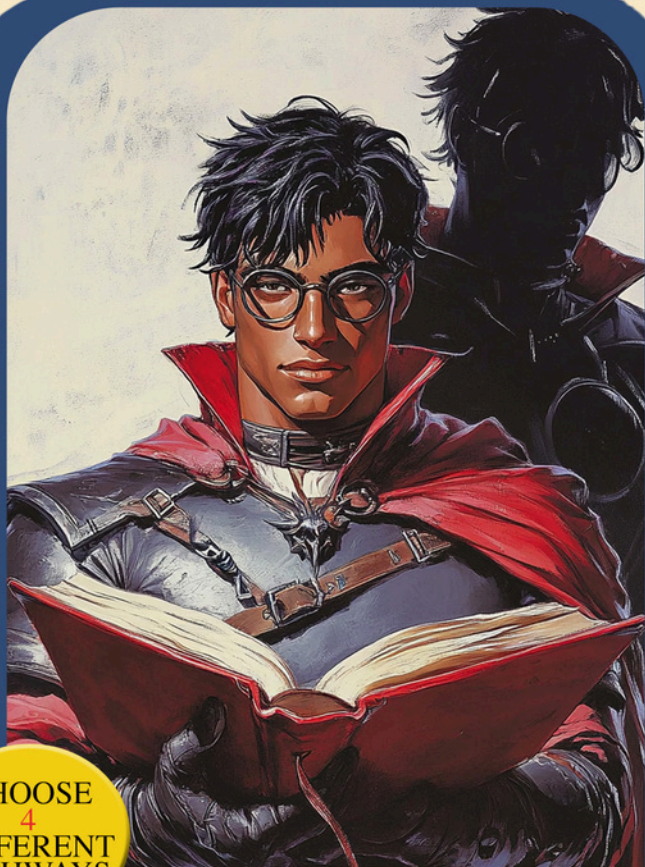


CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE®

THE TRIAL OF SHADOWS



CHOOSE
4
DIFFERENT
PATHWAYS

 **GROUPS**

© 2025 RIVERA & ZDANIO
PUBLISHING

THE TRIAL OF SHADOWS

Davrin Willow stood alone in the Umbral Reach, the wind a howling specter that tore at his tattered cloak and whipped his unkempt hair into his storm-gray eyes. Jagged crystalline spires stabbed upward from the cracked earth, catching the pallid light of Zephyros's twin moons and shattering it into fractured rainbows. The air reeked of ozone and decay, a bitter tang that clung to his throat. At the Reach's heart loomed the obsidian door, its surface a rippling abyss, whispering secrets in an alien tongue. His hands trembled—not from cold, but from memories heavy as a millstone.

Three years ago, Davrin had been the pride of Arcanum University, a light bringer whose power crackled like a storm. But grief and rage unleashed his light in a cataclysm, collapsing the atrium in fire and wind. Expelled, disgraced, he wandered Zephyros, a ghost seeking atonement. Now, the Shadow Sickness ravaged the realm, draining life and light. Legends spoke of this door as the key to a cure. Davrin pressed his palm to the obsidian, its heartbeat thrumming. Darkness swallowed him.

Light returned, blinding, in a chamber of mirrored crystal. Three Davrins emerged: Arrogant Davrin, robed in glowing runes, staff blazing; Broken Davrin, gaunt and whispering failure; Wise Davrin, scarred and steady. "Prove your worth," Arrogant Davrin sneered. A pedestal rose, bearing a runed chest. Davrin's light was gone, his well dry. Panic clawed his chest.

Choices:

Argue with Arrogant Davrin, demanding light. Turn to page 4.

Study the runes on the chest. Turn to page 6.

Ask Wise Davrin for guidance. Turn to page 8.

Smash the chest in frustration. Turn to page 10.



PRIDE'S ARENA

Davrin's fists clenched, nails biting flesh as Arrogant Davrin's smirk cut deeper than any blade. "You call me nothing?" he roared, voice raw with three years of survival in Zephyros's wilds. "I've fought, bled, endured without light—I'm no puppet of your pride!" Arrogant Davrin's laugh was a shard of glass, his staff flaring azure, casting stark shadows across the mirrored chamber. "Prove it, worm, or crawl away."

The mirrors warped, forming a jagged crystal arena, each facet reflecting Davrin's rage, fear, and buried shame. Broken Davrin shrank back, muttering, "You'll lose... always do..." Wise Davrin stood silent, his gaze a weight heavier than words.

Arrogant Davrin struck, his staff's arc trailing fire. Davrin dove, heat singeing his cloak, the acrid scent of burnt fabric stinging his nose.

Arcanum's training flickered back—footwork, instinct. He seized a crystal shard, its edge biting his palm, and hurled it, knocking the staff askew. Arrogant Davrin snarled, advancing, but Davrin tackled him, desperation clashing with polished skill. A blow slammed Davrin's jaw, stars bursting in his vision, but he pinned the staff, muscles screaming.

"Enough!" Wise Davrin's voice thundered. The arena froze, flames dying. Arrogant Davrin vanished, his laughter echoing. The chest glowed red, runes pulsing like a warning.

"Pride is a chain," Wise Davrin said, hand on Davrin's shoulder, his touch grounding. Broken Davrin whimpered, "Not enough..." The chest creaked open, revealing a silver key, its moonlit etchings shimmering like Lunara's glow. Davrin seized it, its warmth steadying his trembling hands. The mirrors dissolved into motes of light, and the floor dropped, plunging him into a void where shadows whispered his name.

Choices:

Use the key immediately. Turn to page 12.

Examine the key for clues. Turn to page 14.

Call Wise Davrin for advice. Turn to page 16.



THE PUZZLE

Davrin forced his breath to slow, Arrogant Davrin's taunts a distant buzz against the pounding of his heart. He knelt before the pedestal, the cold stone biting his knees, the chest's golden runes casting faint, dancing shadows across his scarred hands. They were Zephyrosian script, etched in memory by his mother Kaelis's stern lessons in their cramped village home, her voice sharp with exasperation as he'd pined for glyphs over books. "Light isn't everything, Davrin," she'd said, her eyes holding a quiet strength he'd ignored. Now, those lessons were a lifeline. He traced the runes: *Fortis intra est*—Strength lies within.

The words struck like a thunderclap, reverberating through the hollow where his light once burned. Not power, not flame—himself. The trial wasn't testing his lost gifts but what endured beneath the wreckage of his past. His fingers trembled, not with fear now, but with a fragile hope. He pressed his palms to the chest, not forcing, but offering—his flaws, his fight, his will to continue. A soft click echoed, sharp in the chamber's silence, and the lid sprang open, revealing a silver key, its surface swirling with moonlit patterns that pulsed like a heartbeat. Arrogant Davrin's scoff grated, "Mere luck, not skill." Broken Davrin's whispers wove despair, "It won't last..." But Wise Davrin's nod was a beacon, his scarred face lit with approval. The mirrors trembled, shattering into motes of light that stung Davrin's eyes. The floor vanished, and he fell, the key clutched tight, landing hard on a carpet of moss in a forest where blackened trees loomed like mourners under Zephyros's bruised sky.

Choices:

- A. Use the key immediately. Turn to page 12.
- B. Examine the key for clues. Turn to page 14.
- C. Call Wise Davrin for advice. Turn to page 16.



WISDOM'S COUNSEL

Davrin's gaze locked onto Wise Davrin, the only figure untainted by mockery or pity in the crystalline chamber's endless reflections.

"What is this trial?" he asked, voice rough with a plea he barely recognized. Wise Davrin's scar gleamed under the refracted light, a map of battles won and lessons carved in flesh. "The Shadow

Sickness is a mirror, Davrin," he said, his voice steady as Zephyros's ancient stones. "It shows what you fear to face—yourself, stripped of light. This chest, this place, tests not your power but your truth." He gestured to the chest, its runes pulsing like a quiet heartbeat. "Trust what you know, not what you've lost." Davrin approached, heart pounding against ribs that felt too frail to contain it. The runes were Zephyrosian, Kaelis's teachings rising like a tide: *Fortis intra est*—Strength lies within. He shut his eyes, seeing not fire or wind, but a boy who'd dared to dream, who'd fallen, yet still stood. His hands met the chest, not with force but acceptance—his shame, his resilience, his humanity. A click sounded, clean and final, and the lid opened, revealing a silver key, its moonlit etchings swirling like Zephyros's twin moons in a dance of light and shadow.

"You begin to see," Wise Davrin said, his voice a quiet thunder that drowned Arrogant Davrin's snort and Broken Davrin's fading sigh. The chamber dissolved, mirrors collapsing into a storm of light. Davrin fell, the key's warmth anchoring him, and landed in a forest where blackened trees clawed at a sky heavy with unshed rain, the air thick with the Shadow Sickness's rot.

Choices:

Attack the figure. (Turn to page 22)

Demand answers. (Turn to page 24)



RAGE'S ECHO

Rage boiled in Davrin's chest, a wildfire fed by years of exile and shame. "Enough!" he roared, slamming his fists onto the chest.

Wood splintered, runes flaring red before dying, the chamber quaking as mirrors cracked, their shards falling like jagged tears.

Arrogant Davrin's laughter twisted into a snarl, Broken Davrin's whispers became wails, and Wise Davrin's gaze hardened, though his silence cut deeper than words. The pedestal sank, the chest crumbling to ash, and from its ruin rose a shadow-Davrin, wreathed in darkness, its hollow eyes burning with accusation.

"You break everything," it hissed, drawing a blade of coalesced night, cold as Zephyros's deepest winters. It lunged, the blade grazing Davrin's arm, a chill that numbed bone. He dove behind a mirror, its surface flashing his failure—Arcanum's rubble, screams, accusing eyes. The shadow struck again, and Davrin rolled, seizing a crystal shard, its edge drawing blood from his palm. He parried, each clash jarring his bones, driven by a spark of defiance that refused to gutter. He wasn't that failure—not anymore.

The shadow's relentless assault pressed him, its blade a whisper of death, until Wise Davrin's voice rang out: "Control, Davrin!" He ducked a swing, tackling the shadow, pinning it to the cracked floor. It dissolved, leaving a silver key, its faint glow pulsing like a dying star. The mirrors remained fractured, reflecting a scarred, weary Davrin. He took the key, its weight grounding him, and the floor fell away, dropping him into a forest where the Shadow Sickness's stench clung like a curse, black-veined trees groaning under Zephyros's storm-heavy sky.

Choices:

- A. Use the key immediately. Turn to page 12.
- B. Examine the key for clues. Turn to page 14.
- C. Call Wise Davrin for advice. Turn to page 16.



THE SILENT GORGE

The forest closed around Davrin like a shroud, its air thick with the Shadow Sickness's rot—decaying leaves, tar-like sap oozing from black-veined trees, and a faint, acrid bite that burned his lungs.

Twisted branches clawed at a sky bruised with storm clouds, Zephyros's twin moons barely piercing the gloom. Davrin gripped the silver key, its warmth a faint pulse against the cold dread knotting his gut. Every sound—a rustling leaf, a distant wail—set his nerves alight, the key's edges biting his palm. This was no forest, but a graveyard where life had surrendered to the plague's hunger.

A flicker of movement froze him. A figure emerged, a shadow made flesh—or un-flesh—her form a wavering silhouette of inky mist. Artemis Bellator, His companion in shadow form. Her sword of coalesced darkness gleamed, ready, her green eyes cutting through the haze. "Friend or foe?" she demanded.

"Lost," Davrin rasped, the key heavy in his grip. She solidified, edges sharpening. "Acceptable. I hunt the cure. The Sickness birthed me from a village it devoured—I'll free their souls or fade." Her purpose pierced him, raw and unyielding. Thimble, a small shadow, came forth, his tiny mouse self. "Light bringers wrought this plague," he rumbled, yet his smile soothed Davrin's cuts, cool and gentle.

A storm broke, thunder shaking the earth. Lightning revealed a gorge, its depths a black maw spanned by a swaying rope bridge. Halfway across, a gust snapped the ropes. Artemis clung to a plank, fraying. Thimble dangled, dissolving. Davrin's heart pounded, the key his only hope.

Choices:

- A. Use the key to unlock a path. Turn to page 18.
- B. Climb down to save them. Turn to page 20.
- C. Call the alternate Davrins. Turn to page 22.
- D. Retreat, accepting failure. Turn to page 24.



Davrin cradled the silver key beneath the forest's gnarled canopy, where Zephyros's moonlight bled through like a wound, casting ghostly patterns on the mossy earth. Its spiraling etchings shimmered, shifting into Zephyrosian script: *Lux non est finis*—Light is not the end. The words sank into him, heavy as a vow, whispering that his path lay beyond the glyphs he'd lost. The key pulsed, warm as a living heart, its surface rippling with Lunara's glow, as if it held a shard of the moon's ancient sorrow. The forest groaned, the Shadow Sickness's black veins throbbing in the bark, oozing tar that hissed faintly, a chorus of decay that chilled his spine. A distant wail—half-beast, half-wind—echoed, the plague's hunger stirring.

Artemis Bellator's green eyes pierced the gloom, her shadowy form flickering like smoke in a storm. "What does it say?" she hummed, her voice a vibration that stirred the air, laced with curiosity and a warrior's edge. Thimble loomed, his misty bulk coiling, tendrils curling protectively around his satchel. "Light bringer tricks," he rumbled, distrust thick, yet his gaze lingered on the key, a flicker of hope betraying his gruff demeanor.

Davrin's throat tightened. The key challenged his identity—Arcanum's prodigy, forged in flame. Could he trust its riddle? The ground trembled, a low pulse of the Sickness's malice. Artemis nocked a shadow-arrow, her form tensing. "Decide, lost one," she urged, her hum sharp. Thimble's tendrils brushed his arm, cool and steadying, urging action. The key flared, impatient, its purpose a mystery wrapped in Zephyros's twilight. A glint in the underbrush caught his eye—a runed stone, half-buried, pulsing faintly.

Choices:

- Hold the key aloft, seeking its power. Turn to page 18.
- Share the key's message with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 26.
- Investigate the runed stone for clues. Turn to page 28.
- Ignore the key and press toward the gorge. Turn to page 12.



Davrin's voice tore through the forest's oppressive silence, raw with need. "Wise Davrin!" he called, clutching the key, its warmth a lifeline against the Shadow Sickness's choking rot. The air shimmered, and Wise Davrin appeared, his scarred jaw catching Zephyros's moonlight, his eyes steady as the ancient cliffs of the Umbral Reach. "You seek guidance," he said, his voice a quiet thunder that drowned the distant wails of corrupted beasts. "The key is a mirror, like this trial. It unlocks what you believe in—power, or something deeper." Davrin's grip tightened, the key's etchings biting his palm. "What's deeper than light?" he asked, voice cracking, the weight of his Arcanum failure pressing down.

"Yourself," Wise Davrin replied, his gaze piercing. "Your allies are your strength now. Trust them, as Zephyros's moons trust each other's light." He faded, leaving Davrin with Artemis and Thimble, their shadowy forms flickering in the Sickness's haze.

The forest pulsed, black veins in the trees throbbing like a heartbeat. A storm loomed, clouds churning with unshed rain, the air heavy with ozone. Lightning flickered, revealing the gorge ahead, its rope bridge swaying like a thread in Zephyros's turbulent winds.

Artemis's eyes met his, her sword ready. "What did he say?" she hummed, wary but curious. Thimble's rumble softly. "He's right. We're here." Davrin nodded, the key steadying him, but the gorge's black maw loomed, and the bridge's creak was a warning. The Sickness's stench thickened, a reminder of what was at stake.

Choices:

- A. Use the key to unlock a path. Turn to page 18.
- B. Climb down to save them. Turn to page 20.
- C. Call the alternate Davrins. Turn to page 22.
- D. Retreat, accepting failure. Turn to page 24.



THE KEY'S PATH

Davrin raised the silver key, its moonlit glow slicing through the storm's fury like a beacon in Zephyros's twilight. Rain lashed his face, stinging his eyes as Artemis clung to the bridge's splintered plank, her shadowy form fraying into wisps. Thimble dangled below, his small form dissolving in the gale, tendrils flailing like drowning limbs. The gorge's abyss howled, a maw of shadow that swallowed light and hope. Davrin's heart pounded, the key flaring with silver light, its warmth a pulse against the cold dread knotting his gut.

He held it aloft, willing it to act, to save them. The light wove a crystalline path across the gorge, its surface slick with rain but solid as Zephyros's ancient stone. "Move!" Davrin shouted, voice raw over the thunder. Artemis crawled, her sword clutched tight, her edges sharpening as she reached the path's stability. Thimble grabbed hold of her, being pulled along. Davrin followed, wind clawing his cloak, the key's glow his anchor against the storm's wrath.

They collapsed on the far side, mud soaking their knees. Artemis's green eyes met his, a flicker of respect softening their edge. "Unexpected, lost one," she hummed, her voice a melody over the rain's roar. Thimble's rumble was warm, "Not just a light bringer." The key's light faded, its weight heavier with their trust. The forest loomed ahead, its blackened trees pulsing with the Sickness's malice, the air thick with rot and the promise of trials yet to come.

Choices:

- Press on with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 30.
- Rest and question them about the Sickness. Turn to page 32.
- Examine the key again. Turn to page 34.



THE CLIMB

Davrin's heart thundered as he slid down the frayed ropes, rain stinging his eyes like needles, the storm's fury battering his body. The gorge's abyss yawned below, a void where Zephyros's light dared not tread. Thimble dangled, his tiny form fraying, hands grasping weakly. Davrin reached him, muscles burning as he hauled him up to a narrow ledge, the rope's rough fibers tearing his palms. Artemis was next, her sword slipping from her grasp, her form flickering like a candle in a gale. He caught her wrist, her shadow solidifying under his touch, and pulled her to safety, her weight a fleeting warmth against the cold.

"You didn't need power," Thimble rumbled, his voice steady despite the storm, a tendril clapping Davrin's shoulder with surprising gentleness. Artemis nodded, her hum a soft approval, her green eyes glinting with a trust that pierced him. The ledge was treacherous, slick with mud, the gorge's walls looming like the bones of some ancient beast. Above, the bridge's remnants dangled, useless; below, the abyss swallowed all hope. Thimble's tendrils probed the rock, pointing to jagged outcrops leading up.

"Hard climb," he said, "but possible."

Artemis scanned the shadows, her sword ready. The storm raged, lightning illuminating the forest beyond, its blackened trees pulsing with the Shadow Sickness's veins. Davrin's breath hitched, pride sparking amidst the chaos—he'd saved them, without light, without glyphs. But the Sickness's stench clung, a reminder of the cure they sought, and the key in his pocket pulsed faintly, urging him forward.

Choices:

- Press on with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 30.
- Rest and question them about the Sickness. Turn to page 32.
- Examine the key again. Turn to page 34.



SHADOWS OF SELF

Davrin's voice tore from his throat, raw and desperate. "Help!" he shouted, the storm swallowing his plea. The air shimmered, and the alternate Davrins materialized, ghostly in Zephyros's rain. Arrogant Davrin sneered, staff blazing azure. "Begging? Pathetic." Broken Davrin moaned, "No one comes..." Wise Davrin stepped forward, eyes steady. "You called. Act."

Arrogant Davrin raised his staff, a gust of conjured wind steadying the bridge's remnants. Artemis scrambled, her form fraying, but reaching the ledge. Thimble followed, barely holding onto the ropes. But Arrogant Davrin flickered, his power costing him, and he vanished with a snarl, "Don't waste this." Broken Davrin faded, muttering, and Wise Davrin nodded before dissolving. Artemis collapsed beside Davrin, panting, her green eyes wary but grateful. Thimble's rumble was heavy, "Light bringer tricks. Dangerous."

"You summoned them," Artemis hummed, her voice sharp with curiosity. "Who are they?" Davrin hesitated, the key pulsing in his pocket, its warmth a reminder of the trial's riddles. The gorge loomed behind, its abyss a mirror of his doubts. The storm's rain soaked his cloak, cold seeping into his bones, but the Sickness's stench was colder, a promise of ruin if he faltered. The ledge was narrow, the path up treacherous, but Artemis's bow and Thimble's tendrils stood ready. The forest beyond pulsed with malice, black veins throbbing in the trees, Zephyros's decay pressing in.

Choices:

- Press on with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 30.
- Rest and question them about the Sickness. Turn to page 32.
- Examine the key again. Turn to page 34.



Davrin's shoulders slumped, the storm's roar drowning his resolve. The gorge's abyss stared back, Artemis's fraying form and Thimble too heavy a burden without his light. "I can't," he whispered, stumbling back across the bridge's remains, each step a surrender. Artemis's shout—"Coward!"—cut through the wind, sharp as a blade, but he didn't turn. Thimble falling lost to the gale.

The forest swallowed him, its blackened trees pulsing with the Shadow Sickness's veins, their sap oozing like Zephyros's tears.

He sank to his knees, the key slipping from his grip, its glow dimming to a flicker. The air pulsed, and the obsidian door reappeared, its surface rippling like a dark sea. A voice, not his own, echoed: "You chose fear. The trial ends."

Davrin stepped through, the Umbral Reach returning, its crystalline spires cold and silent under Zephyros's moons. The cure was lost, the Sickness free to devour villages, cities, lives. He wandered, a ghost once more, his failure a weight heavier than the moons' light. The wind howled, carrying the wails of those he'd abandoned, and Zephyros wept black rain.

THE END



BONDS FORGED

Davrin met Artemis's piercing gaze, the key warm in his hand. "It says, 'Light is not the end,'" he said, voice steady despite the forest's oppressive rot. "The trial's not about power—it's about us." Artemis's hum softened, her shadow-form stilling, green eyes glinting with understanding. "My village believed in bonds," she said, "before the Sickness took them," Thimble spoke. "My town thrived on trust. You speak truth, light bringer."

The forest pulsed, black veins in the trees throbbing, Zephyros's decay pressing in. A storm loomed, lightning illuminating the gorge ahead, its rope bridge swaying. Davrin shared the key's weight, passing it to Artemis. Her fingers brushed his, cool and fleeting, solidifying her form. Thimble's hands grazed it, his hands steadying. "Together," Davrin said, their trust a spark against the Sickness's chill. They reached the bridge, but a gust snapped the ropes. Artemis clung to a plank, fraying. Thimble dangled, dissolving. Davrin's heart raced, their shared resolve burning. The key glowed, urging unity.

Choices:

- Use the key with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 18.
- Climb down to save them. Turn to page 20.
- Call the alternate Davrins. Turn to page 22.
- Retreat, accepting failure. Turn to page 24.



THE RUNED STONE

Davrin knelt by the runed stone, half-buried in moss, its faint pulse matching the key's glow. Zephyros's moonlight caught its Zephyrosian script: *Fides aperit viam*—Faith opens the way.

The forest's rot pressed in, black-veined trees groaning, the Sickness's wail echoing. Artemis's bow was taut, her hum wary. "A trap?" Thimble's tendrils probed the stone, rumbling, "Old magic. Dangerous."

Davrin's fingers traced the runes, the key flaring in response. Faith—in himself, his allies? He pressed the key to the stone, its glow merging with the runes. The ground shook, revealing a hidden path of glowing crystal leading past the gorge. "Faith,"

Davrin murmured, Artemis nodding, Thimble's rumble approving. They followed, the path solid underfoot, bypassing the storm's wrath.

Choices:

- Press on with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 30.
- Rest and question them about the Sickness. Turn to page 32.
- Examine the key again. Turn to page 34.



THE HALL OF ECHOES

The forest dissolved in a swirl of mist, replaced by a crystalline hall pulsing with Zephyros's otherworldly light. Silver veins threaded the translucent walls, reflecting Davrin's life in shifting tableaux—childhood under Kaelis's stern gaze, his first flame under Voren's praise, the Arcanum's ruin in fire and screams. The air smelled of parchment and ozone, memories made manifest. Kaelis and Voren stepped from the walls, her robes shimmering with glyphs, his charismatic smile faded, eyes cold.

"You lacked discipline," Kaelis said, voice a whipcrack. "Your outburst shamed us." Voren's tone cut deeper, "Our legacy, ruined." A table rose, scattered with glowing memory-shards, a puzzle locking the hall. Davrin's hands shook, the key pulsing, his light still gone.

Choices:

- Defend your choices. Turn to page 36.
- Apologize and seek forgiveness. Turn to page 38.
- Solve the puzzle silently. Turn to page 40.
- Break the shards in anger. Turn to page 42.



TALES OF LOSS

Davrin sank to the mud, rain dripping from his cloak. "Tell me of the Sickness," he said, voice low. Artemis's hum was soft, her form flickering. "It took my village, turned kin to shadows. I'm their echo, seeking release." Thimble spoke softly, "My town burned bright, but the Sickness darkened it. I'm its remnant, carrying their hope." Their pain and the appearance of his friends mirrored Davrin's, the key pulsing with shared resolve.

The forest's rot thickened, urging haste.

Choices:

- Press on with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 30.
- Examine the key again. Turn to page 34.



THE KEY'S PULSE

Davrin held the silver key aloft, its moonlit etchings flaring like Zephyros's twin moons caught in a storm's fleeting calm. The forest's rot clung to his senses—blackened trees oozing tar-like sap, their veins pulsing with the Shadow Sickness's malice, the air thick with decay's acrid bite. Each breath burned, a reminder of the plague's hunger. The key's script—*Lux non est finis*—glowed, whispering of bonds over power, its warmth a heartbeat against his palm. Artemis's green eyes glinted, her shadow-form taut, sword ready. "What now, lost one?" she hummed, her voice a melody sharp with urgency. Thimble's small form loomed, hands ready. "It's more than metal," he said. A faint glow flickered in the underbrush, a crystalline path shimmering into existence, leading beyond the gorge's yawning maw. The key pulsed, urging trust—not in glyphs or flame, but in Artemis's fierce resolve, Thimble's joy, and Davrin's own battered will. The Sickness's wail echoed, closer now, a beast stirring in Zephyros's twilight. Artemis's sword and shield ready, she hummed a challenge to the dark. Thimble's hand brushed Davrin's arm, steadying him. The path's light wavered, as if testing their resolve, its end lost in a haze where shadows danced like specters of Davrin's past—Arcanum's ruins, his mother's lessons, his exile. The key's glow steadied, a beacon in the chaos, but the choice was his.

Choices:

- Follow the path with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 30.
- Rest and question them about the Sickness. Turn to page 32.



DEFIANCE

Davrin's jaw clenched, the crystalline hall's silver-veined walls pulsing with memories that seared his soul—Kaelis's stern gaze, Voren's charismatic smile twisted by disappointment. "You pushed me to be perfect!" he snapped, voice raw, echoing in the vast chamber. "Your weight broke me!" Kaelis's glyphs flared, her robes shimmering like Zephyros's starlit cliffs. "Excuses, Davrin," she said, her tone a whipcrack. Voren's sigh cut deeper, his eyes cold. "You squandered our gift, our legacy." The memory-shards on the table glowed hot, their jagged edges reflecting Arcanum's rubble, the screams, the shame.

Davrin's hands shook, the key pulsing in his pocket, its warmth a faint anchor. He seized the shards, forcing them into place, each piece a fragment of his truth—fear, not malice, drove his outburst.

The air crackled, ozone sharp, as the puzzle locked, the hall quaking. Walls cracked, silver veins bleeding light like Zephyros's wounded sky. Kaelis and Voren flickered, their forms fraying, but their eyes held no forgiveness. A door yawned open, revealing a chasm where shadows swirled, a void that whispered Davrin's name. Artemis and Thimble stood behind, their presence a quiet strength, but the chasm demanded his choice. The Sickness's stench lingered, a reminder of the cure beyond.

The key's glow flared, urging courage, but the chasm's depths mirrored his doubts—could defiance alone redeem him? The hall's light dimmed, Zephyros's moons barely piercing the haze, and the weight of his past pressed harder, a storm waiting to break.

Choices:

- Cross the chasm alone. Turn to page 44.
- Call Artemis and Thimble to cross together. Turn to page 46.
- Use the key to bridge the chasm. Turn to page 48.



FORGIVENESS

Davrin's voice broke, a raw whisper in the crystalline hall's oppressive glow. "I'm sorry," he said, eyes burning as he faced Kaelis and Voren. "I failed you, failed Arcanum." Kaelis's stern face softened, her glyphs dimming, her robes catching Zephyros's moonlight like a fading dream. "You were enough, Davrin," she said, voice gentle as a mother's lullaby. Voren's cold gaze warmed, his smile returning, weary but kind. "Forgive us, too, for pushing you."

The memory-shards glowed warm, their light soft as Lunara's embrace. Davrin pieced them together, hands steady, each fragment revealing his fear, not evil, as the cause of his cataclysm. The puzzle clicked, a quiet harmony, and the hall's silver veins pulsed with approval. Kaelis and Voren stepped forward, their hands on his shoulders, a fleeting warmth that anchored him. "Go," Kaelis whispered, her voice a breeze from Zephyros's cliffs. Voren nodded, fading. The door opened, revealing a chasm where shadows danced, their whispers softer now, beckoning.

Artemis and Thimble waited, their shadowy forms steady, Artemis's green eyes glinting with respect, Thimble's calm and quiet ready for support. The key pulsed, its glow a reminder of the cure beyond. The Sickness's rot lingered in the air, a faint hiss, but forgiveness lightened Davrin's steps. Zephyros's moons cast faint light into the chasm, a path of hope amidst the dark, but the choice loomed, heavy as the trial itself.

Choices:

- Cross the chasm alone. Turn to page 44.
- Call Artemis and Thimble to cross together. Turn to page 46.
- Use the key to bridge the chasm. Turn to page 48.



SILENT TRUTH

Davrin knelt before the table, the crystalline hall's silver veins casting Zephyros's moonlight across the memory-shards, each a shard of his past—Kaelis's lessons in their village's dim hearth, Voren's praise under Arcanum's glowing arches, the atrium's collapse in fire and screams. The air was heavy with parchment and ozone, memories sharp as blades. Kaelis and Voren watched, their forms flickering, her glyphs steady, his smile faded. Davrin worked silently, piecing the shards with trembling hands, each fragment revealing truth: fear drove his outburst, not malice.

The puzzle locked, a soft chime echoing, the hall's walls pulsing with Zephyros's ancient rhythm. Kaelis's stern gaze softened, a nod of understanding. Voren's eyes warmed, his silence a quiet absolution. They stepped back, fading into the silver veins, their presence lingering like a breeze from Zephyros's cliffs. A door opened, revealing a chasm where shadows swirled, their whispers no longer accusing but beckoning, a challenge to trust himself.

Artemis and Thimble stood behind their trust, a weight Davrin felt in his bones. The key pulsed, its glow steady, the Sickness's rot a faint hiss in the air. Zephyros's moons cast faint light into the chasm, a sliver of hope, but the path was his to choose. The hall's light dimmed, the trial's weight pressing, urging him to decide—alone, or with those who'd become his strength.

Choices:

- Cross the chasm alone. Turn to page 44.
- Call Artemis and Thimble to cross together. Turn to page 46.
- Use the key to bridge the chasm. Turn to page 48.



SHATTERED PAST

Davrin's rage erupted, a storm born of Zephyros's wilds. "You made me this!" he roared, sweeping the memory-shards from the table. They shattered, the crystalline hall quaking, silver veins cracking like Zephyros's fractured cliffs. Kaelis's glyphs flared, her voice sharp, "Control!" Voren's eyes darkened, "You ruin still." From the shards rose a shadow-Davrin, its claws of coalesced night slashing, its hiss a chorus of his failures—

Arcanum's ruin, his exile, his shame.

Davrin dodged, the claws grazing his arm, cold as Zephyros's deepest frost. He seized a crystal fragment, its edge biting his palm, and struck, each clash a defiance of his past. The shadow lunged, relentless, but Davrin grappled it, pinning it to the cracked floor. "I'm more!" he gasped. It dissolved, leaving the silver key, its glow faint but steady. Kaelis and Voren faded, their voices a whisper, "Control..." The door opened, revealing a chasm where shadows danced, their whispers a challenge. Artemis and Thimble stood ready, her green eyes fierce. The Sickness's stench clung, a reminder of the cure beyond. The key pulsed, Zephyros's moons casting faint light into the chasm, a fragile hope amidst the trial's weight. Davrin's breath steadied, the fight grounding him, but the choice loomed, heavy as the past he'd shattered.

Choices:

- Cross the chasm alone. Turn to page 44.
- Call Artemis and Thimble to cross together. Turn to page 46.
- Use the key to bridge the chasm. Turn to page 48.



LONE LEAP

Davrin faced the chasm alone, its shadows swirling like Zephyros's heart, a void where light drowned. Across it, a vial glowed, the cure's promise shimmering like Lunara's tears. His heart pounded, the key pulsing faintly, but Artemis and Thimble's absence was a weight heavier than the trial. He leaped, boots slipping on the chasm's edge, fingers clawing a jagged ledge. Pain seared his palms, but he pulled himself up, seizing the vial. Its warmth flared, then faded, incomplete without his allies' trust. The hall's silver veins dimmed, Zephyros's moons casting cold light. The cure was his, but its light flickered, a half-healed wound. The Sickness's rot lingered in the air, a faint hiss, mocking his solitude. Davrin stood, the flower heavy, his path forward uncertain. The chasm's shadows whispered his name, not in victory, but in warning—the trial wasn't done. Artemis's hum, Thimble's rumble, echoed in memory, their absence a wound deeper than failure. Zephyros's cliffs loomed in the distance, their silence a judgment.

The key pulsed, urging him onward, but the cure's dim glow spoke of a truth he couldn't ignore: redemption required more than courage—it required others. The mist thickened, the trial's next challenge hidden, waiting.

Choices:

- Press on alone. Turn to page 50.
- Seek Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 52..



UNITY'S STRENGTH

Davrin turned to Artemis and Thimble, their shadowy forms steady in the crystalline hall's fading light. "Together," he said, voice firm, the key pulsing with Zephyros's moonlight. Artemis's green eyes glinted, her hum a vow. Thimble smiling warmly, "As one." They roped together, shadows and flesh bound by trust, and leaped the chasm, the void's whispers powerless against their unity.

Davrin's boots hit stone, Artemis's sword steady, Thimble riding on Davrin's shoulder. He seized the vial, its light blazing, steady with their bond, like Zephyros's moons sharing the sky. "Ours," Artemis hummed, her voice a melody of triumph. Thimble's hands brushed the flower, his voice soft, "Together, we heal." The hall's silver veins pulsed, approving, the Sickness's rot receding, its hiss drowned by their resolve.

The chasm's shadows retreated, Zephyros's light piercing the haze. The flower glowed, a beacon of hope, but the trial's weight lingered, the air heavy with ozone and promise. Artemis's bow remained taut, Thimble's satchel trailed mist, their presence a strength Davrin hadn't known he needed. The path forward shimmered, mist curling, the cure's power tied to their unity.

Choices:

- Press on with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 50.
- Seek Wise Davrin's guidance. Turn to page 54.



KEY'S BRIDGE

Davrin raised the silver key, its glow weaving a crystalline bridge across the chasm, its facets catching Zephyros's moonlight like a frozen river. Artemis's green eyes widened, her hum sharp with awe. Thimble's hands steadied, his hum approving, "Strong work." They crossed, boots echoing on crystal, the void's whispers silenced by the key's light. Davrin seized the flower, its warmth blazing, Zephyros's shadows retreating as the Sickness's rot hissed, weakened.

Artemis's sword relaxed, her hum soft, "You're more than lost." Thimble's hands brushed Davrin's shoulder, his satchel trailing mist like a banner. "Not just a light bringer," he said, joy in his tone. The hall's silver veins pulsed, the air clearing, ozone fading. The flower's light was steady, tied to their crossing, but the trial's weight lingered, a storm waiting to break. Zephyros's moons cast faint light, the path forward shrouded in mist. The cure was theirs, but its power demanded more—trust, resolve, a truth Davrin was only beginning to grasp. Artemis and Thimble stood ready, their bond a beacon, the Sickness's wail distant but not gone.

Choices:

- Press on with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 50.
- Seek Wise Davrin's guidance. Turn to page 54.



VEIL OF DOUBT

Mist rolled in, thick with ash and Zephyros's sorrow, dimming the vial's glow. A Shadow Warden loomed, its ember eyes searing, its form a colossus of coalesced night, its voice a rumble that shook the crystalline hall. "Your failure birthed this," it accused, a mirror rising, showing Arcanum's rubble, Artemis's village in shadows, Thimble's village crumbled. Davrin's heart clenched, the key pulsing, the Sickness's rot sharp in his lungs.

A riddle glowed on the mirror: What binds the broken, heals the lost, shines without flame? Artemis's hum was tense, her bow taut. Thimble's tendrils coiled, his rumble heavy, "It's us, isn't it?" The Warden's eyes flared, shadows lashing like Zephyros's storms, testing their resolve. The vial's light flickered, tied to their answer, the hall's silver veins pulsing faintly, as if holding breath.

Davrin's mind raced, memories of Kaelis's lessons, Voren's praise, his allies' trust flashing like Lunara's light. The Sickness's wail echoed, a beast circling, Zephyros's decay pressing in. The riddle's truth was close, a spark in the dark, but the Warden's presence was a weight, its accusation a mirror of Davrin's deepest fears.

Choices:

- Confront the Warden with the key. Turn to page 56.
- Solve the riddle with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 58.
- Ask the mirror for truth. Turn to page 60.
- Surrender to the Warden. Turn to page 62.



SEEKING ALLIES

Davrin clutched the flower, its dimming light a wound in Zephyros's twilight. Mist thickened, the Sickness's wail echoing like a dirge, the crystalline hall fading into shadow. He searched for Artemis and Thimble, their absence a void heavier than the chasm's depths. The air grew colder, the Sickness's rot stinging his lungs, black veins pulsing in the unseen trees beyond. The vial flickered, its power tied to their bond, now broken by his choice to leap alone. Zephyros's moons cast faint, accusing light, their glow swallowed by mist. The trial's weight crushed him, the cure slipping away like sand. A whisper—Artemis's hum, Thimble's joy—faded, lost to the Sickness's hunger. The obsidian door loomed, its surface rippling, a voice hissing, "You chose solitude. The trial ends."

Davrin stepped through, the Umbral Reach returning, its crystalline spires cold under Zephyros's sky. The Sickness spread, villages falling, his failure a shadow darker than the plague. He wandered, the flower a useless weight, redemption lost.

THE END



WISDOM'S FINAL WORD

Davrin called into the mist, "Wise Davrin!" The air shimmered, and he appeared, scarred jaw catching Zephyros's moonlight, eyes steady as the Umbral Reach's cliffs. "The cure is unity," he said, voice a quiet thunder. "Your fault was human, your strength is them—Artemis, Thimble, the bonds you've forged." The flower blazed, its light steady with their trust, Artemis's hum and Thimble's rumble echoing in Davrin's heart.

The crystalline hall's silver veins pulsed, the Sickness's rot receding, its hiss drowned by Wise Davrin's words. Artemis's green eyes glinted, her sword ready, while Thimble fixed his hat. "He speaks truth," Thimble spoke, joy in his tone. The mist curled, revealing a path, but the trial's weight lingered, Zephyros's shadows whispering of one final test. The flower's glow was a beacon, tied to their unity, but the air grew heavy, ozone sharp, a storm brewing in the trial's heart.

Choices:

- A. Press on with Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 50.



WARDEN'S WRATH

Davrin faced the Shadow Warden, its ember eyes searing through the mist, its colossal form a nightmare of Zephyros's darkest nights. "I didn't cause this!" he shouted, raising the key, its glow flaring like Lunara's defiance. He struck, the key clashing against shadow, sparks of moonlight scattering. The Warden roared, its voice a quake, shadows lashing like Zephyros's storms, coiling around Artemis and Thimble, their forms fading into the mist.

Davrin fought, each strike a rejection of guilt, but the flower dimmed, its light tied to his allies. The Warden's claws grazed his chest, cold as exile, and Artemis's hum grew faint, Thimble's voice went silent. The mirror shattered, the riddle unanswered. The mist lifted, Zephyros's moons casting cold light, but the cure weakened, the Sickness's rot hissing in triumph. Davrin stood, the flower heavy, his allies gone, the trial's weight a wound. The path forward shimmered, but the cure's flicker spoke of loss. The Umbral Reach's spires loomed in memory, a reminder of what he'd failed to save.

Choices:

- Use the Flower now. Turn to page 64.
- Search for Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 66.



RIDDLE'S ANSWER

Davrin turned to Artemis and Thimble, the Shadow Warden's ember eyes looming. "Help me solve it," he urged, the riddle glowing: What binds the broken, heals the lost, shines without flame? Artemis traced the mirror, her hum soft, "It's us—our bond." Thimble rumbled certain, "Friendship, forged in shadow."

Davrin nodded, the key pulsing, its glow merging with the flower's light.

He spoke, "Friendship," and the mirror blazed, Zephyros's moonlight flooding the hall. The Warden dissolved, its roar fading, shadows retreating like a receding tide. The vial flared, its warmth a heartbeat, the Sickness's rot hissing in defeat. Artemis's green eyes shone, her hum a song of triumph. "We're the cure," she said, her shadow-form steady. Thimble's rumble was warm, "Together, we shine."

The crystalline hall's silver veins pulsed, Zephyros's air clearing, ozone fading. The trial's weight lifted, the path forward bright, but the cure's power demanded one final act, a choice to seal their victory.

Choices:

- Use the vial now. Turn to page 64.
- Embrace Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 68.



MIRROR'S TRUTH

Davrin faced the mirror, its surface rippling like Zephyros's twilight seas. "Show me the truth," he said, voice steady, the vial glowing faintly. The mirror revealed his journey—Kaelis's lessons, Voren's praise, Artemis's trust, Thimble's peace. The riddle's answer crystallized: Friendship binds the broken, heals the lost, shines without flame. Davrin spoke it, the key flaring, its light merging with the flower's glow.

The Shadow Warden vanished, its ember eyes extinguished, shadows dissolving like mist under Zephyros's moons. The flower steadied, its warmth a promise, the Sickness's rot retreating, its wail silenced. Artemis's hum was soft, her green eyes bright. Thimble jumped in joy, "You saw it." The crystalline hall's silver veins pulsed, the air clearing, ozone fading. The path forward glowed, Zephyros's light piercing the mist, but the cure's power demanded a final choice, a seal for their victory. The trial's weight lingered, a whisper of doubt, but Davrin's heart was steady, anchored by his allies.

Choices:

- Use the vial now. Turn to page 64.
- Embrace Artemis and Thimble. Turn to page 68.



SURRENDER

Davrin's shoulders slumped, the Shadow Warden's ember eyes crushing his resolve. "I can't," he whispered, dropping the flower, its light snuffed like a candle in Zephyros's storms.

Artemis's hum faded, Thimble's rumble silenced, their forms dissolving into the mist. The Warden laughed, a quake that shook the crystalline hall, its shadows swallowing the mirror, the riddle unanswered.

The obsidian door loomed, its surface rippling like a dark sea.

Davrin stepped through, the Umbral Reach returning, its crystalline spires cold under Zephyros's moons. The Sickness spread, villages falling to shadow, rivers thickening to sludge, his failure a darkness deeper than the plague. He wandered, a ghost once more, the key cold, redemption lost. Zephyros's cliffs stood silent, their judgment heavier than the moons' light, the wails of the lost echoing in the wind.

THE END



HASTENED CURE

Davrin raised the flower, its light spreading like Zephyros's dawn, pushing back the mist. The crystalline hall's silver veins flared, the Sickness's rot hissing as it retreated, trees beyond blooming faintly. But Artemis and Thimble's absence dimmed the glow, their trust missing from the cure's heart. Zephyros healed, rivers clearing, leaves regaining color, but shadows lingered, a half-healed wound.

Davrin stood, the vial heavy, his victory hollow. The Umbral Reach's spires loomed in memory, a reminder of those he'd left behind. The key was cold, its glow faded, the trial's lesson incomplete. He wandered Zephyros, a light bringer no more, the cure partial, his heart heavy with the cost. The moons cast faint light, their judgment soft but unyielding, a whisper of what might have been.

THE END



SAVING SHADOWS

Davrin used the flower's light into Artemis and Thimble, their forms solidifying, Artemis's green eyes bright, Thimble steady.

"You chose us," Artemis hummed, her voice a melody of gratitude. Thimble's smile was warm, "Not alone." The crystalline hall's silver veins pulsed, but the flower dimmed, its power spent, the Sickness's rot lingering in Zephyros's air.

Rivers thickened, trees blackened beyond the hall, the cure incomplete without the vial's full strength. Artemis and Thimble stood with him, their bond a light in the dark, but the trial ended, the Umbral Reach returning, its spires cold. They thanked him, shadows no more, but Zephyros suffered, the plague's shadow enduring. Davrin's heart ached, redemption partial, the key silent.

THE END



EPIPHANY

Davrin embraced Artemis and Thimble, their warmth a hearth against Zephyros's fading shadows. The flower blazed, its light flooding the crystalline hall, silver veins singing as the Shadow

Sickness dissolved. Rivers cleared beyond the walls, trees bloomed with vibrant green, and the Umbral Reach's spires gleamed under Lunara and Seryth's radiant glow. Artemis's green eyes sparkled, her hum a melody of peace. "We're free," she said, her shadowy form shimmering, a smile softening her fierce edges. Thimble's smile was warm, he sat on Davrin's shoulder, his broad grin bright as Zephyros's dawn. "You did it, lad," he said, then both faded, their smiles lingering like moonlight on water, their souls released to rest.

Wise Davrin appeared, scarred face gentle. "You're more than light," he said. "Your fault was human, your strength is them."

Davrin nodded, the key glowing faintly, a reminder of bonds forged in shadow. Zephyros was saved, its air clean, the Sickness's wail silenced. He knew now—his worth lay not in glyphs, but in his heart's resilience, his friends' trust. The obsidian door dissolved, and Davrin stepped into a meadow, Zephyros's cliffs aglow.

Before him stood his friends: Snow, Amelia, Groupie, Jasper, Thimble, Groupette, Artemis, and Lucina, her quiet strength a beacon. Artemis rushed forward, embracing him, her warmth real, her voice a soft hum. "You're alive, Davrin, and whole." He held her, their bond unbreakable, Zephyros's moons blessing them. Redemption was his, not in light, but in love.

THE END