cylinder. Inside, you see a hand. Is this some kind of funerary structure? Does someone live in the building?

Investigate the building - Turn to 48

35 - Climbing the Outcrop

You scabble up onto a rock twice as tall as you and much longer. You see no sign of the bird thing. There are actually several outcroppings of rocks that seem to join together in the distance. You walk along the ridge line, jumping over deep perpendicular grooves.

A screech pierces the air.

You are hit in the back and thrown from the stone ridge, but you do not fall. Something is holding you. It's much larger than you are. The creature flaps vast featherless wings and rises with you in its claws. It bends its neck down to look at you. It has a long face like a bird, but huge translucent green spheres for eyes. It screeches in your face.

You rise together. Your feet dangle below you and you realize that the outcropping of stones was really an enormous skeleton. It has a long neck and tail and at least ten limbs. You were walking along a single series of finger bones. It must have been almost as large as the Tableland.

Strange flocks of headless birds float below you, in clusters. The circles on the ground fade, and you see long rows of dots radiating out from a glowing structure. You can now see it's some kind of tower in a ruined settlement. The bird thing is taking you to it.

There is a platform in front of the tower. The bird deposits you there and then flies up to a perch on the side. At the far end of the platform is a triangular doorway similar to the one on the Augur's dwelling. This one is made of the same metal as your blade.

Enter the doorway - Turn to 37

36 - Specks on the Horizon

After an eternity of walking, you arrive at the thing you saw. A row of clay cylinders stretches out before you straight toward the glow. To either side of you, parallel columns of cylinders to the same. Beyond those there are more.

Each cylinder is twice as tall as you are, but only vaguely cylindrical. They narrow at the top before rounding off in a dome shape. Each is covered in the same swirling patterns that decorate the Augur's dwelling. There is at least a stade between them. You continue onward past hundreds and thousands of them.

They seem to be getting older and more worn as you walk. Eventually you find one with a crack in it.

Continue following the line of cylinders - Turn to 41

Investigate the cracked cylinder - Turn to 43

37 - The Iridescent Doorway

Beyond the entrance is an open chamber. There is a figure in the middle of this. He seems tall, much taller than you. He's dressed in flying robes and a hat that looks like a semicircle was placed on his head.

"It has returned." The chamber echoes with its voice. "We thought it understood. There was a change. My predecessor expected the change to persist."

Returned? - Turn to 49

Change? - Turn to 54

38 - The Glow on the Horizon

You stay above and walk on the endless tangles of stone tubes of a diameter so that two people could scarcely touch fingertips around one. They sweep up and down, branch, and rejoin. Sometimes they end in a curved horn, sometimes there are holes bored through them. Occasionally one has broken off and fallen into the darkness below. Always you are pushing onward toward the glow.

Days become weeks. Weeks become months. Can it be months? You scarcely remember sleeping. Progress is slow, but not as slow as it once was. You have grown skilled in traversing the tangle. So skilled that when you finally reach its end, you feel a pang of sadness.

The sky remains a dim purple, and the glow is still coming from just over the horizon.

You walk. The ground is covered with strange circular formations like the ripples of raindrops on water. Above you, something flies and lands near a sprawling outcrop of rock. It's hard to tell how large it is, but it seems huge. It's a bird, but it's not like the bird you know from home.

You approach the outcropping, but you no longer see the bird. On the horizon there are small dots, regularly spaced.

Explore the outcrop - Turn to 35

Continue toward the horizon - Turn to 36

39 - Carried Toward the Glow

This leathern bird-like creature glides effortlessly above this odd landscape. You cannot tell how long you have been carried. But the twisted stone landscape has gone and the ground is covered in strange concentric circles intersecting one another. They remind you of raindrops on the surface of the water. They continue for what must be hundreds, —perhaps thousands—of stades, and then you see an enormous skeleton sprawled across them. It has a long neck and tail and at least ten limbs. It must have been almost as large as the Tableland.

Strange flocks of headless birds float below you, in clusters. The circles too fade, and you see long rows of dots radiating out from the glow. You can now see it's some kind of tower in a ruined settlement. The bird thing is taking you to it.

There is a platform in front of the tower. The bird deposits you there and then flies up to a perch on the side. At the far end of the platform is a triangular doorway similar to the one on the Augur's dwelling. This one is made of the same metal as your blade.

Enter the doorway - Turn to 37

40 - Following the Tunnel

The walls appear to be made of the bones of individual creatures, but they are arranged in a way that suggests the pattern of a larger creature? A support structure made of hundreds of skulls and spines forms a single rib. The ceiling is at least half a stade above your head.

You walk and the dim light fades until you are stepping gingerly through the dark. You feel your way along this tunnel lined with the remains of creatures you've never encountered before. Time is strange here. You do this for what must be weeks. Then there is light spilling down a stairway. You can't remember eating or sleeping since you've been down here.

You tirelessly climb an impossible number of stairs until you finally emerge from the stairway onto a platform. At one end of that platform is a triangular doorway similar to the one on the Augur's dwelling. This one is made of the same metal as your blade.

Enter the doorway - Turn to 37

41 - Approaching the Glow

The long row of cylinders continues. The condition of the structures worsen until they are just mounds of earth. These must be ancient. The mounds end at a strange structure that might be some kind of a wall made of some kind of grey spires that appear to have grown together by reaching out and intertwining their branches. If this is a wall, it was not designed to keep something so small as you out of it. You pass through it and onward to your destination: an illuminated tower at the top of a stepped structure.

You climb until you are on a platform. At the far end of the platform is a triangular doorway similar to the one on the Augur's dwelling. This one is made of the same metal as your blade.

Enter the doorway - Turn to 37

42 - Searching for the Bell

You walk through the tangle of stone searching for the bell that is gently ringing. You climb up until you can see a great bell just like the one in the Settlement, but much larger. It hangs from a wooden beam so large that it would take the entire verdant spire to create it.

A mound of earth rises slightly above the stone brambles. In addition to the bell, there appears to be a hut, a standing stone, and a strange earthen cylinder.

Investigate the cylinder - Turn to 34

Investigate the standing stone - Turn to 46

Investigate the hut - Turn to 48

43 - Peering Inside

The crack is large enough that you can put your upper body through. Inside the hollow chamber is a huge creature that has been dead a long time. It's like a man, but taller, much taller. Its purplish skin has dried and pulled taught over long and slender bones. It has four arms, and is hunched over exposing a strange and delicate structure between its shoulder blades.

Continue on - Turn to 45

44 - Climbing Silently Down

You move downward through the interwoven stone toward the shuffling sound. You stop. Four gently glowing orbs stare up at you for several moments before vanishing. You drop down and find yourself on the ground.

Where they were there appears to be a den, but when you put your head inside, you see an enormous cavernous space. There is a crack in the wall of a huge tunnel. The tunnel runs off in two directions, and you have no way to choose, so you settle on the direction that is nearest to your previous heading. The only illumination is from the crack where you entered.

You hear the gong again faintly.

Follow the tunnel - Turn to 40

Look for the gong - Turn to 42

45 - Approaching the Glow

The long row of cylinders continues. The condition of the structures worsen until they are just mounds of earth. These must be ancient. The mounds end at a strange structure that might be some kind of a wall made of some kind of grey spires that appear to have grown together by reaching out and intertwining their branches. If this is a wall, it was not designed to keep something so small as you out of it. You pass through it and onward to your destination: an illuminated tower at the top of a stepped structure.

You climb until you are on a platform. At the far end of the platform is a triangular doorway similar to the one on the Augur's dwelling. This one is made of the same metal as your blade.

Enter the doorway - Turn to 37

46 - A Broken Stone

There is a standing stone here, but it is broken. And the break is clean, almost as though a section was shorn off. Other than this, it's like the one you came through. It's smooth with a small pyramidal indentation. There is a glint in the dirt at its base. In that dirt, you find the shattered remnants of a blade much like your own. There is little else to be done here.

There is still the clay cylinder and the building. Then you notice something move on top of the building.

Investigate the cylinder - Turn to 34

Approach the building - Turn to 48

47 - Approaching the Stone

This stone is like the other in this world, smooth and with a small, pyramidal notch. Tracing your hand over its surface makes an odd scraping noise. When your fingers reach the hole, you press the tip of one into it. It seems to fit.

Light fills the clearing, and a doorway opens up to another place. The place is dark, darker than where you are now. The air smells almost the same on the other side, but slightly more stale.

You are unsure whether you should pass through yet another passage like this. Perhaps it would be best to investigate the top of the spire instead.

Enter the stone - Turn to 53

Climb the spire - Turn to 56

48 - Approaching the Building

This structure is almost identical to the Augur's building. Same patterns on the outside, same triangular doorway. The only things different are the material its made of, and a small spherical structure at the top that you cannot see into. It looks like it could be an observation area.

You've never been inside the Augur's dwelling. Perhaps this will give you some idea of what he's hiding in there.

There are walls full of things in glass jars and marked with a strange writing. There are books. More books that you knew could exist. There are also strange apparatus arrayed on tables. It's all covered in a layer of dust. There are crystals here too, but they are dull and black.

There is a ladder that goes up through a hole in the ceiling, and also down below the floor of the structure into the mound of earth.

Climb the ladder up - Turn to 52

Climb the ladder down - Turn to 55

49 - Returned?

"I have returned?" you ask.

"The emissary has come to this place times beyond number. It learns. It promises. It goes back to the exile. In the span of my predecessor it came. Always insisting. Always promising. Then, one time it did not come. Then my predecessor's span ended. It is my span now."

Span? - Turn to 57

Exile? - Turn to 62

50 - Bird Opens Seed

Your fist collides with their abdomen and they collapse in a heap, dropping their spear in the process. Their robes are in tatters.

You kick the spear and it slides spinning far across the room. The figure looks up at you and then turns and crawls toward the spear on five of its six limbs. One hand covers a spot between its shoulder blades.

Strike at the spot - Turn to 74

Negotiate an end to the fight - Turn to 78

51 - A Screeching Roar

You intended to tell her who you are. You wanted to tell her what you've learned. But all that comes out is a piercing alien cry.

An onlooker screams in horror.

Davu's expression grows more grim and determined. She lashes out at your head.

Duck below the attack - Turn to 83

Slap the flat of the blade with your palm - Turn to 86

52 - Up to the Observation Area

You climb up the ladder to a wooden hatch. You pass through it and into a cup-like structure on the top that is lined with strands of fiber. The remnants of vast egg shells crackle under your feet. There is a glow on the horizon.

You are hit in the back and thrown from the structure, but you do not fall. Something is holding you. It's much larger than you are. The creature flaps its vast featherless wings and rises with you in its claws. It bends its neck down to look at you. It has a long face like a bird, but huge translucent green spheres for eyes. It screeches in your face.

It flies away from the building carrying you toward the glow.

Dangle helplessly - Turn to 39

53 - Stepping Through

You step through the stone and end up in a huge chamber. The walls appear to be made of the bones of individual creatures, but they are arranged in a way that suggests the pattern of a larger creature? A support structure made of hundreds of skulls and spines forms a single rib. You can see now that the chamber is actually a tunnel. The ceiling is at least half a stade above your head.

The doorway closes, the light is extinguished, and you are left in utter darkness. You feel the stone on this side. There is no notch, only a bowl-like depression on one face. You wait for a time, but the stone does not open.

You walk, stepping gingerly through the dark. You feel your way through an endless maze of tunnels lined with the remains of creatures you've never encountered before. Time is strange here. You had to have been at this for weeks before you saw the light spilling down a stairway. But you can't remember eating or sleeping in that time.

You tirelessly climb an impossible number of stairs until you finally emerge from the stairway onto a platform. At one end of that platform is a triangular doorway similar to the one on the Augur's dwelling. This one is made of the same metal as your blade.

Enter the doorway - Turn to 37

54 - Change?

"What changed?" you ask.

"The emissary did not return for one cycle. Then my predecessor's span ended. It is my span now. Once again, the emissary of the exile is here. Here to defy the natural order."

Span? - Turn to 57

Exile? - Turn to 62

Defy? - Turn to 64

55 - Under the Mound

The ladder descends farther than you could have thought possible. Eventually you emerge into a vast chamber before finally reaching the ground. Only the faintest glow reaches down here, but somehow it is enough for you. The chamber is actually a tunnel. There is only one way to go.

Follow the tunnel - Turn to 40

56 - Climbing the Spire

There are limb-like structures protruding from the trunk of the towering column. They make climbing easy. You move above the twisted stone surface and continue climbing. There's some kind of platform at the top and a creature resting on it. It lets out a gurgling call.

You continue to climb. The creature looks over the edge down at you. It has a long face like a bird, but huge translucent green spheres for eyes. It screeches in your face and leaps from the platform. It's much larger than you are. The creature spreads its vast featherless wings and makes sweeps in a huge arc around you. Then it swoops in and snatches you from the tower.

It flies away from the clearing carrying you toward that glow on the horizon.

Dangle helplessly - Turn to 39

57 - Span?

"Your span?" you ask.

"Is it not finite? Perhaps not. It has come again and again for so long. Persistent. A vessel that defies what must be."

Vessel? - Turn to 58

Defy? - Turn to 64

58 - Vessel?

"I am a vessel?"

"Why must the vessel always question? Questions change nothing. The exile thrives beyond our reach."

Exile? - Turn to 62

59 - Howling Gale

You sprint toward the tall figure. They don't set to receive your charge like someone carrying a spear might. Instead, the spear point glows. You knock it upward with your blade and a flash of light erupts from the tip. Something strikes the wall of the chamber and debris crashes to the ground.

Slash at their arms - Turn to 73

Slash at their head - Turn to 76

60 - The Verdant Spire

You stand still, focused, your feet rooted to the earth. Your adversary extends their weapon toward you. The tip of the spear glows and light fills the chamber. You are struck by something and thrown backward. Your skin clatters against the floor as you land.

You leap to your feet.

Distance will not save you from this weapon.

Charge past the spear - Turn to 63

Move in close enough to attack the weapon - Turn to 69

61 - Gust Topples the Altar

You slide forward, and wrap your hands around the wrist of the Augur. You twist Davu free of his grasp. Davu grabs your falling weapon and performs Sheathing the Blade, impaling the Augur. He lets out a hideous screaming hiss.

You pull Davu and the blade away and kick the Augur through the doorway. He bares his teeth at you before the light coalesces to a point and the way is closed.

You grab Davu and pull her close. Everyone else is silent.

The cycles continue - Turn to 68

62 - Exile?

“Who is the exile?” you ask, though you think you know the answer.

“Enough of this! Its own vessel asks. I shall do in my span what the others would not. I shall silence the vessel.”

The figure turns and pulls a spear from his robe. It is made of the same shifting metal as your blade, but it glows in strange places. He holds it with three arms and advances pointing it toward you.

You do have a strange sense that you have been here before.

Close the distance rapidly - Turn to 59

Await the charge - Turn to 60

Leap to the side - Turn to 66

63 - Wind Under the Threshold

You charge toward the robed figure, and dive onto the ground when you see the spear glow. Another flash misses you. You roll and pop up inside the range of the spear.

Slash at the weapon - Turn to 69

Impale the figure through the neck - Turn to 71

64 - Defy?

“What am I defying?”

“The end of your span! The end of the exile’s span!”

Exile? - Turn to 62

65 - Level the Hedges

You bring the blade across, cutting through the Augur’s robes. You strike...something under there, which causes the blade to bounce off and slap flat against his stomach.

The Augur lets out a strange groaning hiss. For the first time you sense a rising panic in the gathered crowd. Davu is trying to calm them. The Augur looks toward the Settlers of The Tableland and loudly announces, “You will do your duty, and journey beyond The Standing Stone.”

Then the Augur moves faster than you knew a man could move. He grabs Davu by the neck.

“I didn’t want to do this, but you will go.”

Davu’s hand faintly shows a signal: Gust.

“You will go through now.”

Capitulate and step through The Stone - Turn to 28

Charge toward Davu and the Augur - Turn to 61

Attempt to disable the arm holding Davu with your blade - Turn to 67

66 - Water Rolling off the Tableland

There is no rational reason for this technique. But The Art is not always rational. The spear point glows and then a flash of light erupts from the tip. A wave of heat passes nearby and something slams into the wall behind you.

Charge past the spear - Turn to 63

Move in close enough to attack the weapon - Turn to 69

67 - Harvesting the Pepper

You slash toward the arm holding Davu. The Augur reacts, swinging Davu around to block the blow. The weapon bites deeply into her chest.

In shock you release the blade and kick the Augur in the abdomen. His eyes go wide, and he drops Davu. Taking advantage of this moment of surprise, you throw your shoulder into the Augur and drive him through the gateway. He bares his teeth at you before the light coalesces to a point and the way is closed.

You rush to Davu's side. She is unconscious. The Augur was the Settlement's healer, but there are others trained to aid the body. You send Danali to find a doula. She returns with Nal, who stanches the bleeding.

Davu recovers her vitality, but never regains the use of her right arm.

The cycles continue - Turn to 68

68 - Life on The Tableland

For a time after the departure of the Augur the Settlement despaired. There was a fire in the field at the base of the Verdant Spire. Its bark was left charred and we worried that it might have been permanently damaged, but now new spires have grown. They aren't but a fraction of the height of the first, but they already serve as homes to ever more birds.

Davu has become a new kind of Augur. She has also had children. They are guardians now. Twice The Standing Stone has not opened when it should have. There is hope that it will never open again.

The Settlement is safe.

THE END

69 - Shaking the Branches

You strike the weapon with the flat of your blade and another flash erupts from it, striking another wall of the chamber. The figure's free hand reaches out to grab you.

Slash at their arm - Turn to 73

70 - Dowak Returns

You roll backwards until your feet find the ground, and then you plant them and dive forward. The figure is stunned that they have bought themselves so little time.

Charge in past the spear - Turn to 63

Lunge at their head - Turn to 76

71 - Bird Catches Crustacean

You drive the blade straight through the neck of the figure. They barely seems to notice this killing blow. Their deeply-set eyes narrow and a hand smashes into the side of your head.

There is an audible crack.

Punch them in the abdomen - Turn to 50

Pull blade free - Turn to 72

72 - Harvesting the Orange Tuber

You pull the blade free and prepare to strike. You are struck by one of those flashes of light. Shards of you spray in every direction and rattle on the ground. But you're still alive. You leap to your feet. You have been thrown clear of the figure. Their robe is in tatters and they look battle weary, but they are still fighting.

Charge past the spear - Turn to 63

Move in close enough to attack the weapon - Turn to 69

73 - Trimming the Branches

You bring the blade across to strike their arm, but they deflect the blade away. One of its other arms releases the spear and shoves you backward.

Tumble backward and then spring forward again - Turn to 70

Spin with your blade held outward - Turn to 75

74 - There Is No Name

You thrust your blade through their hand and into their back. They collapse onto the floor. Their span has ended.

Return to the platform - Turn to 77

75 - Untethered Windmill

You spin and roll the force of the push into a retaliatory strike while you're still in range. The blade bites deep into the torso of the figure beneath their robes. The bite of the blade stops you as you pull.

Strike them in the abdomen with your free hand - Turn to 50

Brace your feet and pull the blade free - Turn to 72

76 - Ringing the Bell

The blow lands across the brow of the figure knocking their hat askew, but doing little else, apparently.

It grabs you with one arm and brings the butt of the spear up to strike you.

Impale the figure through the neck - Turn to 71

Slash at the arm to get free - Turn to 73

77 - On the Platform

An enormous bird-like creature stands on the platform. It searches you with its deep green eyes, and then kneels. You climb onto its back and it takes flight.

Ride back to The Standing Stone - Turn to 81

78 - Negotiations

You touch your blade to the hand. The figure halts.

“This would end your span, yes?”

“Yes.”

“If you let me leave, your span can continue. I will not be back.”

Return to the platform - Turn to 77

79 - Before The Standing Stone

The air smells damp, putrid, of rot and life.

There is a guardian here. She's got a streak of white in her hair, but she is strong and tall and holding her blade upright. She is the Verdant Spire.

Beyond her, the Augur stands. He looks grey and withered, possibly on the verge of death. He smiles.

A few others are gathered, around. Most are keeping their distance except for one small child. She's holding a wooden training blade.

Circle around toward Augur - Turn to 82

Wait - Turn to 88

80 - Turn of the Windmill

You raise your blade to meet hers. You tilt and rotate it, guiding the other weapon over your head without stopping its momentum. The guardian pivots on her heel and brings the blade around again, continuing its arc.

Quickly retreat backward out of range - Turn to 85

Push the guardian aside and lunge for the Augur - Turn to 87

81 - The Return

The creature flies back toward your Standing Stone. You aren't sure how you know this, but you do. You have somehow been transformed.

After an unknowable amount of time, the bird creature lands before the part of The Standing Stone that resides in this place. You climb down and the bird leaves.

The Stone hums and that hum grows louder as you approach. There's a pyramidal hole and you raise your hand and place it beside the hole. For the first time you notice yourself—your skin. It is black, iridescent, and covered in spikes.

You have become the Augur's harvest.

You press the tip of your finger into the hole and the way opens back to the Tableland.

Step through the doorway - Turn to 79

82 - Circle Toward the Augur

You begin moving in a circle around the guardian. She shifts subtly as you move. She's keeping herself between you and the Augur.

You dash past her. But she intercedes and strikes.

Deflect her blow - Turn to 80

Strike at the guardian - Turn to 90

83 - Bird Harvests Mollusk

You wait for the blow and then bend forward and place your hand on the ground. The True Blade passes over your head. You push up hard and swing at her exposed side. Davu's eyes narrow and she shifts to Wind Spins Vane. She intercepts your blade and throws it to the side.

She uses the momentum from your weapon to reverse direction.

Roll backward out of range and then forward again to strike - Turn to 89

Slide to the side to avoid the direct assault - Turn to 91

84 - Love

You hold up your limb making a signal.

Love

Davu's eyes go wide and her attack falters. She drops back and becomes the Verdant Spire.

Wait

You stand squared off, but she isn't moving. Perhaps she understands. You will find out now.

Water

You charge through Davu toward the Augur. Davu rotates, clearing your path.

The Augur is not prepared.

Strike at his head - Turn to 93

Hit him in gut - Turn to 100

85 - Darting Crustacean

Almost as quickly as she moves to attack, you slip away. But she presses on. You raise your blade to block her next blow, but it doesn't come where you are expecting. The blade sweeps in from the side and crashes into you, throwing fragments onto the ground.

You have seen this style, or a clumsier version of it. This is Davu. She will die to protect the Augur, because she believes he protects the Settlement.

She moves in to strike again.

Call to Davu - Turn to 51

Duck below the attack - Turn to 83

Roll backward out of range and then forward again to strike - Turn to 89

86 - Slapping the Windmill

You slap at the blade with your open hand to deflect it, while keeping your weapon at the ready. A shower of black falls from your hand. You're certain she has severed part of a finger, or what would have been your finger.

Signal to Davu - Turn to 84

Strike Davu with the flat of your blade - Turn to 92

Surge forward to too-close range - Turn to 95

87 - An Unwise Strategy

You shove the guardian aside using brute force. She spins absorbing your energy and the blade comes crashing back into you. Your skin cracks under the blade and bits of you fall to the ground.

You have seen this style, or a clumsier version of it. This is Davu. She will die to protect the Augur, because she believes he protects the Settlement.

She moves in to strike again.

Call to Davu - Turn to 51

Duck below the attack - Turn to 83

Slide to the side to avoid the direct assault - Turn to 91

88 - The Verdant Spire

You hold your blade up and wait for the attack. Your weapon, you notice, has become part of you. Encrusted with the same black mineral that now covers your body.

You stare at the guardian for a time. Then she charges. She is impossibly fast, and the movements of her blade are unexpected. She cuts an arc through the air bringing her blade toward your head.

Deflect her blow - Turn to 80

Strike at the guardian - Turn to 90

89 - Dowak Returns

You roll backwards until your feet find the ground, and then you plant them and prepare to dive forward. Davu seems momentarily off guard.

Stop and signal to Davu - Turn to 84

Strike Davu with the flat of your blade - Turn to 92

90 - Level the Hedges

You bring the blade across at the neck of the guardian. She bends forward and your attack glides over her head. She pushes up from the ground. You know a blow will come soon.

Quickly retreat backward out of range - Turn to 85

Push the guardian aside and lunge for the Augur - Turn to 87

91 - Water Rolling off the Tableland

She thrusts, but you are no longer there. You turn and flow into another stance, positioning your own weapon to threaten.

She sensed you might do this and hasn't fully committed herself. Davu shifts and the True Blade sweeps in an arc toward you.

Slap the flat of the blade with your palm - Turn to 86

Roll backward out of range and then forward again to strike - Turn to 89

92 - Swatting the Gnat

You bring the flat of your blade down onto Davu's shoulder, but she is no longer there. She intends to impale you.

Duck below the attack - Turn to 83

Slide to the side to avoid the direct assault - Turn to 91

Surge forward to too-close range - Turn to 95

93 - Level the Hedges

You bring the blade across and it bites into the Augur's skull. He lets out a strange groaning hiss.

The crowd gasps.

But he is far from mortally wounded. He grabs your wrist with a strength you could not have imagined.

Signal for Davu's help - Turn to 96

Twist free and escape - Turn to 98

94 - The Biting Gale

You turn and charge the Augur. He was not expecting it. You exchange blows. He hardly bothers to block your attacks. After a few of them it becomes clear that he is feeding off of them. Off of you.

You stagger backward toward the stone desperately fending off blows.

Then the Augur stumbles forward and falls face-first. Davu lay on the ground, covered in blood and holding his ankle.

Impale the Augur through the back - Turn to 99

95 - Gust Topples the Altar

You surge forward. Your bodies collide. Your daughter's attack falters, but she remains upright. Her weapon falls the ground. Davu twists and slides off of your form. She lies crumpled on the ground bleeds from a dozen wounds that your jagged body has inflicted.

Attack the Augur - Turn to 94

Return to the portal - Turn to 97

96 - Help

You hold up your free hand and signal, but it soon collapses. The Augur is doing something to you, and you can feel your span ending.

Davu strikes the Augur in the back. He screams. His span has ended sooner.

The Augur is dead. You carry his corpse back through the portal.

From the other side, you signal toward Davu and your granddaughter.

Love

The doorway closes.

THE END

97 - Return

What have you done? You should not have come back to the Tableland. If the Augur has your corpse, you will have given him exactly what he needs to perpetuate the cycle. Perhaps a few discarded fragments aren't enough.

You hurry back to The Standing Stone. The Augur gives chase. You may not make it.

Turn and attack the Augur - Turn to 94

Try to get through - Turn to 98

98 - The Cycle

You twist and your wrist and hand shatter and fall to the ground. You are free. You hurry back to The Standing Stone. The Augur catches you at the threshold and puts your own blade through you. You collapse through the stone and back into that dim and strange world.

You hear the Augur commanding someone through the portal.

Will the cycle continue? The world fades before you have an answer.

THE END

99 - The Killing Blow

You bring your blade down between the Augur's shoulder blades and he dies.

You carry his corpse back through the portal.

From the other side, you signal toward Davu and your granddaughter.

Love

The doorway closes.

You don't know if Davu survives, but the cycle is broken.

THE END

100 - Bird Opens Seed

Your fist collides with the Augur's abdomen. He collapses in a heap. You tear his robe away, revealing his two additional arms. He clutches weakly at you as you roll him into his stomach.

You thrust your jagged blade between his shoulders.

The Augur is dead. You carry his corpse back through the portal.

From the other side, you signal toward Davu and your granddaughter.

Love

The doorway closes.

The cycle is broken.

THE END