



CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE ∞

THE DEXTRUS OF TEMPUS

BY WESLEY WHEN



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WRITTEN FOR MS. TOMAYKO'S
8TH PERIOD CREATIVE WRITING CLASS

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for the Princess

WARNING!!!!

Do not read this book straight through from beginning to end! These pages contain many different adventures you can go on as you adventure in a new world that you discover after travelling through the Cave of Time.

From time to time as you read along, you will be asked to make a choice. Your choice may lead to success or disaster! The adventures you take are a result of your choice. You are responsible because you choose! After you make your choice follow the instructions to see what happens to you next.

Remember—you cannot go back! Think carefully before you make a move! Make the wrong choice, and one mistake can be your last ... but make the **right** choice and it may lead you to fame and fortune!



1

Possibly this will be one of your best vacations ever. Once a year, you visit the State Park. You're very excited at the prospect of being able to explore the wilderness.

And now, you've found a perfect cave to investigate! Inside, you notice that the small path leading into it goes actually much deeper than it looked from the outside. Winding down the dark path, the darkness almost makes you turn back, when you suddenly see something ever so small — a slight flash in front of you. At first, you think it's probably a firefly, but then you remember that fireflies don't really exist here this time of year. Strangely, unlike a firefly, the yellow light brightens as you move further down the cave. You chase towards it, when suddenly it overwhelms you!

Temporarily blinded, you blink a few times. When your vision clears, you realize that you are in a lush green field — nothing like the forest that was there when you entered the cave!

The field is filled with many wildflowers; lupins and foxgloves everywhere. You see a castle (!) to the northeast, up on a hill. A small trail pointing south-east leads into a misty valley.

If you follow the trail into the valley, turn to page 22.

If you go up the hill, right towards the castle, turn to page 23.

2

Suddenly disoriented, you shake your head — and notice that you're in a very familiar-looking cave. You can tell because you recognize the bright yellow light you saw before, but this time it is taking the vague form of a human being that says, *you shouldn't be here. This is not the right path for you. You must start on the right path.*

"But how will I know that I'm on the right path?" The being of light extends its index finger and points at you. *You will know.*

When the time is right, you must look at the route you have chosen and look at it with remorse, the being says.

"Isn't there something else I could do?" you ask. The being responds, *there is an alternate path. It does not start out right, but it ends well as well.*

"This is very confusing," you say, "are there any flags that could be used to point my way?" The being stays silent, but starts to pulsate red. Perhaps it is getting angry.

You are confused because you do not see. You must learn to see the right spots just before the end. The light-being grows bright, completely blinding you, and then...

You're back in the field you emerged from when the adventure started. "Well, if at first you don't succeed, try again," goes the proverb...

If you follow the path right down into the valley, turn to page 22.

If you go up the hill, right towards the castle, turn to page 23.



3

Duty done, you return to the princess's castle victoriously. Not only are you covered in jewels, but you have a scale from the dragon to prove that you have slain it. You arrive to the sound of trumpets.

But the only thing you truly have eyes for is the princess, her golden hair glistening in the sunlight, as she beams at you. "My hero!" she states, "May I kiss you?"



*If you kiss the princess,
turn to page 15.*

*If you allow the prin-
cess to kiss you, turn
to page 15.*

4

Hoping that the minotaur isn't too bright, you try to hide behind a nearby rock, hoping to avoid his deadly axe. Your results are nowhere near excellent, though — the beast sees you and grabs you by your collar, lifting you straight into the air. You've been captured!

The minotaur drags you through the maze toward its lair. Your heart pounds as you see the bones of its previous victims strewn about the floor. It throws you on the ground and licks its lips in anticipation of eating you for dinner, and you cast your eyes about the chamber trying to think of a way to escape.

The monster's muscles ripple as it lifts its deadly weapon above its head. In desperation, you point over its shoulder and yell, "Behind you!" The minotaur turns its head, and you leap to your feet and run past it. You can't believe it — the oldest trick in the book worked! This time, you manage to outrun the minotaur and escape the maze.

Once you're sure he's not following, you stop and exhale a big sigh of relief. Feeling lucky to be alive, you continue on the path, which now leads toward a dark forest. You also seem to be much closer to that gleaming castle you saw earlier; it's now just up a small slope to the right.

*If you enter the castle,
turn to page 7.*

*If you go down the
path, entering the dark
forest, turn to page 18.*



5

Suddenly you're in a dark, torch-lit cavern. There is a grouchy-looking dwarf staring right at you, who starts talking before you can say anything. "Let me guess, the wizard sent you here to retrieve his silly ring. What you don't know is that his memory is atrocious. He asked me to look at it 26 years ago, and I returned it the next day! But every time he can't find the ring, he accuses me of stealing it and teleports some poor sap like you to question me. Well, his stupid teleportation spell only lasts for a few minutes, so you might as well make yourself at home."

True enough, soon you are back in the wizard's cottage. "Did you get my ring, boy?" he yells. You take a closer look at him, and see a glint inside his beard. He yells more. "Have you gone deaf?"

If you reach out and grab the glint, turn to page 2.

If you point your finger right at the glint, turn to page 27.

6

Reluctantly, the princess follows you inside the dark entrance. She doesn't seem very happy; her sad expression makes you think thoughts of Xanadu again.

But just as you're thinking of turning around and going back, you see some rock formations that make you realize that you're inside the same cave that brought you here to this world in the first place. In fact, you think you can see the faintest glimmer of yellow light far, far down the tunnel. Your heart beats faster as you realize that this means that you'll be able to go back to your own time soon. Feeling quite anxious about it, you animatedly try to explain everything to the princess, including describing the modern world that you came from and all the wonderful things it has to offer.

Although she seems fascinated about the descriptions of your home, you can tell she doesn't quite understand everything you're saying, and she is unsure about whether she should come with you. On one hand, you're the brave hero who killed the dragon and rescued her! On the other hand, she doesn't want to leave her homeland.

You and the princess discuss the dilemma at length, and in the end, she throws up her hands and says that you'll just have to decide for her. Should she return to the kingdom she left behind? Or would it be more upright to stay with her rescuer?

If you insist that she come with you, turn to page 32.

If you let her leave, turn to page 2.



7

Gold curtains gleam in the light. Everywhere you look, you see treasure and precious jewels. After wandering a bit, you hear voices coming from a room in the distance, discussion about a powerful wizard of some sort? Quickly, you move towards it, doing your best to stay in the shadows. As you look through the door, you are amazed to see a blond-haired princess sitting on the throne. You start to step back into the shadows when she calls for you. You step forward and bow, awkwardly. She gives a giggle and waves away some guards that have been closely following you since you entered the room.

“Good sir, I can see you are a brave soul, for we have never seen one attired like you before,” says the princess. “A fierce dragon plagues our land of Xanadu; please help us slay it or scare it off.”



If you ignore the princess and track down the wizard, turn to page 25.

If you do the right thing and accept the dragonslaying quest, turn to page 19.

8

Advancing to the other side of the treasure room is not easy. Carefully avoiding the largest items as you examine ornate artworks and beautiful textiles, you finally reach the other side of the room after what seems like an agonizing amount of climbing and side-stepping.

But now that you're on the other side, you see the source of the light.

It's coming from a small object lying on a velvet pillow — a golden ring.

Marveling at the ring's beauty, you read an inscription on the inside: it's called the Dextrus of Tempus. You can feel magic power emanating from the ring and are about to slip it on your finger when, to your surprise, the harp whispers to you! “Be careful, my lord! That ring is an item of great arcane might, but its power is known to be very unpredictable. It can make you grow or shrink; it could turn your enemies to stone or you into a mouse. It might randomly pour forth a stream of gold, or butterflies instead. Many unsuspecting souls have fallen victim to its hexes. It could even suddenly transport you to a different place — or time! Do you see that trap door beneath you, to the right? That must lead to the lower levels! Leave me here, forget the ring and go there!”

The harp's message makes you suspicious. You could do as it says and leave the ring alone...or throw caution to the wind and put it on.

If you listen to the harp, turn to page 20.

If you turn down the harp's warning and put the ring on, turn to page 2.





9

Boasting proudly, you tell the young female blacksmith about your quest to find and slay the dragon. She listens with great interest, although she grimaces every time you talk about the princess. She is also very inquisitive; she asks many intelligent, probing questions, and while you try to deflect them, you can tell that she isn't satisfied. Nevertheless, after you say that you want to be prepared for anything, she beams a little smile, and hands you a magical sword, calling it a "gift." She then suggests that you might want to visit a wizard that lives in the foggy marsh right outside of the village.



If you decide that confronting the dragon directly is the best idea, turn to page 11.

If you think that talking to the wizard might be useful, turn to page 25.

10

Magic harps apparently aren't all alike, thankfully, because unlike in the old stories, this one isn't obnoxiously shouting to alert the giant to your presence! The hallway you're in leads to an ornate door, which you open.

Behind the door lies a treasure chamber, filled with riches beyond your wildest imagination! Chests, silver coins, works of art, and fine jewelry fill the room. Since you're not here for petty personal gain (and you can't carry much anyway), you don't loot the room, but you do take just a few coins and gems as keepsakes. Surely the giant wouldn't notice a few things missing from this over-luxurious room?

Just as you're about to leave, you see a flash in the southwest corner of the chamber.

If you backtrack to the big red door (which way is it?), turn to page 20.

If you investigate the flash, turn to page 8.



11

No more dragging the plot around; it's time for you to confront the dragon. With a deep breath, you approach it in its lair. It stands up, flaps its long scaly wings and you feel a small twinge of fear. Then you remember the princess with her sun-washed hair, her beautiful pink smile, and her sweet giggle. For one moment, time seems to stand still as you thrust your magical sword into the horrible dragon. It roars and breathes fire, but you jump out of the way. You watch as it throws its head around, its roar thundering one last time, until it slumps to the ground. You have killed it! Hooray!



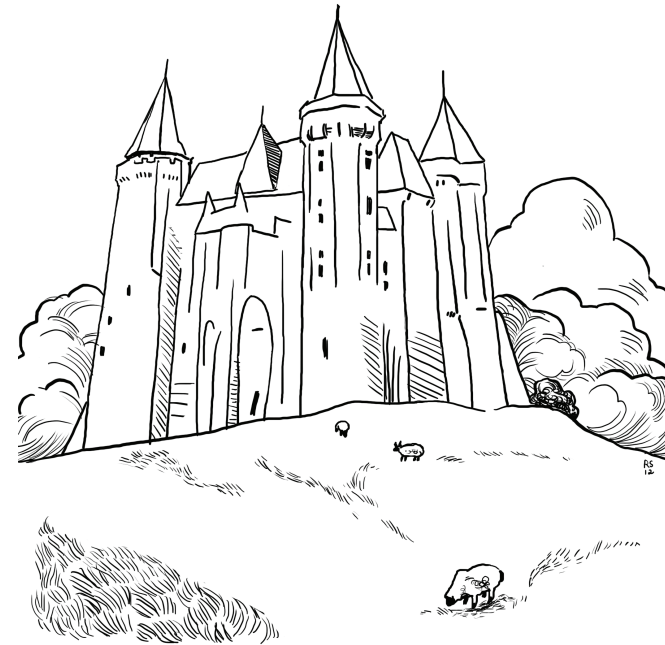
If you look around the dragon's lair, turn to page 16.

If you return right away to the castle, turn to page 3.

12

Straight ahead of you is a giant's castle, assuming that the sign to it saying "Giant's Castle" is not just a hoax. You'd prefer not to face the giant directly, so you ponder your options for sneaking in.

You see a flock of sheep grazing down the slope to your left — maybe you could hide yourself in the flock? You also see a small hole in the castle wall to your right.



If you go to the flock of sheep, turn to page 30.

If you try to sneak into the hole, turn to page 26.





13

No one really agrees on what a troll looks like (in modern times, that is). They're either "big and ugly," or "small and disgusting." The shadow looming over you now suggests the former.

This troll is huge! The club he is carrying looks very frightening. He lumbers up to you, his long arms dragging near the ground. Each step sounds like a clap of thunder as he gets closer and closer. The bridge shakes and trembles so much that you are starting to worry that the bridge is going to collapse before the troll can even reach you. Every instinct you have tells you to RUN! but for some reason, you stand your ground. Soon he arrives in front of you. You look up at a dirty morass of chest hair, and look up further to gaze into the troll's face. He lets out a long, huffy, and odorous breath.

"Who's that on my bridge?" he bellows, glaring straight down at you. "Run before I eat you." The part of your brain that is stopping you from running suddenly has vanished into thin air.

If you run back into the woods, turn to page 18.

If you run right between his legs, turn to page 21.

14

Out of the dungeons you go, leading the princess back out the dungeon and up the stone spiral staircase, expediently travelling as you both exit past the dragon's lair. She clings to you for safety, sending an electric tingle through you every time she squeezes your hand.

Before you can escape the castle entirely, you hear an ear-splitting roar and feel the ground rumble. The princess screams as the giant lumbers into view! He's easily twenty feet tall, and as he comes closer you can see that he is carrying a huge wooden club, which he brandishes menacingly at you. After all, you have invaded his complex, slain his pet dragon, and stolen his treasure; he's not happy about it!

You grab the princess by the arm and run faster than you've ever run in your life! At long last, after crossing a bridge, you pause, panting, and see that the giant has given up the chase. You, the princess, and the entire kingdom are safe!

While catching your breath, you think about what to do next. You can return with the princess to her castle, of course, which is quite a while away to the north. However, there's also an eerily familiar cave entrance a short distance away to the northwest, which the princess seems a bit apprehensive about.

If you return to the castle, turn to page 3.

If you insist on entering the cave, turn to page 6.



15

Every single wish of yours is fulfilled right at this moment. Your lips touch the princess's and you feel fireworks. The whole room begins to spin, and you find yourself lost in the feeling. She knows the real you, the true you, who was a hero at heart. Inside of you beats the heart of a legend. When the kiss breaks, everyone applauds. There is much rejoicing and happiness because the evil dragon is dead. The princess throws a huge banquet, and you get to see the kingdom of Xanadu at its happiest moment. As the night draws to a close, you walk out into the moonlit garden with the princess.

"Oh, brave warrior, we cannot thank you enough for all that you have done for our little kingdom. I can only invite you to stay with us. Will you stay?" she asks, looking at you longingly.



If you say "no" and search for the cave, turn to page 2.

If you decide to stay, turn to page 31.

16

Hidden in the corner of the dragon's lair is a trap door. Opening it, you find a narrow spiral staircase leading downwards. You're unsure what to expect, but you climb down anyway.

At the bottom are the castle's dungeons. Looking through portcullises into the cells, you see the skeletal remains of the dungeon's unfortunate prisoners. In the very last cell, though, there's someone alive — it's the princess, who really had been kidnapped by the dragon! Even in a dirty cell, she's radiantly beautiful, and your heart skips a beat. You find the keys nearby and quickly open her cell door. She exclaims "My hero!" and throws her arms around you in gratitude. Much as you'd like to bask in her admiration, you force yourself to be calm and remind her that you still have to escape.

You can leave the dungeons to the west, or you can try to find a shortcut through a dark tunnel in the northwest — although you'll have to push through what looks like a nasty, sticky cobweb.



If you go back to the castle, turn to page 14.

If you risk going through the cobweb, turn to page 6.





17

Maybe taking this path wasn't the best choice you could have made, since it seems to go on for quite a while. Now, you find yourself in a village. People come out to gawk at you, but you just smile.

There are whispers as you walk through town, presumably all about the new stranger (you!). The sound of metal hitting metal distracts you, and you walk towards the open building where all the sounds seem to be coming from. This place is undoubtedly a smithy; the air smells charred and heat radiates from the doorway. Looking through the open door, you see the blacksmith's silhouette against a glowing forge. The smith is hammering out a long sword with a very intricate design at the tilt of the blade. While you continue to stare with interest, the smith senses your presence and stops.

You are stunned as the blacksmith turns around to notice that it is a woman! She sets down the sword she is working on, raises an eyebrow, and looks at your strange clothing.

Now that your eyes are better adjusted to the darkness of the smithy, you can tell that her dark hair is tied up in a small bun in the back. "Come to buy a sword?" she says, smiling right at you. So...

...you panic and run away. Turn to page 12.

...you attempt to talk with the blacksmith. Turn to page 9.

18

Striding quickly along the path, you enter a dark forest. The sound of a nearby creek comforts you in a relaxing way. After walking for a mile or so upstream following the burbling of the creek, you see several wagons up ahead through the trees. Entering the encampment, you meet a band of nomads dressed in brightly colored tunics and wearing fancy jewelry. The leader of the nomads, clad in green with golden stripes, comes over and addresses you.

"We are Gypsies," he says, "and you are welcome to stay with us tonight. There are many dangerous creatures, here in the lands of Xanadu. Of course, if you must continue on your journey, we will not hinder you."

You make your decision quickly. What did you decide?

If you decided to hunker down for the night, turn to page 24.

If you left the camp to go further upstream along the path, turn to page 17.



19

Exiting from the elegant castle, you think about this new mission that you have just accepted. There isn't much information to go on; all you know, based on what you have been told, is that the dragon makes its roost somewhere at the top of the mountain. Exactly how to get there is still a question, so you will have to figure that out for yourself. The more you think about it, the more doubt starts to creep into your thoughts, but you try to set those doubts aside and tell yourself that you will be brave. You will change this world by and saving the princess's kingdom.

As you walk you notice the beautiful kingdom. The fields are perfectly plowed, and your heart skips as you think about the beautiful princess. She seems very popular with her subjects.

In a few hours, you come to a fork in the road. Up ahead you can see a sign: "TROLL BRIDGE." You chuckle a bit, saying "Gosh, I bet there's an evil troll up ahead," as you wax sarcastic.

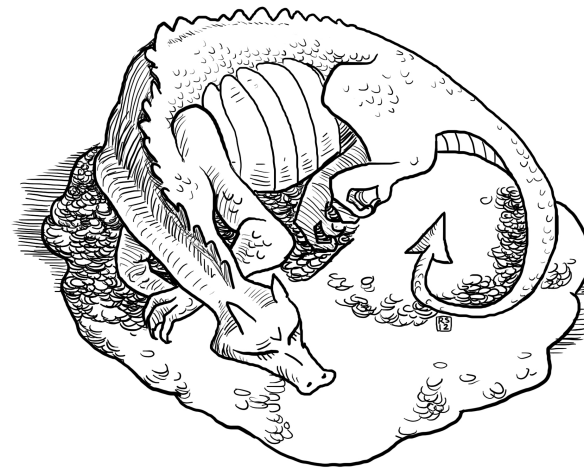
If you take the left path which appears to lead into some woods, turn to page 18.

If you take the other path to the bridge, turn to page 13.

20

Pushing the door open, you see a huge dragon sleeping in the middle of a giant chamber. Almost by reflex, its eyes flick open. You are transfixed by fear as it gazes straight at you. Then, it raises its neck, flaps its wings, and snorts smoke.

This must be the dragon that has terrorized the kingdom! You dodge behind a nearby pillar as it lunges towards you. The dragon's head hits the pillar with such force that the pillar snaps in two like a twig. Unfortunately for the dragon, a large stone slab that is part of the ceiling lands square on its head...rendering it unconscious. Not how you thought things would go, but you're not exactly complaining as you find a sword amid the treasure and behead the beast. Now what?



If you return to the castle up in the mountains, turn to page 3.

If you venture down into the castle's dungeons, turn to page 16.



21

Under his smelly crotch? Really? Well, it's your funeral. Holding your breath, you pretend to turn around to get off the bridge — and then you spin around again and run!

The troll is suddenly silent, as if completely caught by surprise. Then, behind you, you hear a large roar. Thankfully, as big as he is, he doesn't move very fast. You hear the sound of someone screaming as you continue over the other side of the bridge. Finally you reach the other side and continue to run for a minute to maintain some distance. Stopping to catch your breath, you realize that you were the one doing the screaming. You glance back and the troll seems to have given up. The path you're on continues forward, but there appears to be a small detour to the right.



If you continue down the path, turn to page 25.

If you decide to take the detour, turn to page 17.

22

As you descend the long winding path toward the misty valley, you see several scattered farmhouses intermixed with barns. Standing at the doorway of a small farmhouse are two middle-aged farmers, who eye you curiously as you approach.

You strike up a conversation with them. They talk at length about the castle atop the mountains. They tell you about the princess in the castle, and about the fearsome dragon that plagues the kingdom, and how the princess is searching for a hero who will slay the dragon. They talk about a giant, who has another castle ruling over a neighboring kingdom that is next to the large forest. After the exposition they return to their work and you continue west along the road.

The road eventually fades away into a large sandy section of the valley.

The bottom of the valley is eerily quiet, with no signs of human inhabitation. You cautiously make your way between numerous huge boulders, wondering where you are, when you are taken aback by an exceedingly loud grunting noise. You're not sure what it is, but it sounds like it's coming from behind some large rocks to the southeast.



If you continue to head west along the path, turn to page 17.

If you investigate the sounds coming from the southeast, turn to page 28.





23

After a long walk, the sun gradually begins to disappear behind the shadow of the castle. There are strangely-dressed people scurrying about. Once in a while someone will stop to stare at you and whisper.

It suddenly occurs to you that these people are dressed as if they were in the Middle Ages! Could you be dreaming? It's possible, but you feel wide awake. As you get closer you can see guards at the castle gate. They eye you, and you can tell they are taking an offensive posture. You give them a friendly wave, and they still stare, but as you walk through the open gate, they do not stop you. Now the castle is up ahead. Your stomach begins to jump a little. No one is making you go in, and you can still turn back. Everyone is still staring at you and your modern clothes as you try to think.



If you reconsider and go back to the dirt path, turn to page 22.

If you forge right on ahead into the castle, turn to page 7.

24

Accepting the Gypsies' invitation, you join them for a delicious supper of stewed vegetables and roasted oxtail. After dinner, the Gypsies extemporize festive songs and dances around the fire. Eventually, you drift to sleep under the open sky, wrapped in a warm patchwork quilt that the clan lends you to sleep with.

When you awake in the morning, however, the joyous mood of the Gypsies from the previous night has disappeared. Their leader tells you grimly that they have terrible news: that some time last evening, the dragon kidnapped the beautiful princess of Xanadu!

You ask how you can help. The Gypsy chief looks skeptical, but he tells you that the dragon's lair is to the northwest and offers to lend you a fine broadsword if you are determined to fight the creature.

He also mentions that there is a giant's castle to the west, and that inside its vast treasure room there is rumored to be a powerful magical artifact called the Dextrus of Tempus. The Gypsy leader knows very little about the nature of the artifact, but says it might be worth searching for it.

If you head northwest, to where the dragon's lair is, turn to page 11.

If you decide to head towards the giant's castle, turn to page 12.





25

Emerging out of the fog, you behold a strange purple hut, which must be a wizard's cottage. You rap on the door, and a voice from far inside the hut yells, "Bring me the Dextrus of Tempus!"



If you give up on the wizard and go to attack the dragon, turn to page 11.

If you ask "What is the Dextrus of Tempus?", turn to page 29.



26

Emerging out of a short passage, you find yourself in a hallway lined with fancily-decorated tapestries. Exploring for a few minutes leads you to a door with soft, beautiful music coming from beyond it. Opening the door carefully, you see an incredible sight: a fine, golden harp sitting on a mahogany table, playing a song without anyone strumming its strings!

You grab the golden harp, which stops playing when you touch it, and then you leave through a wooden door you see on the other side of the room. "Just don't yell out to the giant, like in some other stories," you mutter to the harp as you exit the room.

To your astonishment, the harp replies, "Yes, my lord."

You're in a long hallway leading south as far as you can see, but ahead of you, you can see a big red door to the west.

"The treasure room is to the south, my lord," the harp says. You're not sure if you can trust it.

If you go south, turn to page 10.

If you go west, turn to page 20.



27

“I think that there’s something inside your beard there,” you say as you point to a shiny ring, partially obscured by his beard, hanging around the wizard’s neck.

“Great Scott, the Dextrus of Tempus has returned!” the wizard exclaims. “I understand everything now! You must be an even more powerful wizard than I! And you are on a quest to kill the dragon, O Great One? I simply must lend you the Dextrus of Tempus to help protect you!” He takes off the chain and thrusts it into your hand. “No, I insist! Just make sure to return it to me when you’re done! Do you need a magic sword? I can conjure one up for you if you don’t have one!” Ignoring your protests, he pushes you out the door. You find yourself alone again...and confused.



If you try putting on the ring, turn to page 2.

If you think right now would be a good time to confront the dragon, turn to page 11.

28

Treading carefully, you creep around a boulder to investigate the strange grunting sound, and see a monstrous creature carrying a gargantuan axe. It has the body of a man, but the head of a bull — it’s a minotaur! Raising its weapon, it snorts and bellows angrily as you turn and run.

As you flee in terror, the minotaur chases you through the field of boulders, steadily coming closer. The boulders become larger and grouped more tightly together, until you realize that you are running through some sort of maze! Soon, you find yourself trapped — you’re in a dead end with only one exit, the one you came in from!

Wait — is that a narrow entrance to your left? You could risk slipping through a cluster of tight rocks, hoping it leads into a cave, or you could lie down behind a stone and try to hide from the horrible beast.

Make your decision quick; the minotaur is just behind you!



If you lie down close to the ground, turn to page 4. *If you run left, into the cave, turn to page 2.*





29

Reservedly, you yell, “I have no knowledge of this ‘Dextrus of Tempus.’ What is it?” You hear footsteps approaching, and suddenly the door swings open, revealing a man with a wild white beard.

“The Dextrus of Tempus is only one of the most powerful magical artifacts in existence! It manifests itself in the form of a ring, like one would wear on one’s hand, except that its magic is so strong that wearing it would have completely unpredictable effects! However, it protects against evil magic, and enhances my own. There is a dwarf named Grouchy, who has stolen it from me. You must recover it! I cannot leave this house without it. Do you know how much evil magic is out there? Too much! Much too much! Just a moment, I’ll send you right to Grouchy!”

You just nod. This wizard could be crazy. If he is, he might just get you killed if you try to track down his ring. On the other hand, if the ring really does protect against evil magic, it might have its uses.

If you are mesmerized by the wizard’s beard, turn to page 27.

If you accept the mission to find the Dextrus of Tempus, turn to page 5.

30

Sitting on the ground near the flock is a discarded sheepskin. You snatch it up, wrapping it around your extremities and your core body as an extemporaneous disguise — maybe you can sneak into the castle when the flock is brought inside!

Trying to blend in with the flock, you manage to get close to the castle undetected, but then a sudden fog forms around you. It’s so thick you can’t see your hand in front of your face, and after a few minutes of wandering aimlessly, you admit you’re hopelessly lost and throw off your covering. You’re not even sure if you’re inside or outside the castle complex. The lack of visibility makes you anxious, as all you can see is the gravel path at your feet and you have no idea if the giant is anywhere nearby.

Then, faintly, you can hear music. It’s hard to tell where it is, but you think the source might be up and to the right of you. You could try to find the music, or you could continue down the path.

If you go further down the path, turn to page 25.

If you try to follow the sound of the music, turn to page 26.



31

“Xanadu is a magnificent kingdom,” you say to the princess, “I can’t think of anywhere — or anywhen — else I would rather stay.” She squeals in joy, something that makes your heart skip a beat. Of course, you knew right away what your answer was going to be. This is the life you want — to live with the beautiful and amazing princess. You gaze into her eyes lovingly, and she gazes back. Any thoughts you had of returning to your own time (or is it your own world?) are instantly forgotten, completely cast out of your mind. You want to stay in Xanadu for the rest of your life.

Two weeks later, you and the princess (whom you learn is named Elizabeth) are married. The ceremony is the biggest the kingdom had ever seen. Invitations were spread far and wide, including many characters that you met along your adventures. Among the throngs of spectators you notice a grouchy dwarf, a kindly blacksmith, a singing harp, a hairy troll, a fierce minotaur, a green-clad man of the forest, and even a wizard who is still muttering about “The Dextrus of Tempus.” They all cheer as you marry Elizabeth, your true love, the fairest woman in all the land.

Your marriage is a long and happy one, and your kingdom prospers and grows under your reign, which lasts for decades and decades. You never think about the Cave of Time ever again!

The End!

32

Emerging from the cave, you and the princess blink in the bright sunshine. After a few minutes of adjusting your eyes to the sunlight, you examine your surroundings — you seem to be back in the State Park! At first, you can’t believe you’re actually back in your own place and time, but when you find the ranger station at the park entrance, you know it’s real. The princess is amazed by all of the cars driving in and out of the parking lot — and the other park visitors are bewildered by the strange “costume” the princess is wearing!

Ignoring the stares from the crowd, you lead the perplexed princess back to civilization and your home.

You delight in showing the princess — whom you learn is named Elizabeth — the technological wonders of the modern world: computers, airplanes, and especially televisions.

Though she misses her homeland greatly at first, she gradually comes to love life with you in your world. For your part, you sometimes also miss the land of Xanadu, the thrill of fighting a fierce dragon or escaping from a giant — but you’re happy to have traded all the wonders of the past for a life with Elizabeth.

And, in fact, you and Elizabeth live happily ever after.

The End