

Penult Manual

You are an ordinary resident in the town of Acadia in the kingdom of Faradur. Recently, the land has been overrun by hordes of fell creatures from the Shadow Realm. These incursions have happened in the past, but never in such numbers, nor for any sustained period of time.

A few days ago, you had a dream that you were visited by a traveler from the magical Fey Realm that took the form of a small dragon. In the dream, you intuitively understood that it chose you to bond with in order to accomplish some unknown greater purpose.

When you woke up, you discovered that at least part of your dream was true: the fey dragon companion was real!

The following day, a messenger arrived, delivering a message for you along with a small amount of gold:

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I hope this letter finds you well. I do not yet know your identity; only that you are the champion chosen by the Fey Realm to help us in our time of need. There is much I wish to impart.

As you no doubt know, our fair land has been beset by fell creatures from the Shadow Realm. While such incursions have occurred throughout the Kingdom's history, they have been of late greatly increasing in frequency and numbers. My sages have not been able to determine the cause, and it is all my forces can do to keep our settlements safe. The roadways are overrun, and travel only happens when the need is great and in large numbers for safety.

This dire situation has given me little choice: I have asked for the assistance of the Fey Realm in the hope that one of their number can find a suitable champion in the same way that my own fey companion Rufus picked me long ago.

If this letter reaches you, then my messenger has identified you as the chosen champion. Arm yourself, and explore the world. Seek out the cause of our troubles. Build up your strength of arms and your new magical abilities imparted to you by your fey companion. In the pages that follow, I will give you some information about the land and the dangers you will likely face.

Good luck! The fate of our land is in your hands.

Avalina Godfrey, Queen of Faradur

## Fey Companion

Most of my subjects do not understand Rufus's true nature, assuming that he is just an ordinary cat that serves as my familiar. In reality, the relationship is more complicated than that. He is the source of my power, and I of his. Your own fey companion will likely assume a different form, but the form does not determine its power. It will grow in power with you as your own skills and experience increase.

Since your fey companion exists between both realms, it cannot be easily killed in ours. If it is defeated in combat, it will merely be banished from our realm for a brief period of time.

## Training

You will need to practice your combat abilities and magic as you explore the land. You will also eventually need to find trainers to help hone specific techniques. I can help with some of the basics, but at a certain point you will need to seek out specialists to further train these and other necessary skills.

**Strength:** This represents not only your physical might, but also your prowess in hand-to-hand combat, as well as your ability to withstand the blows of your enemies. As your strength increases, your fey companion's melee abilities will similarly increase.

**Dexterity:** This represents your hand-eye coordination, as well as your ability to dodge traps and other hazards. Dexterity is important for accuracy when using ranged weapons. As your dexterity increases, your fey companion's accuracy with their magical attacks will also increase.

**Intelligence:** This represents your memory and mental discipline, and affects your connection to the Fey Realm, which, in turn, is needed for casting spells. As your intelligence increases, the power of your fey companion's magical abilities will increase as well.

## Cities and Towns

There are many cities and towns to be found in Faradur. The majority of these lie on the mainland, while some are only reachable via ship.

Due to the incursions from the Shadow Realm, many items normally found in these settlements are in short supply. Weapons and armor are used by those defending the residents. Those which may be found will have a high cost. The disruption of trade routes means that you may

have to travel to several settlements to find the supplies that you need. While you are there, take the time to speak with the townsfolk. Many will have information that could be useful to you.

## Merchants

Various types of shoppes may be found in cities and towns. Many of them sell goods that you will need for your journeys to come.

**Weapon Merchants:** While you can fashion a staff for yourself from a sturdy branch for free, you should purchase better weapons once you are able to afford them. A mace is a simple weapon that will have more impact than a staff. Axes can be even more deadly in the hands of a skilled welder. Swords are the best melee weapons that you are likely to find in the cities of Faradur.

Do not forget to get a ranged weapon as well. The ability to attack foes from a distance may often make the difference between victory and defeat. Slings are common, and usually relatively inexpensive. Bows are much more costly, but are also much more effective.

**Armor Merchants:** Like weapons, good armor is in short supply due to the incursions, and prices are very high. Leather is the most common armor to be found, and while it is not as strong as other types, it is a lot better than no armor at all. Chain armor is made from interlocking metal rings, and it can turn more blows than simple leather. Plate armor is highly prized, and is generally very hard to find even under normal circumstances. Finding a vendor may be easier than finding enough gold to commission a suit, however!

**Grocers:** In addition to common grocery items, these merchants can sell you trail rations that will stay preserved and keep you fed for long journeys. Definitely do not neglect to stock up on several of these if you are traveling far from home. Grocery shoppes can usually be identified by the iconic bread loaf picture on their shoppe signs.

**Healers:** Healers have the power to heal your bodily injuries and cure other ailments such as poison or disease. It is always best to know where the nearest healer may be found! The healer in my castle has been instructed to provide his services at no charge to you. Expect to pay a reasonable sum to healers found elsewhere, however.

**Potions:** There are some with skills at making magical brews that can cure ills in the same way that a healer might. Carrying some of these with you may save you when you are far away from a settlement with a skilled healer.

**Pubs:** While these establishments may not seem vital, they are gathering places for townsfolk who may have useful information. Talk to the bartenders, as they hear many things from travelers who stop in their establishments.

# Monsters

Many dangerous creatures are roaming freely throughout the kingdom. In addition to ones coming from the Shadow Realm, monsters native to Faradur that are normally kept at bay by our patrols have come out of hiding, and are attacking travelers.

**Shadow Rats:** These are unusually large and vicious rodents from the Shadow Realm. While more aggressive than their smaller cousins, any traveler with any reasonable skill at arms should be able to fend them off.

**Darklings:** These diminutive humanoids from the Shadow Realm may only barely be above knee height, but they know no fear and have some skill with their tiny spears.

**Goblins:** These small but agile humanoids are native to Faradur. While they are not especially tough, their skill with slings makes them more dangerous opponents than they might at first appear.

**Skeletons:** Animated long ago by dark magics, these mindless creatures seek only to destroy the living. Although they may appear to be frail and brittle, the animating magic gives them surprising resilience.

**Fire Beetles:** These magical, flaming insect-like Shadow Realm creatures are quite dangerous. They have the ability to shoot jets of fire at their opponents from afar.

**Trolls:** Since the patrols of the land have stopped, several of these large, brutish humanoids have taken residence under the bridges of the land, attacking hapless travelers. The bridge near my castle is usually safe, but care must be taken when crossing any others.

**Ogres:** Related to trolls, but much less clever, these monsters can be found wandering the wilderness instead of staking-out strategic locations.

**Shadow Orbs:** Beware of these terrifying creatures of dark energy. They are rightly feared for their ability to channel psychic energy to attack the minds of their opponents from afar.

**Heads:** These odd, floating creatures from the Shadow Realm appear to be gigantic disembodied heads. They have great magical powers, including the ability to teleport and to shoot bolts of lightning from their eyes to attack opponents.

**Giants:** While not clever or skilled with any kind of weapons, giants are dangerous due to their sheer size and strength. Try to fight them from a distance as much as possible to keep their powerful blows from landing on you.

## Magic and Spells

Upon gaining your fey companion, you should also have gained some minor proficiency at magic. Your abilities will grow in time with practice. You must also learn new spells when you can. This is done through your connection to the Fey Realm, though I cannot instruct you how exactly this will be accomplished in your case, as it differs for every person.

## Dungeons

These are great magical mazes built into the mountains themselves by a long-forgotten magical race. It is impossible to say what their initial purpose may have been, but they are places of great danger and possible reward now. Only a powerful few alive today have made it through one with their lives. If your investigations into the ills of your land take you to any dungeons, you will need to be very well-prepared for the foray if you have any hope of surviving the experience.

I'm afraid I do not have much information about what to expect in dungeons apart from the common stories you have likely heard yourself. There are said to be magical fountains and rooms full of treasures, but the levels are filled with strange monsters that never see the light of day, magical traps, and other hazards.

## Death and Dying

Through our shared connection to the Fey Realm, I have the ability to bring you back from the dead should you ever fall in combat. Be warned that this comes at a great cost, however: your mortal remains are lost, and you will inhabit a newly-reconstructed body with none of your worldly goods. All weapons, armor, gold, or other items will be lost with your original body should this ever happen. Take care to defend yourself and your life!