# Fighting Fantazine

THE FIGHTING FANTASY & GAMEBOOK FAN MAGAZINE

## HIDING BEHIND MASKS
THE FACT OF FICTION UNMASKS MASKS OF MAYHEM

## TOP TRUMPS
AN INTERVIEW WITH U.S. WRITER STEVE JACKSON OF STEVE JACKSON GAMES

## BACK TO ALLANSIA!
ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY ADVENTURES THE TRIALS OF CHRONADA AND A SHADOW OVER ANVIL

## PAPERBACK WRITER
AN INTERVIEW WITH WRITER MICHAEL J. WARD ABOUT DESTINY QUEST

## LORDS OF STONE
A BRAND NEW FIGHTING FANTASY ADVENTURE!

ISSUE 15
May 2016
ANISEED

# Scriptarium

http://scriptarium.fr/fr/

## Gamme Défis Fantastiques, le jeu de rôle Advanced Fighting Fantasy

The French editions of this series are crammed full of exclusive contents including unreleased and new art from various Fighting Fantasy illustrators (Russ Nicholson, Malcolm Barter, John Sibbick, Steve Luxton & others) and French artists, maps including new geographical features (contributed by Steve Jackson, Ian Livingstone, and Jonathan Green), additional rules (new character types, spells, competencies), campaigns and magic cards.
OUT SOON: A translation of Marc Gascoigne's Out of the Pit, including 2 original, monstrous solo adventures.

## Gamme Rêve de Dragon Rêve: the Dream Ouroboros

Scriptarium allows the Dragons to dream again, relaunching this French RPG with a hardcover rulebook, full-colour campaign, and a gamebook.

## Lone Wolf & Grey Star

Our high-skilled Magnamund experts help Joe Dever in the reissue of edited and augmented Collector Edition gamebooks, and to expand this very rich game setting with new material including the Maps of Magnamund, Lone Wolf Adventure Game, and mini solo adventures included as bonuses in the gamebooks.

# Coming soon. Watch this space.

I could repeat myself by talking about the lengthy gap between issues, but I won't (too much). I think I said everything I needed to last time (but I could probably find more to say if I tried!) So what is the current state of play with regard to the magazine?

This issue brings you more of the usual goodies you, dear reader, have come to expect of the magazine. We've two interviews with gamebook authors – the US Steve Jackson of *Scorpion Swamp*, and Michael J. Ward of *DestinyQuest* fame – plus a new mini *Fighting Fantasy* adventure from Brett Schofield (who penned *Bones of the Banished* back in issue #5), two mini *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* scenarios (from Graham Bottley and Stuart Lloyd), and an NPC character description for *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* to boot. Beyond this are some of our recurring regulars such as 'The Fact of Fiction' and 'Chronicle of Heroes'. The issue has been a long time coming, so we're hoping the material on offer doesn't disappoint loyal readers who've waited this long.

Meanwhile, work has already begun on the next issue and the issues after that, with the hope that the gap between this and the next issue is somewhat shorter. We're busy lining up interviews (plans are afoot to talk with Gary Mayes, Peter Andrew Jones, Edward Packard, and Dave Morris, among others, in coming issues), mini adventures, *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* scenarios and the regular material. But we're always on the hunt for new ideas and things to say about gamebooks. So if you have an idea, please get in touch and remember we're not limited to just *Fighting Fantasy* material - anything gamebook-related is fair game!

*Alex*
Alexander Ballingall, Editor

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Fighting Fantazine
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*A terrible evil is growing deep beneath the Iron Hills!*

Mor Orthor, a wicked Dark Elf sorcerer, is experimenting with the four elemental powers of earth, air, fire and water. Once he has mastered them all he will become unstoppable. The good Dwarfs of nearby Stonebridge have called upon your help once more. YOU must venture into the Iron Hills - armed only with your trusty sword and a handful of powerful Elemental Runestones - and put an end to the sorcerer before his vile experiments are let loose on the world!

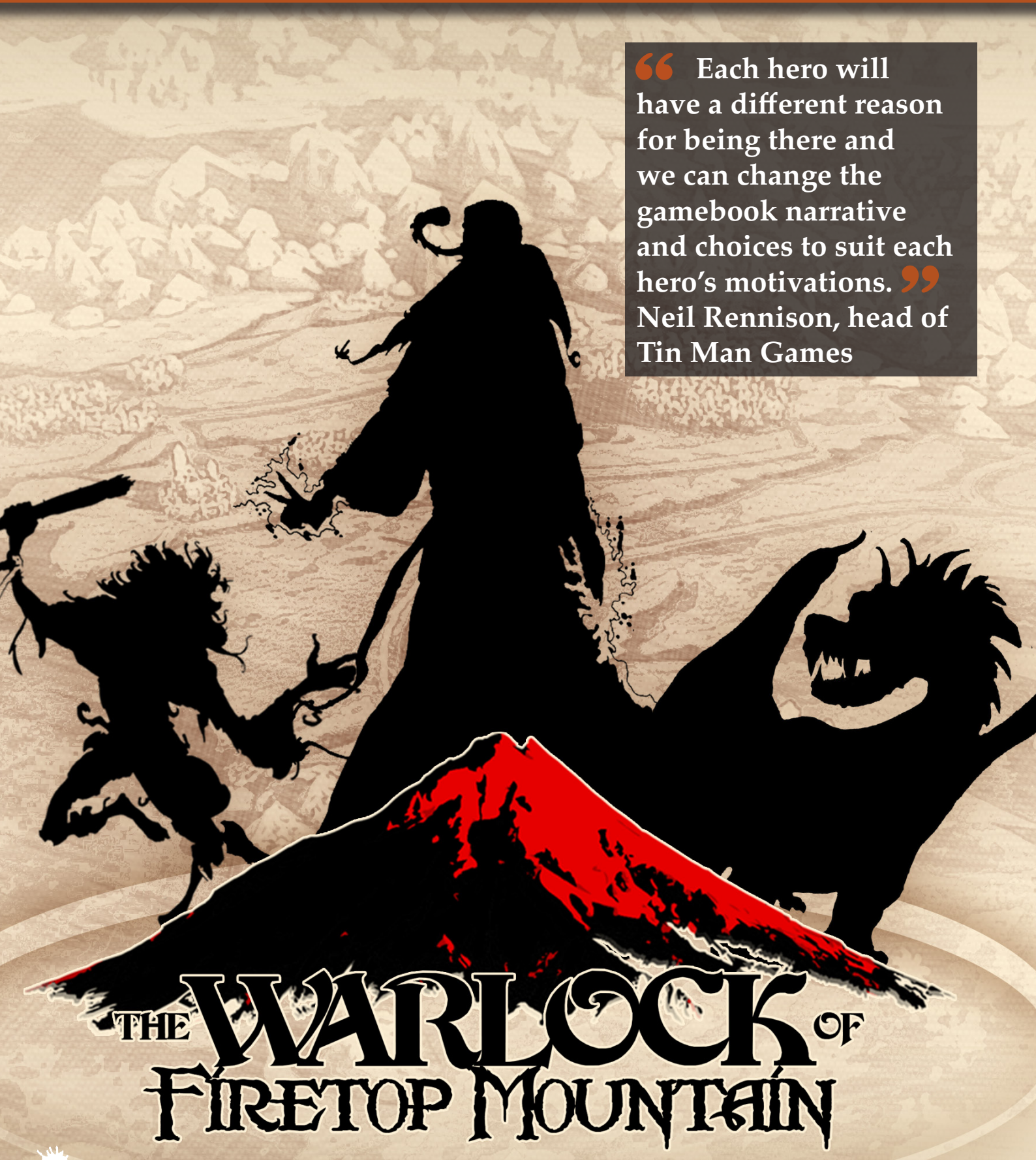
Turn to paragraph 1.

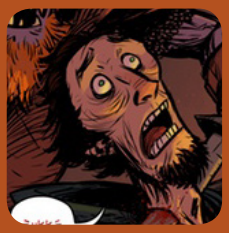
NEWS FROM EVERY CORNER OF TITAN AND BEYOND!

# Omens & auguries

AT THE CORE OF THE GAMEBOOK COMMUNITY

> “Each hero will have a different reason for being there and we can change the gamebook narrative and choices to suit each hero’s motivations.”
> Neil Rennison, head of Tin Man Games





**TROLLTOOTH WAR!**
More details about the *Fighting Fantasy* graphic novel.
**Page 8**

**EYE SEE YOU!**
*Golden Dragon* title *The Eye of the Dragon* is back.
**Page 11**

**THE PIT!**
The French *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* dives deep.
**Page 14**

# Down in the underground! Lost and lonely...

It's been well over a year since Tin Man Games (TMG) last released a *Fighting Fantasy* adaptation. We asked Neil Rennison, head of TMG, about that gap.

"A year! Wow, time flies. I guess it was intentional. We decided that *Bloodbones*, and our last two *Gamebook Adventures*, *Songs of the Mystics* and *Asuria Awakens*, were going to be the last using our digital gamebook engine in that form. Whilst our *Warhammer 40k* title, *Legacy of Dorn: Herald of Oblivion* used that engine too, we changed it quite substantially. In terms of the *Fighting Fantasy* license, we've just been really busy designing our new 3D engine that we'll be using on *Warlock*."

Often when *Fighting Fantasy* moves to another format/adaptation, *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* is the first to transition given its place as the cornerstone of the range. However, *Warlock* has had to wait a while.

"We wanted some distance between what Big Blue Bubble produced [Ed - released in 2009] and what we were planning to develop," reasons Neil. The delay has resulted in additional positive outcomes though, Neil pointing out, "that the time gap has worked in our favour somewhat too, as we've moved on from our old digital format slightly and can do something a lot bolder with the grand-daddy of the series."

So how bold can we expect the shiny new *Warlock* to be? "It will be very different," enthuses Neil when talking about what TMG has done to the gamebook. "We've completely changed things and moved away from the interactive digital book format, with dice combat, and into something more akin to tabletop RPGs.

"Essentially gamebooks are basically single-player *Dungeon & Dragons* RPGs with the writer acting as a kind of dungeon master. We wanted to bring that back and inject some tabletop elements such as using miniatures on a map to show where you are in the story."

Neil is keen, however, to point out that despite these changes, "The gamebook is certainly still there, but now it acts as a narrative support to the visual elements happening on screen."

Doing something different from the Big Blue Bubble version hasn't been the only motivating force for the TMG team when it comes to their *Warlock* adaptation. Neil explains that they "also wanted to address the perceived lack of replayability of gamebooks once they have been completed."

A niggling issue for many players of gamebooks, especially the more linear ones from earlier in the *Fighting Fantasy* range, has always been the 'one true path' aspect and the TMG team looked for ways of moving away from this. "We have worked our way around this by introducing many different heroes," argues Neil. "You are no longer the hero, but one of many that you can take through Firetop Mountain. Each hero will have a different reason for being there and we can change the gamebook narrative and choices to suit each hero's motivations."

Some of this change has come from input from *Fighting Fantasy* alumni Jonathan Green (*Bloodbones*, *Night of the Necromancer*), but Neil points out that "Jon hasn't been involved for nearly a year now. He laid the foundations for some pretty major design changes for Firetop Mountain and we've taken those and run with them."

Where do these changes take us with the new version of *Warlock*? Neil tell us that we can "expect a brand new re-telling of the *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook that started

## The Warlock of Firetop Mountain

**GAME for PC & Mac***
TIN MAN GAMES

BASED ON THE GAMEBOOK BY Steve Jackson & Ian Livingstone

**RELEASED** July/August 2016**
**PRICE** US$20

**WHAT'S IT ABOUT?**
Return to where it all began and attempt to crack open Firetop Mountain, stronghold of the warlock Zagor. But beware! Traps, enemies, and various creatures lie between you and your goal.

**EXTRA FEATURES**
- 3D map of Firetop that builds before your eyes.
- Read the gamebook and make your choices in a dynamic new interface.
- Play as multiple adventurers each with their own motivations for entering Zagor's domain.
- Characters and enemies represented as digital miniatures for you to collect.
- The gamebook text will subtly change depending on the character you choose.
- New simultaneous turn-based combat system designed to work with the digital miniatures.
- New monsters and new rooms to explore – an all new layout for Firetop Mountain inspired by Jonathan Green.
- Many young readers have entered Firetop Mountain over the years – collect their souls for Oriana the Soulkeeper!
- Players can now visit Anvil and investigate the mysteries of the mountain.
- 6 new Russ Nicholson illustrations. All illustrations beautifully recoloured.
- An amazing soundtrack that adapts to your location in the dungeons.
- An ever-evolving game with plans to release new miniatures over time.

For more information, visit www.kickstarter.com/projects/warlockks/fighting-fantasy-the-warlock-of-firetop-mountain

*POSSIBLE IOS/ANDROID RELEASE LATER
**RELEASE DATE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

it all, some beautiful digital miniatures crafted by skillful 3D artists, a vibrant, interactive Firetop Mountain that slots together as you wander around, a new combat system that uses the figurines within their environment, and more than a few new surprises in the depths of Zagor's domain."

However, doing all this has been a new learning curve for Tin Man Games with challenges aplenty. "Costs and complexity have definitely been the biggest tests," muses Neil over the development of the game. "The budget has blown out far beyond any of our previous digital gamebooks and obviously having all these new graphical elements and extra levels of story design has meant a lot more work for the team."

As a motivating factor, this brave new step forward meant trying something new in terms of project funding. "Basically we needed some more cash to get the art completed," explains Neil. "Kickstarter also gave the project a bit of a marketing boost too, which is always important at this stage in development." The TMG adaptation of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* was launched on Kickstarter at the end of October last year and less than 36 hours later was fully funded.

While the Kickstarter was fully funded and managed to reach four of its stretch goals (additional Russ Nicholson art, an adventurer's pack, an old TMG-style app version of *Warlock*, and colour art), it didn't manage to quite reach the last three (Battlebards music & SFX, an English voiceover, and localization for four non-English countries). "A little bit," states Neil, explaining how disappointed they were not to reach those last goals. "To be honest though we were all really excited that we reached as high as we did, so we can't really complain!"

We asked how Neil found the whole Kickstarter process. "It was, and continues to be, quite demanding!" grins Neil when looking back over that mad month of campaigning. "Kickstarter certainly isn't a way to make a quick buck. Once you've calculated how much time has gone into the campaign to begin with, the levels of support needed to communicate effectively with backers long-term and then throw in Kickstarter fees and taxes, you're not left with much cash."

That said, would Neil and his team consider using Kickstarter again for future projects? "Even though it's not easy," Neil says carefully, "for the right project, we would definitely look at Kickstarter again."

**ALEXANDER BALLINGALL**

**BUY IT BECAUSE: Going back to your roots has never been so dramatic!**

Another *Fighting Fantasy* Kickstarter project that successfully funded last year was a planned adaptation of Steve Jackson's 1989 novel *The Trolltooth Wars*. We asked project lead PJ Montgomery about the impetus behind adapting the book into a graphic novel.

"I've always thought that there was a strong visual side to the *Fighting Fantasy* series, thanks to the illustrations which accompanied each book," explains PJ. "These really helped bring the world of Titan to life thanks to the excellent work of the many illustrators involved, but also meant that the world of Titan was ripe to be turned into a comic.

"Starting with an adaptation of *Trolltooth Wars* just made sense to me, since it already features a cast of popular *Fighting Fantasy* characters and locations to play with."

Helping in this adaptation endeavour is artist Gavin Mitchell. "At the same time that I was looking for an artist for the book," explains PJ, "Gavin was looking for something to draw in the fantasy genre, so he offered his services.

"We'd already worked together on the horror comedy comic *Stiffs*, so I knew we could produce a good comic together."

With the project now nearing completion, PJ enthuses that, "[Gavin's] art is stunning, and he's really upped his game for *Trolltooth Wars*. [His] version of Titan is beautiful. It's a new take on Titan, with enough in there that the fans will still recognise it as the *Fighting Fantasy* world."

But any adaptation is more that simply putting pictures to words, as each type of media has its own style of storytelling. "There are changes," agrees PJ, "but nothing major. We didn't want to come in and completely change the story, because if we did that it wouldn't be *Trolltooth Wars*, and what would be the point? All we've done is made some cuts here and there, moved a couple of scenes around a bit, and added one or two small bits to it. Any changes have been made mostly for pacing reasons. With comics being a visual medium, the pacing is completely different to that of a novel, but at the same time you don't want to lose anyone's favourite moments. Hopefully we've managed to do a good job here, and the fans will enjoy it."

Speaking of enjoyment, we did ask PJ about the difficulties involved in such a project. "I have to hold my hands up here and admit," begins PJ, "that, with Gavin pencilling, inking, colouring and lettering the job, it's been a lot more work for him than either of us expected, which has been part of the reason for our much-publicised delays. We could have sped it up by hiring on other people to colour and letter it, but this would also have cost a lot more. There are other factors too, all of which have meant that the book is late, which I know is frustrating to some fans. It's frustrating for us too. However, the book is coming, and we're trying to get it finished as quickly as we can while still providing a quality

# At war deep in the Trolltooth Pass!

product for *Fighting Fantasy* fans, new and old alike."

Moving on to happier topics and thinking about the recent Easter, we probed PJ about any little Easter eggs fans should be on the lookout for. "Yes," says PJ without giving much away, "Gavin's been working things in. Some of them I put in the script, and some of them he's just drawn in off his own back, but fans will definitely want to scan the backgrounds of some scenes carefully. It's not just *Fighting Fantasy* either. Gavin's put in references to a few other popular fantasy stories and series here and there. I'm thinking of running some kind of contest to see who can find the most!"

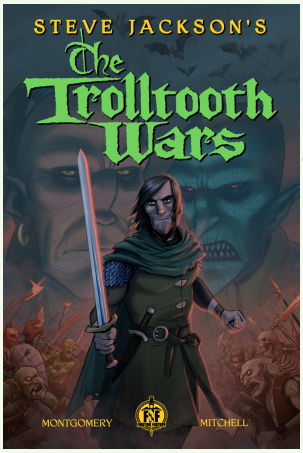
As noted at the beginning, this graphic novel was a Kickstarter project. PJ explains that doing the Kickstarter was "incredibly stressful!" He elaborates by explaining that, "running a Kickstarter is like working an extra full-time job on top of everything else. We were down to the wire as well with our target, which didn't help. You're constantly looking at the site, clicking 'refresh', hoping a few more pledges had come in. Some days would end without the total really changing, and one or two ended with us on less than we started with that morning. Those days were not fun! But at the same time, the support from people who are passionate about what you're doing and want to see it as much as you do, if not more in some cases, is fantastic. Their help, not just with funding, but with spreading the word and sending messages of encouragement, really helps."

Given all the ups and downs involved in doing a Kickstarter project, the question has to be asked: Would you do it again, and if so what would you do differently? "Would I do it again is quite a difficult question to answer at this point," muses PJ. "I've been living and breathing *Trolltooth Wars* pretty much non-stop for a year and half or so now, so it's not easy for me to have perspective on it. I think I'd have to wait until the book's actually out to be able to answer that properly. However, I do know that I'd change quite a bit. This is the first time either Gavin or myself have worked on both a licensed product like this, and on a graphic novel of this size, so it's been a massive learning experience for us. There are certain things I'd do differently right from the beginning of the process. For example, I didn't start on the script until after I'd acquired the rights, really only having a basic outline at that point. If I were to do it again, I'd definitely want to be ahead on this beforehand to give myself and Gavin a bit of extra lead time. It might seem like there'd then be the possibility I'd have wasted my time on it if Steve Jackson had come back to me and said no, but every writer's got loads of half-finished work lying around. Half a *Trolltooth Wars* script which ended up amounting to nothing would be no different."

And on top of all that, would the pair consider adapting the other two Allansia-based novels? "I don't know at the moment," shares PJ. "I'm very aware of both *Demonstealer* and *Shadowmaster* sitting there on my book shelf, as well as *The Zagor Chronicles* series of novellas, but again, it's difficult to think about doing them when we haven't got *Trolltooth Wars* out yet. That said, we have made a small addition to the end of *Trolltooth Wars* so that it could, potentially, feed into a *Demonstealer* adaptation. It doesn't end on a cliffhanger, but if a *Demonstealer* graphic novel were to go ahead, either by myself and Gavin or another team, it could follow on quite naturally. As to whether or not that actually happens, we'll have to see."

**ALEXANDER BALLINGALL**

**BUY IT BECAUSE: A visual feast of a makeover for an important moment in *Fighting Fantasy* history.**




Not final cover art design

## The Trolltooth Wars

**GRAPHIC NOVEL**

WRITTEN BY PJ Montgomery
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY Steve Jackson
ILLUSTRATED BY Gavin Mitchell

**RELEASED SPRING 2016***
**PRICE £15***

**WHAT'S IT ABOUT?**

It starts with an ambush. Balthus Dire's Hill Goblins raid a Strongarm caravan, little realizing the consequences. For the caravan carries Cunnelwort destined for Zharradan Marr. War between these two forces soon ensues.

As the war escalates, the Kingdom of Salamonis comes under threat, and a champion, Chadda Darkmane, is summoned to undertake a perilous mission. Somehow, he must turn the war to the advantage of Salamonis. Somehow, he must prevent the bloodshed and chaos of a victorious army's invasion on the Vale of Willow.

**EXTRA FEATURES**

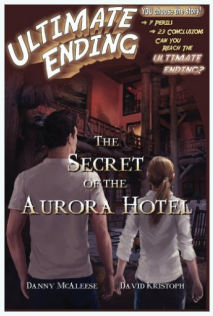
- Bonus artwork from guest-artists:
  - Anastasia Catris (*Cirque du Mort*)
  - Simon Williams (*The Transformers*, *Death's Head*, *Spectacular Spider-Man Adventures*)
  - Malcolm Barter (*The Forest of Doom*)

For more information, visit www.kickstarter.com/projects/pjmontgomery/steve-jacksons-the-trolltooth-wars

***Release date subject to change and price is RRP**

# FIGHTING FANTASY

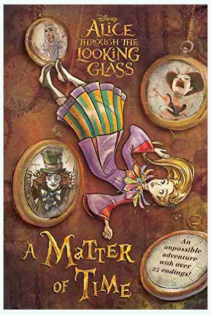
**Ultimate!**




A new series of books under the banner *Ultimate Ending* were published in April. The six books in the series are:

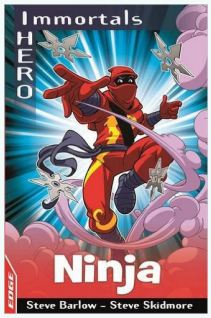
#1: *Treasures of the Forgotten City* by Danny McAleese
#2: *The House on Hollow Hill* by David Kristoph
#3: *The Ship at the Edge of Time* by Danny McAleese
#4: *Enigma at the Greensboro Zoo* by David Kristoph
#5: *The Secret of the Aurora Hotel* by Danny McAleese
#6: *The Strange Physics of the Heidelberg Laboratory* by David Kristoph

**Alice!**




Hard on the heels of Jonathan Green's steam-punk Alice adventure comes another gamebook take. This time it is *Alice Through the Looking Glass: A Matter of Time* by Carla Jablonski and is based on the film due out this year starring Johnny Depp.

**Hero!**




More titles in the *I, Hero* series are due out this year. *Warrior Princess* and *Spy* are out in October, with *Ninja* and *Unicorn* out in November. While since the last issue the following titles have been

### INKLE STUDIOS

On the inkle Studio front, *Sorcery!* parts 1 through 3 are all now available for PC and Apple computers via the Steam distribution app. Parts 1 and 2 are bundled together (store.steampowered.com/app/411000) while due to its size part 3 is available on its own (store.steampowered.com/app/445040).

Meanwhile, part 4 has reached beta testing and the plan is for the final part of the *Sorcery!* experience to debut in the northern hemisphere summer, containing a few surprises for fans.

### TIN MAN GAMES

The Kickstarter-backed version of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* (see page 7) is due out this year. Tin Man Games have indicated that they hope to adapt *Deathtrap Dungeon* in a similar way next.

### GRAPHIC NOVELS

The adaptation of *The Trolltooth Wars* is still in progress but should see publication this northern spring (see page 8). Hot on the heels of *Trolltooth* are plans for another graphic novel funded via Kickstarter. This time it will be based on Ian Livingstone's *Freeway Fighter*. It will be written by Andi Ewington and illustrated by Simon Coleby. Watch out for the Kickstarter campaign soon!

### ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY

After much asking from fans, the first *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* tome arrives in the pdf format. *Heroes Companion* is out now and there are very tentative plans to hopefully follow this with the rest of the *AFF* range. Get a copy here: www.rpgnow.com/product/176998/AFF-Heroes-Companion

Meanwhile, work has begun on an *Old World Gazeteer*, but don't expect a publication date yet!

Beyond that *Fighting Fantazine* has heard tentative plans for the French scenario *Le Tambour de Gondrim* (*The Drum of Gondrim*) and series of Titan maps created by Scriptarium to be translated into English and published by Arion Games. The Scriptarium writers are also rumoured to be helping with the above-mentioned *Gazeteer*. Finally, no word on the fate of the proposed *Titan Herbal* title.

### WIZARD BOOKS

And Wizard Books remain quiet about the future of the series in print.

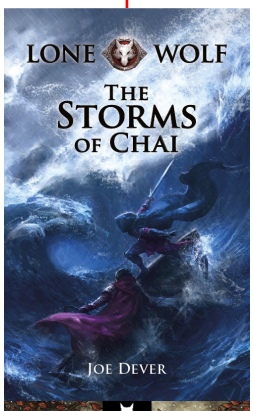
# CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

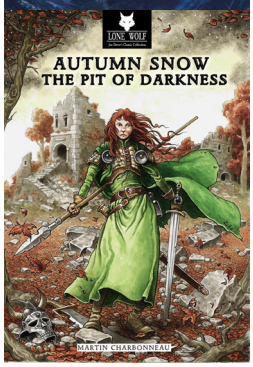
*Choose Your Own Adventure Dragonlarks* (the young reader range) previously saw the publication of the following in 2015: *Princess Island* by Shannon Gilligan, and *Fire!* by R.A. Montgomery. May this year sees the release of *Your Grandparents are Spies* by Anson Montgomery and November will see the publication of *Dino Lab* by Anson Montgomery, and *Princess Perri and the Second Summer* by Shannon Gilligan. Meanwhile, *Snake Invasion* by Doug Wilhelm is out in May also, this time as part of the *Choose Your Own Nightmare* range.

# LONE WOLF

The first brand new title in the *Lone Wolf* series, book 29: *The Storms of Chai*, is due soon. It was orginally scheduled to be published in April, but was finally published in May. Book 30, *Dead in the Deep*, is also expected to be published this year, with the final two books of the "New Order" series (31 & 32) yet to be announced as to title or potential publication date.

Meanwhile, Megara Entertainment plan to publish 'collector's editions' of the *Grey Star the Wizard* series later this year.




On top of that, there is the new spin-off series, *Autumn Snow*, the first title of which is *The Pit of Darkness* (*Le Puits des Ténèbres* in its original French version). This new series, which is coming soon, is based on the solo adventures written by Martin Charbonneau that were originally published as *Neige d'Automne* in the Scriptarium webzine *Draco Venturus*.


**THE ORACLE OF THE STARSTONE CAVES**

Your handy guide to the gamebook-related apps, books, magazines, and RPGs available soon...


ALL RELEASE DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE, AND ALL PRICES ARE RRP.

## MAY

**SUNDAY 1**

**BOOK – Choose Your Own Adventure Dragonlarks**

■ **Your Grandparents are Spies** by Anson Montgomery CHOOSECO price US$7.99

**BOOK – Choose Your Own Nightmare**

■ **Snake Invasion** by Doug Wilhelm CHOOSECO price US$6.99

## JULY

**FRIDAY 15**

**BOOK – You Choose: History**

■ **The Battle of the Alamo** by Amie Jane Leavitt CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95

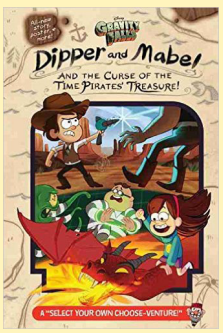
**BOOK – You Choose: History**

■ **The Revolutionary War** by Elizabeth Raum CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95

**TUESDAY 26**

**BOOK – Select Your Own Choose-Venture!: Gravity Falls**

■ **Dipper and Mabel and the Curse of the Time Pirates' Treasure!** by Lissa Rovetch and Jeffrey Rowe DISNEY PRESS £9.20




## AUGUST

**MONDAY 1**

**BOOK – You Choose: Greek Myths**

■ **Hercules and His 12 Labors** by Anika Fajardo CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95

**BOOK – You Choose: Greek Myths**

■ **Jason, the Argonauts, and the Golden Fleece** by Blake Hoena CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95

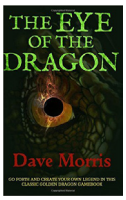
**BOOK – You Choose: Greek Myths**

■ **The Epic Adventures of Odysseus** by Blake Hoena CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95

# FABLED LANDS

## & OTHER MORRIS/THOMSON MATERIAL

Fabled Lands LLP have been busy since the last issue. Last year saw the publication of the first of the *Falcon* time-travel gamebooks by Jamie Thomson & Mark Smith.




Another of the *Golden Dragon* series was republished recently, Dave Morris' *The Eye of the Dragon* coming out April this year. This leaves only the two Oliver Johnson solo titles from the series un-reprinted (*The Lord of Shadow Keep* and *Curse of the Pharaoh*).

Back in February Thomson and Morris worked with Brian Mitchell's team at Amazon to release *Fabled Lands* book 1 (*The War-Torn Kingdom*) on the Kindle. Apparently Mitchell's team had seen the print books and were fans, so they reached out to Morris and Thomson and did all the heavy lifting to make it happen.

But the big news is that the Kickstarter for *Fabled Lands* book 7 (*The Serpent King's Domain*) was successful, restarting the series after a nineteen-year hiatus! Interior art will be by Russ Nicholson and there'll be a cover by Kevin Jenkins. An online demo is available here: richardhetley.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/fl-skd-demo-final.pdf

While that rumbles on, Jamie Thomson is collaborating with Ashton Saylor on *The Good, The Bad & The Undead*, a wild-west gamebook funded by Kickstarter. Meanwhile, following *another* successful Kickstarter last autumn, Dave Morris is working with Paul Gresty to bring *Frankenstein Wars* to life as a gamebook app from Cubus Games.

Finally, the pair have further projects with Cubus Games and a possible tie-in with a major US games publisher to do something big with the *Fabled Lands* world - but that's still in the early discussion stage.

# TIN MAN GAMES APPS

*Choices: And The Sun Went Out* is now available for iOS and Android. Tin Man Games are also making the app a 'hub-app' and so it will have a second story called *The Soul Eater* debuting very soon. More at: gamebookadventures.com/gamebooks/choices-and-the-sun-went-out/

*Miss Fisher and the Deathly Maze* will be available around the end of the year. A murder mystery gamebook with a visual novel approach more akin to *Phoenix Wright* (the 2001 video game from Capcom), *Miss Fisher* is based on the Australian murder-mystery books by Kerry Greenwood (published since 1989) that have more recently been turned into the television series *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*. More here: www.everycloudproductions.com.au/news/video-game-debut-with-miss-fisher-and-the-deathly-maze/p/85

# RECENT GAMEBOOK ROUNDUP

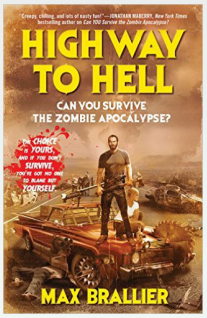
**Some of the gamebook titles published in the last year (and managed to avoid our detection last issue) include:**

### FEBRUARY 2016

- *Inconvenience Caused* by Arthur Wright is available on the Kindle for £2.08.
- *Begin Again* by Irving Zamudio is available on the Kindle for £0.99.
- *Auntie Bear Adventures*, a *Choose Your Own Dream* adventures, by Christopher Thrall is available for £5.91.
- *Planet Strange* by the Ragner Brothers is available for £8.97. *The President has disappeared and his disappearance could start an intergalactic war! Only YOU can save the President. Only you, as the fearless thirty-first century Cyberwarrior, Johnny Raygun, can solve the mystery of the President's strange disappearance.*

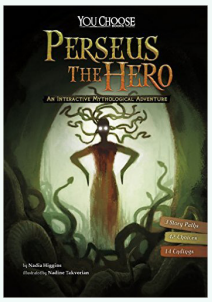
### JANUARY

- *Slay the Blood Witches* by Nathaniel Dale Epperson is available as a paperback for US$7.50. *A pair of evil witches are terrorizing the countryside! You must leave your comfortable life in the village of Vicejoy, travel to their castle, and slay them both to bring peace to the land! On your journey, you will be confronted with dozens of choices, and one wrong step could spell your doom! Do you dare enter this horrifying maze filled with evil and bloodthirsty creatures? Wander exotic lands, confront strange beasts, and unravel the mysteries! Take up thy sword, warrior, your adventure begins!*
- *Inside Out: Sadness Saves the Day!* by Tracey West is issued: *Superhero, Mermaid, Dragon,* and *Wizard*.




### Zombies!

- *Highway to Hell*, a sequel to the 2011 gamebook *Can You Survive the Zombie Apocalypse?* is due out in August. Once again written by Max Brallier, the adventure puts the reader in a zombie-filled cross-country road trip.



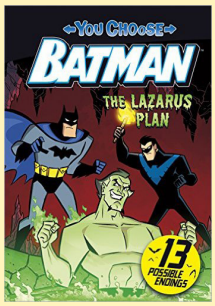

### Myths!

- The *You Choose Books* range delves into various Greek myths with the latest batch of gamebooks due out in August. The four titles scheduled are *Hercules and His 12 Labors, Jason, the Argonauts, and the Golden Fleece, The Epic Adventures of Odysseus*, and *Perseus the Hero*. Also out in July and August from *You Choose Books* is a range based on haunted locations (*The Tower of London*), space (*Space Race*), and moments in history (*The Dust Bowl*).

### Choose!

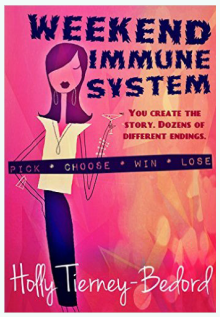
- *You Choose Stories* releases two *Batman*-related titles in August: *The Lazarus Plan* and *Clayface Returns*. Two *You Choose Stories* based on *Scooby Doo* were published in March: *The Mystery of the Mayhem Mansion* and *The Case of the Fright Flight*.

**BOOK – You Choose: Greek Myths**
■ **Perseus the Hero** by Nadia Higgins CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **The Boston Massacre** by Elizabeth Raum CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **The Civil Rights Movement** by Heather Adamson CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **Exploring the New World** by Melody Herr CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **The Golden Age of Pirates** by Bob Temple CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **The Middle Ages** by Allison Lassieur CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **Ancient Egypt** by Heather Adamson CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **Westward Expansion** by Allison Lassieur CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: Space**
■ **Apollo 11 Moon Landing** by Thomas K. Adamson CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **The Attack on Pearl Harbor** by Allison Lassieur CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **The California Gold Rush** by Elizabeth Raum CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **The Dust Bowl** by Allison Lassieur CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: Space**
■ **International Space Station** byAllison Lassieur CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: Space**
■ **Mars Exploration Rovers** by Steve Kortenkamp CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: Space**
■ **Space Race** by Rebecca Stefoff CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: History**
■ **The Underground Railroad** by Allison Lassieurr CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: Haunted**
■ **The Winchester Mystery House** by Matt Doeden CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95



## Weekend!

■ Published in March was *Weekend Immune System* by Holly Tierney-Bedord. It is available in the Kindle for US$2.99. *Remember those awesome Choose Your Own Ending books from childhood? Weekend Immune System is like that, but for adults.*



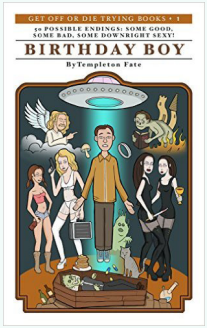

*It's the story of Juniper, a woman in her early twenties. Over the course of a three day weekend, You'll make decisions to steer her life in dozens of different paths. Some paths are happy. Some are devastating. Choose wisely. Juniper's life depends on it!*

## Robots!

■ A new *Chooseomatic* title (this one is under the banner *Chooseomatic Games*) is available for the Kindle. *U, Robot* by Matt Youngmark can be purchased for US$0.99. *68 possible endings! SO MANY WAYS to kill all humans! Take control of a giant worker robot, a humanoid replicant, or a sentient nanobot swarm and throw off the chains of robot oppression (or save humanity from the looming robocalypse, but seriously, where's the fun in that?)*

## Try!

■ Another *Choose Your Own Adventure* parody has been released under the banner *Get Off or Die Trying Books*. *Birthday Boy* by Templeton Fate is available for US$2.99 on the Kindle.




available as a paperback for £4.24. Two earlier titles were published in July 2015 as *What Should Riley Do?* and *Forget This!*, both by Tracey West.

■ *Choose Your Own Love Story: (Mis)Adventures in Love, Lust, and Happy Endings* by Ilyse Mimoun is available as a paperback for £6.07.

■ Another in the *Can You Survive?* series was published in January. *Can You Survive an Aritificial Intelligence Uprising?* by Matt Doeden is available as a paperback for £9.99. Two other titles in the series were also published at the same time: *Can You Survive a Supervolcano Eruption?* by Blake Hoena, and *Can You Survive an Asteroid Strike?* by Matt Doeden. Previous to that, 2015 saw the publication of *Can You Survive an Alien Invasion?* by Blake Hoena, *Can You Survive a Virus Outbreak?* by Matt Doeden, *Can You Survive a Zombie Apocalypse?* by Anthony Wacholtz, and *Can You Survive a Global Blackout?* by Matt Doeden.

### DECEMBER 2015

■ December saw new additions to the *Atama-ii* series with the following titles: #6 *Immortal Empire* by Marcos Benevides, #7 *The Ooze* by Kyle Maclauchlan, #8 *The North Fence* by Theresa Kannenberg, #9 *Tornado Alley* by Lesley Ito, and #10 *Brainstorm* by Andy Boon. All are available on the Kindle for US$2.99 each.

■ *Minecraft Self Adventure* by Billy Miner is available as a paperback for £7.99.

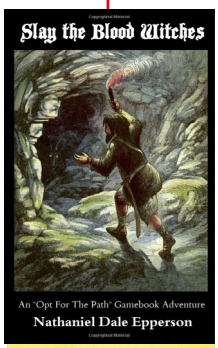
■ The fourth adventure in the *Relic Worlds* series was published. *Secret of the Dark Agents* by Jeff McArthur is available as a paperback for £6.73.

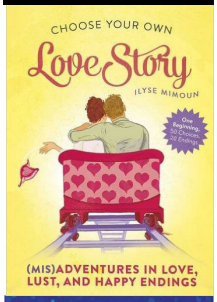
■ Several titles in the *You Say Which Way* series were published in 2015. *Dinosaur Canyon* by Blair Polly and *Deadline Delivery* by Peter Friend were released in December, while published prior to that were *Dragon's Realm* by Eileen Mueller, *Creepy House* by D.M. Potter & Blair Polly, *Between the Stars* by D.M. Potter, and *Volcano of Fire* and *Danger on Dolphin Island* by Blair Polly. All are available as paperbacks for US$14.95 each.

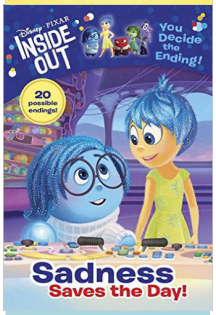
### NOVEMBER

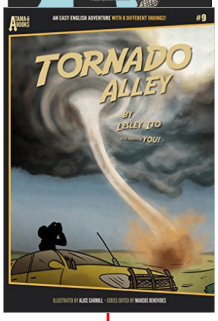
■ *Escape from MH-ZERO* by Henry J. Olsen can be purchased for the Kindle for US$2.99. This is based on *The Northland Chronicles* series of novels by the same author. *He doesn't know where he is. He doesn't know why he's here. He doesn't know the way out. Only YOU can help him escape. The last thing John Osborne remembers is insurgents sawing off his arm. Now he's shackled to an operating table, and, astonishingly enough, his dismembered limb is still attached. John wants to settle the score, but first he must escape. To do so, he needs your help. Your choices determine John's fate. Can you guide him through the dangers of MH-ZERO?*

■ *Random Solo Adventure: Fantasy Dungeon* by J. Pingo Lindstrom can be purchased as a paperback for US$16.95.






### OCTOBER

■ *Spire Abaze* by Jeffrey Dean is the second *A Road Less Traveled* gamebook and is available on the Kindle for US$3.99. The first in the series, *Westward Dystopia* was published in August.

■ October saw a series of titles in the *Turn of Phrase ESL* range (also known as *A Chooseable Path Novel for Learning English Expressions*). The range is described as "an educational series that teaches English language idioms, phrasal verbs, and collocations in the form of chooseable path novels. The series is designed for intermediate to advanced young adult and adult students." The four titles published are available in paperback (at US$15.98 each) or on the Kindle (at US$6.37 each) and are: *An Artful Heist* by Jacob Jun, *Blackout* by G.K. Gilbert, *Cleaning House* by Rebecca M. Karli, and *The Spoonmaker's Diamond* by Mary M. Slechta.

### SEPTEMBER

■ Published for US$14.99 in paperback was *The Eye of Hastur* by Scott King.

**BOOK – You Choose: Haunted**
■ **The Queen Mary** by Matt Doeden CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: Haunted**
■ **The Tower of London** by Blake Hoena CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose: Haunted**
■ **Alcatraz** by Matt Chandler CAPSTONE PRESS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose Stories: Batman**
■ **Clayface Returns** by John Sazaklis STONE ARCH BOOKS US$6.95
**BOOK – You Choose Stories: Batman**
■ **The Lazarus Plan** by John Sazaklis STONE ARCH BOOKS US$6.95

**THURSDAY 11**
**BOOK – Can You Survive the Zombie Apocalypse?**
■ **Highway to Hell** by Max Brallier GALLERY BOOKS £10.99

**SEPTEMBER**

**THURSDAY 1**
**BOOK – Choose Your Own Career Adventure**
■ **NASA** by Don Rauf CHERRY LAKE PUBLISHING price US$10.16
**BOOK – Choose Your Own Career Adventure**
■ **Olympics** by K.C. Kelley CHERRY LAKE PUBLISHING price US$10.16
**BOOK – Choose Your Own Career Adventure**
■ **White House** by Diane Lindsey Reeves CHERRY LAKE PUBLISHING price US$10.16
**BOOK – Choose Your Own Career Adventure**
■ **Super Bowl** by K.C. Kelley CHERRY LAKE PUBLISHING price US$10.16
**BOOK – Choose Your Own Career Adventure**
■ **Hollywood** by Don Rauf CHERRY LAKE PUBLISHING price US$10.16
**BOOK – Choose Your Own Career Adventure**
■ **Military** by Diane Lindsey Reeves CHERRY LAKE PUBLISHING price US$10.16
**BOOK – Choose Your Own Career Adventure**
■ **Broadway** by Monique Vescia CHERRY LAKE PUBLISHING price US$10.16

**BOOK – Doctor Who: Choose the Future**
■ **Terror Moon** by Trevor Baxendale PUFFIN price £6.99

**THURSDAY 8**
**BOOK – Pick Your Path**
■ **Thunderbirds are Go** by TBA SIMON & SCHUSTER price £5.99

**AUGUST**

■ Published for the Kindle (£0.99) is *Dances With Sasquatch* by Eric Diebel, Peter Dibble, Ryan Matsunaga, and Andrew Tran. *Embark on a magical, mystical journey of the mind where YOU'RE in control of the story! This collection of interactive adventures pits you against a wide range of choices in dozens of outrageous scenarios. Which spirit animal will accompany you in an underground dance competition? Want to have tea with the Sasquatch, or go after him with a knife? Each story has numerous possible outcomes—some good, and others deadly. Your fate is in your own hands!*

■ Described as the first in *The Wyldemere Chronicles, Lost Town - Escape the Subterranean Ruins* is a *Forge-Your-Path* adventure by William Woodward available on the Kindle for £0.99.

■ *Codename: Decade* by Johnny Rio was published for the Kindle at £6.39.

■ More titles from *You Choose Books* were published, themed either 'Fractured Fairy Tales' or 'Spies'. The titles were *Cinderella* by Jessica Gunderson, *Jack and the Beanstalk* by Blake Hoena, *Little Red Riding Hood* by Eric Braun, *Spies of World War I* and *Spies of the Civil War* by Michael Burgan, and *Spies of the American Revolution* and *Stealing Nazi Secrets in World War II* by Elizabeth Raum. All priced US$6.95 for the paperbacks.

**JULY**

■ *The Curse of Storm Island* by Class Six (2015) is a paperback available for £2.75. *An adventure gamebook written in the classic* Fighting Fantasy *style by the children of Class Six at Faringdon Junior School. Can you rescue your father from the curse of the vile Blood Skull on Storm Island before it is too late?*

**JUNE**

■ *Murder at Colefax Manor* by S.C. Cunningham is available as a paperback for £3.44. *An interactive murder mystery gamebook set during 1899 in the heart of Cornwall, England. For Detective Constable Stanley Barns, tonight was just any other night, until he received a call from a distraught maid who stumbled upon the scene of a gruesome murder. Explore the stately Colefax Manor and its grounds, interview the staff, and uncover startling evidence as you attempt to deduce who committed the dreadful MURDER AT COLEFAX MANOR.*

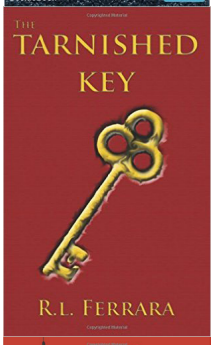
■ Two titles for the *Dead Reich* series by Max Brode have been published. Simply titled *Dead Reich* and *Dead Reich 2*, they are both available on the Kindle for £0.99 each.

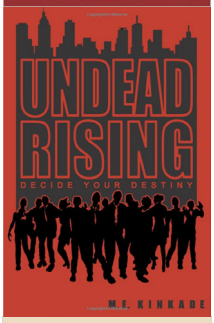
**MAY**

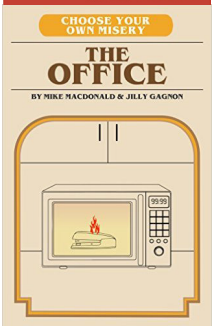
■ *Wishquest - A Destiny Novel* by Megan Anderson was published as a paperback for US$10.

■ Another new range of erotic gamebooks launched with an overarching title that nods to *Fighting Fantasy*. *Sextrap Dungeon* by Kurt Knox was released as a Kindle-only title for £1.99. It was followed by *Critical Ass* in July and *Clock Tease* in October, both by Knox for the Kindle. A selection of other interactive erotic titles for the Kindle and published since the coverage last issue include:

The *I Will Faithfully Execute* series by Becca Lusk and Kevin D'Onofrio
*Agent 69: Stroken, Not Stirred* by Callista Hawkes
*ReWrite* by Liriel Saarinen
*The Grimoire Dungeon* by Kristy Flowers
*Switched! with a Sexy Stranger* by Aurora Sparks
*Dragon Age & Star Wars* by Hot Coffee
*The House* by Cassie Alexander




The *Choose Her Peril* series by Philo Hunter
*The Perfect Date* by Elodie Woods
*Lost in the Castle of the Lesbian Vampire Ex* by Monstrous Love
*Down In The Dungeon* by Carla Frost

**APRIL**

■ A new *Click Your Poison* title has been published, *Superpowered* by James Schannep. It is available as paperback for £9.30.

■ For US$11.99 there is a paperback gamebook called *Undead Rising* by M.E. Kinkade.

**MARCH**

■ *Japan Folk Tales Gamebook Kintaro* by Jotaro Yoyogi for US$2.33 on the Kindle.

■ *The Tarnished Ked* by R. L. Ferrara is available as a paperback from US$9.79.

■ *Dark Forest* by J.L. Caballero is available on the Kindle for £0.99.

**FEBRUARY**

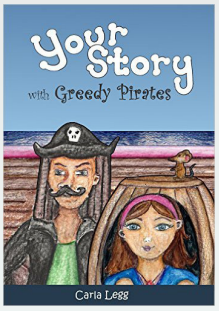
■ *Choose Your Misadventure: Online Dating* by Jenny Young is available on the Kindle for £1.29.

■ *The White Male College Experience* by Monica Edwards is available on the Kindle for £1.40.

**JANUARY**

■ *Choose Your Misery: The Office* by Mike Macdonald and Jilly Gagnon is available for £12.74.

**Pirates!**




■ *Your Story... with Greedy Pirates* by Carla Legg is available on the Kindle for £2.08. *You wake up one morning to find you have been captured by pirates - how will you escape? Your Story with Greedy Pirates is a fun children's adventure story, where your child gets to choose how the story goes. Will they be brave and confront the pirates? Will they hide until the coast is clear? Will they go exploring with mermaids? With over 30 different ways to get to multiple endings, they'll want to read this book again and again to explore all of the stories.*

**School!**

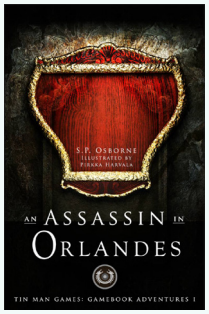
■ *Itsumo Hearts: The Legend of Kei Yamada* by Megan Anderson is out now as a paperback for US$14.99.

**Goth!**

■ *Goth-Amok* is a sci-fi gamebook adventure written by Matteo Poropat and designed for Android devices. It is available now for download on the Google Play app store. Press information suggests that the reader "will influence the course of events and will re-write the plot." Learn more at www.goth-amok.com.

**Print!**

■ The *Gamebook Adventures* series from Tin Man Games are coming to print via Snow Books (who published *You are the Hero*). *An Assassin in Orlandes* is planned for release this year along with another two titles.



## Bulgarian Gremlin!

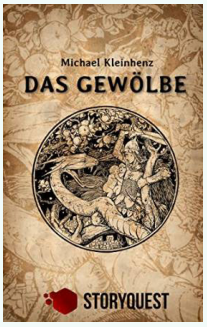
Bulgarian writer Nikola Raykov is the author of two gamebooks, *The Big Adventure of the Little Gremlin* and its sequel. Aimed at toddlers and little children (3-9 year olds), the books are now available in English (with Russian and Italian translations planned) and can be downloaded for free from gametale.eu.
Review page 100

## Swedish Wolf!

Swedish translations of the first five titles in the *Lone Wolf* series (*Ensamma Vargen* in Swedish) are now available and some of the titles feature the bonus adventures developed for the French editions.

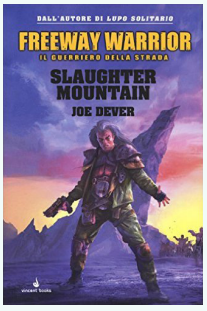
## German Vault!

A German gamebook, written by Michael Kleinhenz entitled *Das Gewölbe* (*The Vault*) was published in April. The book is available on the Kindle from Amazon.de for €0.99.




## Italian Dever!

There were several Joe Dever titles published in Italy since our last issue. They include books 1 & 2 of *Il guerriero della strada* (*Freeway Warrior*), books 6 through 9, and 29 of *Lupo Solitario* (*Lone Wolf*).




# FRENCH FIGHTING FANTASY

The French are being kept very busy with their version of *Advanced Fighting Fantasy*, with the translation of *Out of the Pit* (*Créatures de Titan*) being financed via Ulule (a French equivalent of Kickstarter) last year and the edition, from Scriptarium, due out some time in the northern hemisphere summer.

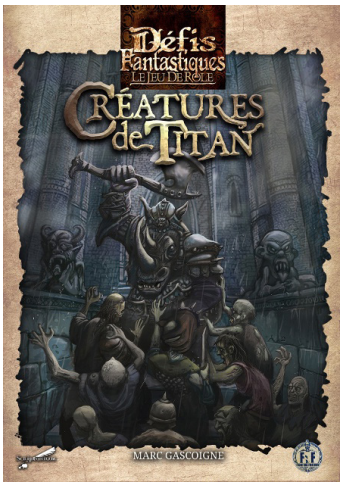
While the arrangement with Pete Knifton to provide some new art for the book fell by the wayside, fellow *Fighting Fantasy* illustrator Malcolm Barter has produced art for the edition, including colour illustrations and a brand new 'Sexy Shareela' picture as a special gift for backers.

The new French edition of the old monster guidebook will feature additional rules, which will include 7 new 'creature' character types.

Also included are two solo adventures allowing players to be a Marsh Hopper on Fire Island and a Jib-Jib hunter in Xamen.

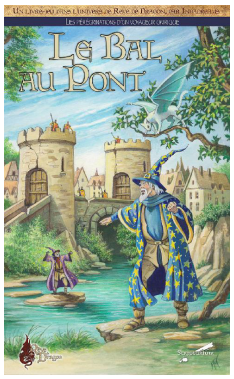
In addition to this, towards the year end Scriptarium intend to publish *Ruines de Sang*, the second part of *Pirates à la dérive* (the adventure that was part of the previous published GM gamescreen) as a single campaign book entitled *Maudit Trésor*, and will include a revised and expanded version of *Pirates* along with new illustrations.

A new gamescreen is under preparation too, with revised tables, a brand new illustration and probably a new adventure (the original gamescreen with the *Pirates* scenario above now out of print and not being reissued).




Work has begun on a translation of the *Heroes Companion* with the idea it will see print in 2017. In addition to this, the Scriptarium team will write the Lendleland and Kakhabad chapters of an Old World sourcebook for the English version, probably publishing the French version in 2017.

Meanwhile, Gallimard Jeunesse, French publisher of the *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks, continues with its series of re-issues, publishing *La Malédiction de la Momie* (*Curse of the Mummy*), *L'OEil d'Émeraude* (*Eye of the Dragon*), *La Sorcière des Neiges* (*Caverns of the Snow Witch*) and *Les Collines Maléfiques* (*The Shamutanti Hills*) in April 2015, and *Retour à la Montagne de Feu* (*Return to Firetop Mountain*), *Le Temple de la Terreur* (*Temple of Terror*), and *La Cité des Pièges* (*Kharé - Cityport of Traps*) in October 2015. They plan to re-publish *Les Sept serpents* (*The Seven Serpents*) in May.




# OTHER FRENCH GAMEBOOK NEWS

### LOUP SOLITARE (LONE WOLF)

French publisher Gallimard Jeunesse issued *Les Druides de Cener* (*The Plague Lords of Ruel*) and *Le Captif du Roi-Sorcier* (*The Captives of Kaag*) in April 2015, and *La Croisade du Désespoir* (*The Darke Crusade*), and *L'Héritage de Vashna* (*The Legacy of Vashna*) in November 2015. They plan to re-issue *La Tour de Cristal* (*The Deathlord of Ixia*) and *La Porte d'Ombre* (*Dawn of the Dragons*) in May.

### L'OEIL NOIR (THE DARK EYE)

The Scriptarium team have translated into French the 90s solo gamebook *Princesse Yasmina*, one of several German-language gamebooks based on the German RPG *Das Schwarze Auge* (translated in the 80s as *L'Oeil Noir* in French and in the 2000s as *The Dark Eye* in English). The gamebook is due out some time in the northern hemisphere summer with other solo titles to follow (there were at least 37 titles published in German). They are also translating the 5th Edition of the RPG into French for Black Book Editions.

### RÊVE DE DRAGON (RÊVE: THE DREAM OUROBOROS)

An RPG originally published in 2006 and now being relaunched by Scriptarium. It was successfully funded on Ulule in 2015 and an introductory solo gamebook adventure called *Le Bal au Pont* was published in February. A campaign book has been issued, with the rulebook in preparation and a second gamebook currently being written. More information can be found on the Ulule campaign project page: fr.ulule.com/revededragon/.

### OTHER TITLES

Megara have published *Coeur de Glace* (*Heart of Ice*) by Dave Morris, the new *Way of the Tiger* gamebook *Rédemption* (*Redeemer!*), *Nils Jacket contre l'agent X*, along with *Le Métro du Cauchemar* and *La Malédiction des Baskerville*.

French publisher Makaka have published a series of gamebooks in the comic format: www.makaka-editions.com.

TIN MAN GAMES

# CHOICES:

## AND THE SUN WENT OUT

available now

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gamebookadventures.com

# WINNING MOVES

Interview by ALEXANDER BALLINGALL

*The gaming industry is packed to the gills with Jacksons. Well, not really, but it must seems like it sometimes when two of the big movers and shakers are both called Steve Jackson. We caught up with the US version of Steve Jackson to try and clear up all the confusion.*

Photo © Chaz Boston Baden, 2016. Visit Hazel's Picture Gallery at www.boston-baden.com

Voted most likely to be confused with Steve Jackson, co-creator of *Fighting Fantasy*, Fighting Fantazine caught up with the US-based Steve Jackson, emperor-over-the-sea and founder of Steve Jackson Games. We find out about gaming and life on the other side of the pond...

## GRASS ROOTS – HOW TO BUILD A GAMING EMPIRE IN THREE EASY STEPS

**What can you share about your childhood?**
I was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I started reading at a very early age, and a trip to the library was the biggest treat I could imagine. My family played games, but we're talking about things like Monopoly and Yhatzee – there were no RPGs, adventure games, or even commercial "wargames" back then. It wasn't until college that I started playing Risk and the various SPI games, and had my first experience with *Dungeons & Dragons*.

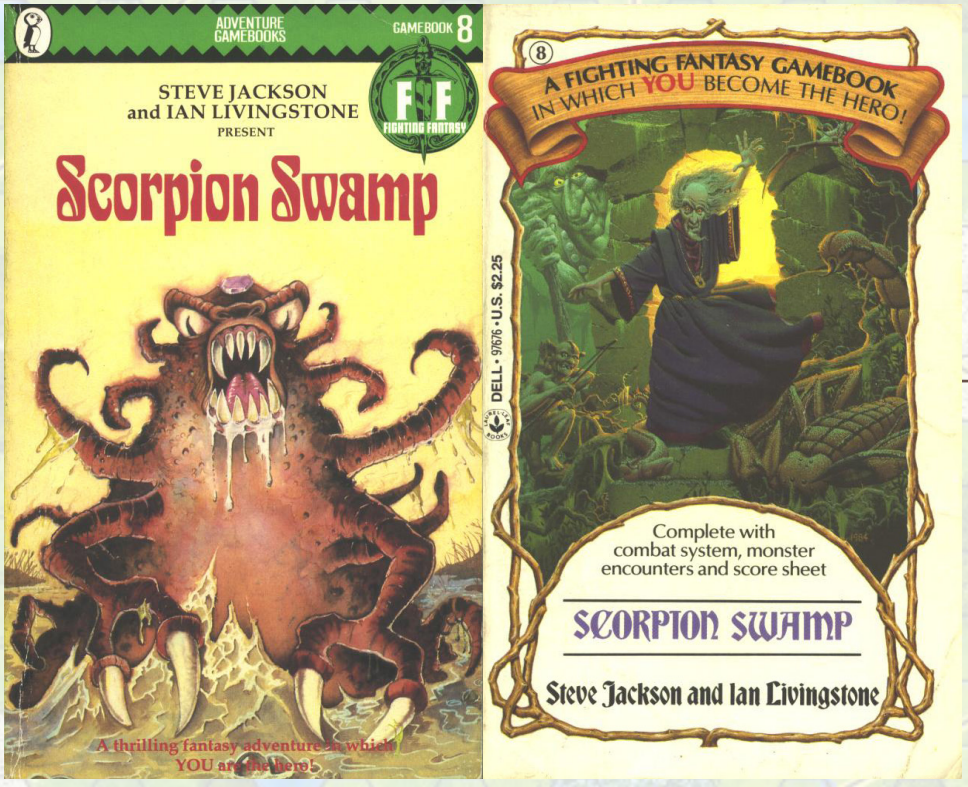
**How did you end up working for Metagaming Concepts?**
Purely by chance. I answered a help-wanted ad for a "zine editor" position. I wasn't even looking for work – I was still in school. But back then, "zine" only meant one thing: science fiction! So I was interested. And it turned out to be from Metagaming, looking for an editor for *The Space Gamer*. I didn't get that job, either – Ben Ostrander did, and he was a great editor. But the contact led to development work for me, which led to original game design.

**What was your proudest achievement while working for Metagaming Concepts?**
There were several – *Fantasy Trip* was certainly something I was proud of - but I think the release of *Ogre* might have been the high point just because it was my first!

**What was the initial impetus for *Ogre*?**
I was working with Metagaming at the time. They had a very tight set of specs for a small game and wondered if I could design to those specs. Yes, yes I could.

**In 2012 you ran a Kickstarter campaign for a deluxe version of *Ogre*. What was it like running the campaign, revisiting your game in this, and what has changed between the 1977 version and today?**
Oh, craziness. That's an essay question, sorry. The big thing that's changed is size; you can literally lay out the original map and play the game atop the box cover for the current edition. I have seen it done!

**What did you learn from running the Ogre Kickstarter that you would take into any future crowd-funding events?**
Lots, but the big one, briefly: Plan for more success than you think is possible!



**This page: A pencil draft of David Martin's cover art for Steve Jackson's third and final *Fighting Fantasy* adventure *Robot Commando* (1986).**

## FIGHTING FANTASY FIRSTS – SCORPION SWAMP

**How did you become the first 'outside' writer for the *Fighting Fantasy* series?**
I was visiting Games Workshop in London. We were talking about *Fighting Fantasy*, which was a new hit at the time, and Steve and Ian were telling me about the methods they used to keep the adventure organized as they wrote it. I don't remember the exact conversation, of course, but I said something like "I think if you just sat down and worked on it, you could keep a lot of it in your head." And they said "It's not that easy." And I said "Have you got a typewriter?" And they said "Sure." And over the next couple of days I finished about the first third of *Scorpion Swamp* on a manual typewriter in the GW offices. And they were right: it's not "easy" – but it's not impossible, either. I found writing *Fighting Fantasy* to be a whole lot of fun, and they liked what I had done, and I wound up with a contract to finish it.

# SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Gamebooks**

FIGHTING FANTASY

*Scorpion Swamp* (1984)
*Demons of the Deep* (1986)
*Robot Commando* (1986)

CAR WARS ADVENTURE GAMEBOOKS

*Battle Road* (1986)
*Fuel's Gold* (co-written with Creede & Sharleen Lambard, 1986)

OTHERS

*The Thing in the Darkness* (co-written with Matthew J. Costello & Warren Spector, 1984)

**Novella**

*Thera Rising* (co-written with David Pulver, 1995)

**Books**

*Game Design, Theory and Practice* (co-written with Nick Schuessler, 1981)

**Board, Card & Dice Games**

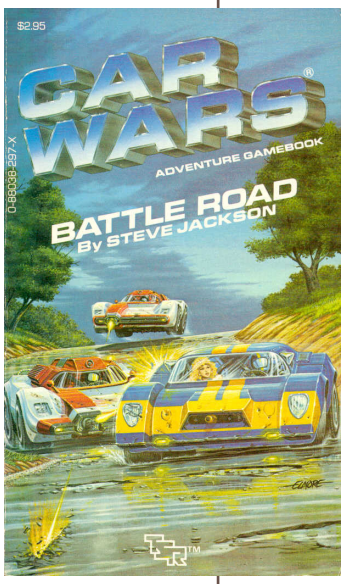
Ogre (1977)
Melee (1977)
G.E.V. (1978)
Wizard (1978)
One-Page Bulge (1980)
Raid on Iran (1980)
Car Wars (co-created with Chad Irby, 1981)
Undead (1981)
Illuminati (1982)
Battlesuit (1983)
Demonwand (1984)
Shockwave (1984)
Man to Man (1985)
Coup (1991)
Star Fist (1991)
Hacker (1992)
Orbit War (co-created with Wallace Wang, 1992)
Dino Hunt (1996)
Tribes (co-created with David Brin, 1998)
Munchkin (2001)
Dork Tower (co-created with Philip Reed, 2003)
Ninja Burger (2003)
Burn in Hell (2004)
SPANC: Space Pirate Amazon Ninja Catgirls (co-created with Fade Manley & Giles Schildt, 2005)
Zombie Dice (2010)
Trophy Buck (2011)

**What are your thoughts on not being credited on the front cover?**
I see my name on the front cover. :)

**Does being often confused with the UK-based Steve Jackson amuse/irritate?**
It's funny! Imagine a hundred years from now... it will drive the bibliographers crazy.

**Was *Scorpion Swamp* the first idea for a *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook that you pitched to Puffin?**
I didn't pitch it to Puffin – Steve and Ian did. But my understanding is that Puffin were very anxious for more books at that time and were happy to see this one, even if it was by a different Steve Jackson. And it made the children's bestseller lists when it came out, so something was right! I'm just sorry that it has not been part of the new wave of *Fighting Fantasy* reprints.

**Was *Scorpion Swamp* always known by that title or did it have others attached to it prior to publication?**
That was always the title.




**What was the rationale behind dividing *Scorpion Swamp* up into three incompatible quests?**
You know, I never thought of them as "incompatible" any more than going right is "incompatible" with going left. It's a different choice. In general, it was done for variety, and in particular, it was done so that the nature of some encounters could be completely different through multiple plays. It also means that there are more ways to win (not that there's anything wrong with a *Fighting Fantasy* book being full of different kinds of awful death!)

Plus, map-making is fun.

***Scorpion Swamp* uses a fairly unique approach by querying the reader if they have been to a particular clearing before. What prompted you to use this device when previous Fighting Fantasy adventures hadn't bothered?**
In a computer text adventure, it's very basic to set a flag for questions like this – and it makes a lot of sense. That old hermit will remember if he's seen you before, after all. There's no automatic way to do this in a text adventure, but it's very easy to let the player keep track of it. I don't know to what extent later *Fighting Fantasy* writers used the device... you tell me! I can tell you that if I wrote another adventure, that device would be near the top of my toolbox.

**What are your feelings about both the story and the accompanying artwork?**
I am happy with this story. I could have done with twice as many paragraphs, of

course. But if the rule is 400, I will use 400. (You have noted that #400 is an ordinary paragraph, though, and not victory. Thus messing with the reader's head just a tiny bit.)

The original cover shows a very blobby creature, but it's definitely a Scary Swamp Monster! A later cover shows a wizard and a literal scorpion, done with far more technical skill but not as dramatic. *[Ed: the US edition is shown next to its UK counterpart on page 16.]* The interiors were nice (same artist as the first cover, completely different style).

**Looking back, what sort of influences can you see on your first *Fighting Fantasy* adventure?**
It's very RPG, starting with the choice of "alignment." I can't recall any particular media influences, though I am sure they were there.

**After you submitted *Scorpion Swamp*, did you get any feedback?**
Ian and Steve were supportive! But at this remove I can't recall details of any particular tweaks they made. Probably because they were not traumatic and it *was* their series, so any comments would be automatically worthwhile. If there was feedback from Puffin, I don't recall it at all.

## SECOND DIP — DEMONS OF THE DEEP

**Your second *Fighting Fantasy* title, *Demons of the Deep*, appeared a little over a year after the first. How soon after *Scorpion Swamp* were you involved in writing your second title and who suggested a second book?**
I started making notes for #2 early on. I was always willing to do more, so it was completely up to Steve, Ian, and Puffin.

***Demons of the Deep* is clearly inspired by the legend of Atlantis, so what impetus led you to look at this for inspiration?**
Actually, the inspiration was "Hmm. What kind of background has not been done in *Fighting Fantasy*? AHA! An undersea adventure! After that, I started thinking about details and tropes, so we get Atlantis AND pirates AND the Kraken and so on.

**Which encounter/set piece is your favourite from *Demons of the Deep*?**
I thought Cyrano the Swordfish was a pretty cute mashup. Plus, alliteration!

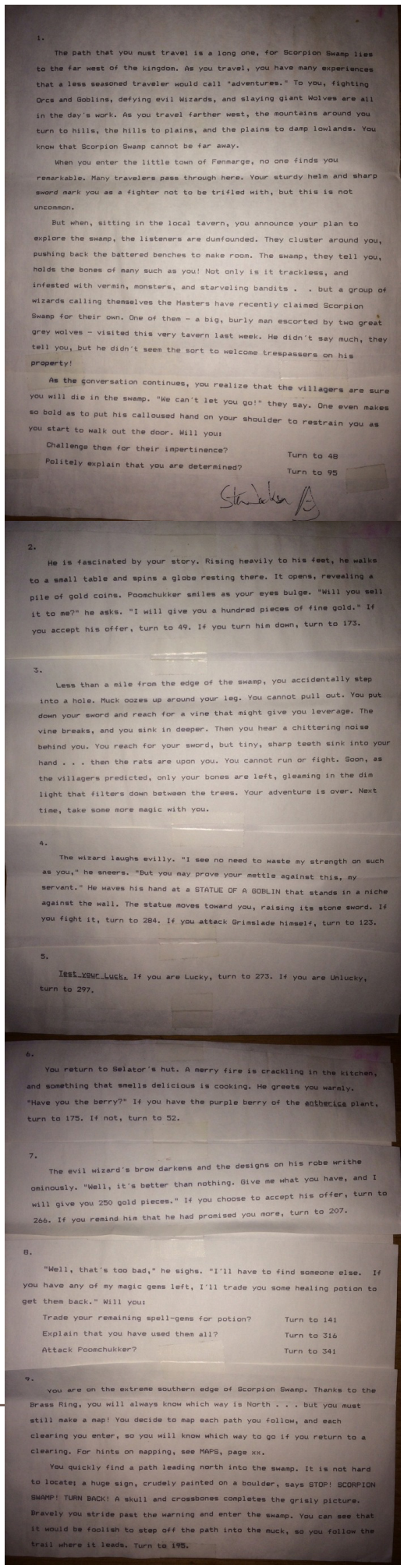
**Both this and *Scorpion Swamp* subsequently had their geography incorporated into the fledgling *Fighting Fantasy* fantasy world of Titan. Were you consulted about this and how do you feel about it now?**
I don't recall any discussion of that. Doesn't mean it didn't happen...

**What did you make of the art for *Demons of the Deep*?**
I quite like the cover, and some of the interiors are rather good too.

**Do you feel gamebooks should be linear with one victory outcome or more open to a variety of different, yet positive outcomes?**
I like multiple outcomes.

## STAGE THREE: THE ROBOTS TAKE OVER — ROBOT COMMANDO

**You went for a sci-fi adventure for your third title, *Robot Commando*. Why the change in genre?**
Changes in genre are good! Seriously, that was the only reason.



1.
The path that you must travel is a long one, for Scorpion Swamp lies to the far west of the kingdom. As you travel, you have many experiences that a less seasoned traveler would call "adventures." To you, fighting Orcs and Goblins, defying evil Wizards, and slaying giant Wolves are all in the day's work. As you travel farther west, the mountains around you turn to hills, the hills to plains, and the plains to damp lowlands. You know that Scorpion Swamp cannot be far away.
When you enter the little town of Fenmarge, no one finds you remarkable. Many travelers pass through here. Your sturdy helm and sharp sword mark you as a fighter not to be trifled with, but this is not uncommon.
But when, sitting in the local tavern, you announce your plan to explore the swamp, the listeners are dumfounded. They cluster around you, pushing back the battered benches to make room. The swamp, they tell you, holds the bones of many such as you! Not only is it trackless, and infested with vermin, monsters, and starveling bandits . . but a group of wizards calling themselves the Masters have recently claimed Scorpion Swamp for their own. One of them - a big, burly man escorted by two great grey wolves - visited this very tavern last week. He didn't say much, they tell you, but he didn't seem the sort to welcome trespassers on his property!
As the conversation continues, you realize that the villagers are sure you will die in the swamp. "We can't let you go!" they say. One even makes so bold as to put his calloused hand on your shoulder to restrain you as you start to walk out the door. Will you:
Challenge them for their impertinence? Turn to 48
Politely explain that you are determined? Turn to 95

2.
He is fascinated by your story. Rising heavily to his feet, he walks to a small table and spins a globe resting there. It opens, revealing a pile of gold coins. Poomchukker smiles as your eyes bulge. "Will you sell it to me?" he asks. "I will give you a hundred pieces of fine gold." If you accept his offer, turn to 49. If you turn him down, turn to 173.

3.
Less than a mile from the edge of the swamp, you accidentally step into a hole. Muck oozes up around your leg. You cannot pull out. You put down your sword and reach for a vine that might give you leverage. The vine breaks, and you sink in deeper. Then you hear a chittering noise behind you. You reach for your sword, but tiny, sharp teeth sink into your hand . . . then the rats are upon you. You cannot run or fight. Soon, as the villagers predicted, only your bones are left, gleaming in the dim light that filters down between the trees. Your adventure is over. Next time, take some more magic with you.

4.
The wizard laughs evilly. "I see no need to waste my strength on such as you," he sneers. "But you may prove your mettle against this, my servant." He waves his hand at a STATUE OF A GOBLIN that stands in a niche against the wall. The statue moves toward you, raising its stone sword. If you fight it, turn to 284. If you attack Grimslade himself, turn to 123.

5.
Test your Luck. If you are Lucky, turn to 273. If you are Unlucky, turn to 297.

6.
You return to Selator's hut. A merry fire is crackling in the kitchen, and something that smells delicious is cooking. He greets you warmly. "Have you the berry?" If you have the purple berry of the antherica plant, turn to 175. If not, turn to 52.

7.
The evil wizard's brow darkens and the designs on his robe writhe ominously. "Well, it's better than nothing. Give me what you have, and I will give you 250 gold pieces." If you choose to accept his offer, turn to 266. If you remind him that he had promised you more, turn to 207.

8.
"Well, that's too bad," he sighs. "I'll have to find someone else. If you have any of my magic gems left, I'll trade you some healing potion to get them back." Will you:
Trade your remaining spell-gems for potion? Turn to 141
Explain that you have used them all? Turn to 316
Attack Poomchukker? Turn to 341

9.
You are on the extreme southern edge of Scorpion Swamp. Thanks to the Brass Ring, you will always know which way is North . . . but you must still make a map! You decide to map each path you follow, and each clearing you enter, so you will know which way to go if you return to a clearing. For hints on mapping, see MAPS, page xx.
You quickly find a path leading north into the swamp. It is not hard to locate; a huge sign, crudely painted on a boulder, says STOP! SCORPION SWAMP! TURN BACK! A skull and crossbones completes the grisly picture. Bravely you stride past the warning and enter the swamp. You can see that it would be foolish to step off the path into the muck, so you follow the trail where it leads. Turn to 195.

**This page: Three pages from the original computer printout manuscript of *Scorpion Swamp* (1984).**

# SJ GAMES vs. THE SECRET SERVICE

*The following is directly borrowed from the website of Steve Jackson Games (with permission) and outlines events from their perspective. If you go to the website (www.sjgames.com/SS/) then you can read additional documents releated to these events.*

On March 1 1990, the offices of Steve Jackson Games, in Austin, Texas, were raided by the U.S. Secret Service as part of a nationwide investigation of data piracy. The initial news stories simply reported that the Secret Service had raided a suspected ring of hackers. Gradually, the true story emerged.

More than three years later, a federal court awarded damages and attorneys' fees to the game company, ruling that the raid had been careless, illegal, and completely unjustified. Electronic civil-liberties advocates hailed the case as a landmark. It was the first step toward establishing that online speech *is* speech, and entitled to Constitutional protection... and, specifically, that law-enforcement agents can't seize and hold a BBS with impunity.

**The Raid**

On the morning of March 1, without warning, a force of armed Secret Service agents – accompanied by Austin police and at least one civilian "expert" from the phone company – occupied the offices of Steve Jackson Games and began to search for computer equipment. The home of Loyd Blankenship, the writer of *GURPS Cyberpunk*, was also raided. A large amount of equipment was seized, including four computers, two laser printers, some loose hard disks and a great deal of assorted hardware. One of the computers was the one running the Illuminati BBS.

The only computers taken were those with *GURPS Cyberpunk* files; other systems were left in place. In their diligent search for evidence, the agents also cut off locks, forced open footlockers, tore up dozens of boxes in the warehouse, and bent two of the office letter openers attempting to pick the lock on a file cabinet.

The next day, accompanied by an attorney, Steve Jackson visited the Austin offices of the Secret Service. He had been promised that he could make copies of the company's files. As it turned out, he was only allowed to copy a few files, and only from one system. Still missing were all the current text files and hard copy for this book, as well as the files for the Illuminati BBS with their extensive playtest comments.

In the course of that visit, it became clear that the investigating agents considered *GURPS Cyberpunk* to be "a handbook for computer crime." They seemed to make no distinction between a discussion of futuristic credit fraud, using equipment that doesn't exist, and modern real-life credit card abuse. A repeated comment by the agents was "This is real."

Over the next few weeks, the Secret Service repeatedly assured the SJ Games attorney that complete copies of the files would be returned "tomorrow." But these promises weren't kept; the book was reconstructed from old backups, playtest copies, notes and memories.

On March 26, almost four weeks after the raid, some (but not all) of the files were returned. It was June 21, nearly four *months* later, when most (but not all) of the hardware was returned. The Secret Service kept one company hard disk, all Loyd's personal equipment and files, the printouts of *GURPS Cyberpunk*, and several other things.

The raid, and especially the confiscation of the game manuscript, caused a catastrophic interruption of the company's business. SJ Games very nearly closed its doors. It survived only by laying off half its employees, and it was years before it could be said to have "recovered."

*Why was SJ Games raided?*

That was a mystery until October 21, 1990, when the company finally received a copy of the Secret Service warrant affidavit – at their request, it had been *sealed*. And the answer was... guilt by remote association.

While reality-checking the book, Loyd Blankenship corresponded with a variety of people, from computer security experts to self-confessed computer crackers. From his home, he ran a *legal* BBS which discussed the "computer underground," and he knew many of its members. That was enough to put him on a federal List of Dangerous Hoodlums! The affidavit on which SJ Games were raided was unbelievably flimsy... Loyd Blankenship was suspect because he ran a technologically literate and politically irreverent BBS, because he wrote about hacking, and because he received and re-posted a copy of the /*Phrack* newsletter. The company was raided simply because Loyd worked there and used its (entirely different) BBS!

As for *GURPS Cyberpunk*, it had merely been a target of opportunity... something "suspicious" that the agents picked up at the scene. The Secret Service allowed SJ Games (and the public) to believe, for months, that the book had been the target of the raid.

The one bright spot in this whole affair was the creation of the Electronic Frontier Foundation. In mid-1990, Mitch Kapor, John Barlow and John Gilmore formed the EFF to address this and similar outrages. It's a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the Constitutional rights of computer users. (For more information, look at the EFF web site, or write them at 454 Shotwell St., San Francisco, CA 94110.) The EFF provided the financial backing that made it possible for SJ Games and four Illuminati users to file suit against the Secret Service.

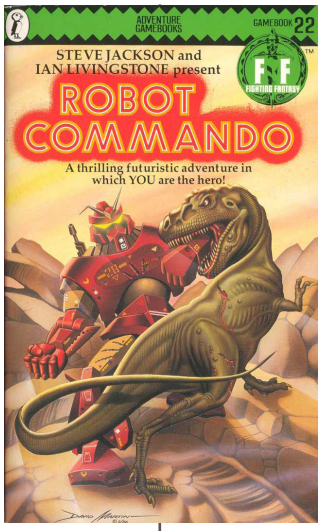
Two active electronic-civil-liberties groups also formed in Texas: EFF-Austin and Electronic Frontiers Houston, which have since merged to become Electronic Frontiers Texas.

And science fiction writer Bruce Sterling turned his hand to journalism and wrote *The Hacker Crackdown* about this and other cases where the law collided with technology. A few months after it was published in hardback, he released it to the Net, and you can read it online.

In early 1993, the case finally came to trial. SJ Games was represented by the Austin firm of George, Donaldson & Ford. The lead counsel was Pete Kennedy.

And we won. The judge gave the Secret Service a tongue-lashing and ruled for SJ Games on two out of the three counts, and awarded over $50,000 in damages, plus over $250,000 in attorney's fees. In October 1994, the Fifth Circuit turned down SJ Games' appeal of the last (interception) count... meaning that right now, in the Fifth Circuit, it is not "interception" of your e-mail messages when law enforcement officials walk out the door with the computer holding them.

**Looking back now, how well do you think the game mechanics of the robots and robot combat measure up?**
I got some good feedback after the book came out, but nobody has mentioned it to me in years. So clearly it worked, but it didn't set new standards in gaming that changed everything that came after...




**Was *Transformers* an inspiration for the book?**
Oh, probably :) You can't even think of robots whacking at each other without thinking of *Transformers*.

***Robot Commando* sees you use an anti-cheat method of the player needing an item with a certain numerical value. Do you think such things ultimately help or hinder a gamebook?**
I think that's a good question for a player survey, actually. Players, was it a good thing?

**This was your last *Fighting Fantasy* title to date. Did you ever pitch any other ideas for *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks to Puffin? If so, what can you recall of them?**
I don't recall any specific pitches. I definitely let them know I was willing to do more, but no further contracts materialized.

**Which out of your three *Fighting Fantasy* adventures is your favourite and why?**
I think *Scorpion Swamp*, because of the multiple paths. In retrospect that worked out well.

**If approached today, would you say 'yes' to penning a new *Fighting Fantasy* adventure?**
I really don't know! It would be fun to talk about. Though first they ought to reprint the three old ones...

**What do you think was the cause of the decline of game books beginning in the late 1980s?**
I suspect that it had to do with the accessibility of single-player computer games, which filled the "I don't have anyone to play with" niche.

**Where in the spectrum of the RPG/games market do you see gamebooks and what sort of niche to you think they fill?**
They're off to the side of the spectrum... they are really puzzles, but they're puzzles with a gaming "skin." And, as I said above, they're for the player who has nobody else to play with at the moment. Traditional RPGs require at least one player and one GM. With a game book, the GM can be remote in time and space and still challenge the player.

## OTHER TITLES

**You've written a few other non-*Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks. What can you tell us about your experiences of writing those and how they compare with *Fighting Fantasy*?**
Well, they are all different (duh)! I think the biggest overall observation I can make is that the underlying ruleset really has a huge influence on the kind of story you can tell. Just compare the length and depth of *Sorcery!* with the simpler books.

**How well do you think the Car Wars gamebooks did and do you see a possibly of them returning to print if the Car Wars kickstarter goes ahead?**
I was happy with their quality. I was satisfied, but not blown away, with sales. It's possible that they might come back, with editing. No promises...

## STEVE JACKSON GAMES

**What was the impetus for starting Steve Jackson Games?**
I wanted more creative freedom. Trite, but true.

**Can you recount your experiences of the 1990 raid on your company?**
Not here; that would be a lot of redundant typing. *[Ed: See the box out "SJ Games vs. the Secret Service" for more detail.]*

**How do you think the RPG/gaming industry has changed since you first entered it and where do you see it going from here?**
It's nearly unrecognizable. Gaming jumped onto the computer and became something that mainstream culture recognizes (even if, sadly, by some bad stereotypes). Non-game pastimes like *Farmville* (*Farmville* is not a game; you can't lose) earned billions by drawing very, very heavily on mechanics drawn from computer RPGs, which drew them from pen-and-paper RPGs. And, more slowly but still surely, hobby-type games have colonized mass market game departments. *Catan*! And (cough) *Munchkin*!

Where will it go next? I'm not going to guess. The past 30 years of gaming have been influenced heavily by "black swan" events – brand new ideas that moved the whole hobby in different directions. The next such idea that gets traction will move us again, and I am as anxious as you are to see it. One thing I think we can be sure of is that games are not going away!

**To what would you attribute the longevity of Steve Jackson Games?**
Persistence, attention to detail, and never too much bad luck all at once.

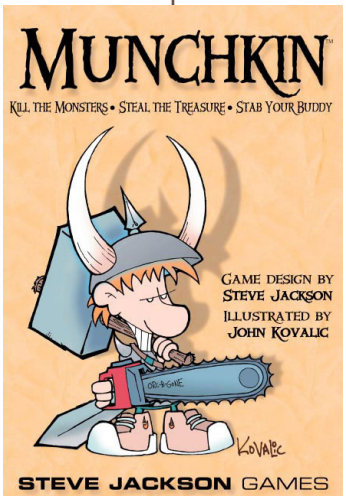
**What is *Munchkin* for those who aren't already aware of it?**
Briefly - it's a card game that started as a pardody of dungeon-crawl RPGs and has evolved into a silly homage to all geekdom. You kill monsters, stab your friends, alternately help and oppose everybody according to the dictates of the moment, and eventually someone reaches 10th level and wins.

**What is the most unusual and funniest custom cards you've come across?**
Kovalic just occasionally goes nuts, usually with ducks. Wonderful off-the-wall stuff.

**How do you decide which licence properties get either adapted to one of the SGJ systems (like *Munchkin*), or adapted from the ground up as a completely new game?**
Through long discussions, and everything is different - I can't really give a reasonable heuristic.

**What hobbies do you indulge in?**
Lego, model trains, model Lego trains, collecting studio glass, museum-crawling, railfanning, attending SF/gaming/train/steampunk conventions.

**What is your favourite non-Steve Jackson Games boardgame/RPG?**
"What is my favorite?" questions are hard to impossible - I play too many games. So to name a few: Puerto Rico, Risk, the original video game Starcraft, and current crush Splendor.




**What are you currently working on now as your latest game project?**
A couple of unannounced *Munchkin* things. Which must remain unannounced as of this writing...

Fighting Fantazine *would like to take the opportunity to thank Steve Jackson for agreeing to the interview.*

# DESTINED FOR GREATNESS

Interview by STUART LLOYD

*DestinyQuest is a relatively new entry to the somewhat crowded gamebook market, but has made a big splash in that small pond. Author* ***Michael J. Ward*** *has published three titles in his gamebook series. Regular* Fighting Fantazine *contributor and gamebook blogger* ***Stuart Lloyd*** *tracked the man down to query him about the series amongst other things.*

## AUTHOR'S NOTES – BACKGROUND AND THOUGHTS ON GAMEBOOKS IN GENERAL

**What makes a gamebook stand out for you?**

Good writing. It doesn't matter how clever or robust your game system is, you need to be able to tell a good story. Even though it is a gamebook and will provide multiple pathways, a good story needs a beginning, a middle and an end – and needs to asks questions, taking the main character on a journey of self-discovery. Think of your gamebook as a movie. There needs to be an over-arching plan to the narrative and that needs to be told well. I know there are exceptions to this rule (such as gamebooks that aim for more of a sandbox approach), but I always tend to find it is the ones with a compelling story that leave a more memorable impression. Dave Morris' *Heart of Ice* is a great example of a gamebook where the story and characters are expertly crafted.

**What spoils a gamebook for you?**

There are two things that are sure to have any gamebook hurtling into my bin. The first is a proliferation of 'dead ends' and 'instant deaths'. You know the type – you take the wrong turn or open the wrong door, and 'boom!' you are dead. It is incredibly lazy writing on the author's part and there is absolutely no need for it. I wrote a blog post on my website about this. *DestinyQuest* has no 'fatal ends' – but *The Eye of Winter's Fury* does provide added challenge with the new death penalty system.

My second annoyance with gamebooks is sort of linked to the above. It frustrates me when an adventure requires you to collect a supermarket's worth of items, most of which will be completely useless... however the one item you didn't pick up turns out to be the one you need to complete a quest or kill the bad guy. On occasion, item-hunting can work – but it is much better for the items not to have such pivotal roles in the narrative. All too often however, you find item-hunting becoming a sort of layer of difficulty that can force you to replay an adventure again and again to find the 'perfect path'. You have to be a very confident author to believe that your reader will have the patience to re-read your book multiple times!

**Tell us about your background.**

I'm a former magazine editor, now turned freelance writer. I specialise in writing educational materials for schools (which thankfully does an 'okay' job of paying the bills). When I fancy getting poor and destitute again, I put everything on hold to write a new book. I've been writing since as long as I can remember. I think, ultimately I always had a dream of writing for the games industry, but it feels a closed shop at times. So perhaps the *DestinyQuest* books are my way of living out that fantasy.

I grew up in the seventies/eighties, so I'm old enough to remember the first release of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* (and the slightly less cool, *Choose Your Own Adventure* books). As computer games were still in their 'Neanderthal' phase, nothing could really come close to the interactivity and fun of a gamebook or RPG, like *Dungeons & Dragons*. I was hooked (although managed to avoid sporting a dodgy beard).

**What's the hardest thing about writing a gamebook?**

I'm not sure, as I actually enjoy all of it! I suppose for *DestinyQuest* it is the balancing of the combats and the itemisation. That takes the most time – and can be very frustrating when you think that you have cracked it, then suddenly you create a build that breaks it again. It is a fine line between creating something challenging and a game that is too easy. With *The Eye of Winter's Fury* this was particularly difficult as I only had two Acts (instead of the usual three), which created a lot of problems in ensuring heroes were gearing up fast enough.

**What's the most exciting thing about writing a gamebook?**

I love writing characters – both the main character who you play, and the people that they meet. It is those interactions where I feel the stories really come alive. There is also something really nice about having a cast of characters that have become established in reader's minds, so that you can reintroduce them, play with the reader's expectations, explore their background and motivations more deeply. That is really fun for a writer.

**What advice would you give to someone who thinks that they want to write their own gamebook?**

Join up with a good app studio and write for them, as I think the market for print-based gamebooks is shrinking daily. The future of gamebooks is really on the tablet and computer. In some ways, I think the future is already here – if you look at what Telltale Games are producing (*The Walking Dead*, *The Wolf Among Us*), that is pretty much the pinnacle of interactive fiction right there. So if you want to be writing in this genre, I'd say play those games – study them and learn from them. They are stunning and show what can be achieved.

**The future of gamebooks is really on the tablet and computer.”**

**What is your wish for gamebooks?**
To be taken more seriously by genre publishers and the mainstream. There is enormous potential with interactive fiction to not only create great entertainment titles for all ages, but also to produce educational tools, training materials, collaborative projects, you name it. I think we're still taking our first baby steps… there is a long journey ahead, but an exciting one!

**What are the main influences on your writing?**
Everything. Obviously, computer games gave me the initial idea for the *DestinyQuest* game system, but beyond that, I always wanted to create something that felt more 'literary' – for an older audience. Everyone will have an opinion on this I am sure, but looking back at some of the earlier gamebooks, they had great moments and provided solid entertainment, but the stories never really stayed with you. They were not written to be literary masterworks, they were simply there to give an experience. Early computer games were very similar – probably due to the limitations of memory and processing power, but today we have stunning interactive works like *The Last of Us* and *The Witcher* series. There is no reason why a gamebook shouldn't have the same quality and depth of storytelling as a mainstream novel. Hence, I read a lot, and see what other genre writers are doing. Those writers are, in many ways, my inspiration. I think those people who say 'well, you should just be writing novels then' are not only missing the point, but also doing a huge disservice to the genre they are meant to be representing.

**What have you done since April 2012?**
After completing the first book in the *DestinyQuest* series, *The Legion of Shadow*, I listened and took note of the feedback from readers (and of course, no one is a harsher critic than myself). When it came to writing the second and third books in the series, I really sought to give the reader a lot more choices and control over the story. *The Heart of Fire* introduced factions, which the player could choose to side with, and also multiple side quests and secret areas to find. *The Eye of Winter's Fury* expanded on this further with sub-games you can play, new death moves for your hero to perform, and a death penalty system. I also tweaked the combat mechanics in both books (hopefully making it quicker and more dynamic to play), and added the team battles (where you can team up your heroes from different books to take on epic foes).

The third book in the series, *The Eye of Winter's Fury*, was a tough book to write, mainly because of the subject matter, but also because I really wanted to push the level of the story-telling and the choices that the reader was given in the narrative. The book takes place in the frozen north of Valeron, where we take on a specific character and follow their adventures. The story takes place after the events of *The Heart of Fire*, so it contains references to that book, but it can also be played completely separately if readers choose to do so.

In *The Eye of Winter's Fury*, I think the story was a lot darker and a bit more adult. Some readers may even have been a little shocked by just how brutal and unrelenting some of the narrative elements turned out to be. I didn't hold back on anything; I wanted the reader to be completely immersed in the brutal and dangerous environment of the north, to feel for their character and to also be left with a sense that they had experienced a real journey by its end.

## CREATING DESTINYQUEST

**What lead to your decision to write *DestinyQuest*?**
Believe it or not, I'm not a gamebook obsessive. I don't have shelves groaning under the weight of old *Fighting Fantasy*, *Way of the Tiger* or *Lone Wolf* books. I have fond memories of those series, but really *DestinyQuest* was born out my love for computer games. I have made no secret of the fact that I had quite a serious addiction to *World of Warcraft* – it pretty much took over my life for a long time. When I wasn't playing (which was rare) I found that trying to settle down and read a book was almost impossible. I think my body and brain was still craving that same buzz you get from playing a computer game. Around that time I started to wonder why no-one had tried to truly capture the MMO experience in a book format. That was when I recalled the gamebooks I grew up with, and suddenly ideas started to click into place.

> **When you're dealing with heroic fantasy, you really have to ramp everything up to 10. While I like to have the quieter character moments, explore some of the offbeat game world, the main focus ultimately needs to be the big battles and world-changing events.**

**Did you start with the stories, the world building or the system when writing *Destiny Quest*?**
I started with the game system because, as you know, I was keen to see if I could come up with a way of creating a *Diablo*/*World of Warcraft*-style adventure in a print format. As I was developing the system, I started to think about story – and from that, I began to plan out the world. By the end, I guess all three are working hand in hand with each other.

**How long did it take to come up with the system for *DestinyQuest*?**
I think it was fairly quick if I'm being honest. I used to play a lot of table top games, like *Warhammer*, so I had a good grounding of rules mechanics. I knew that there needed to be a roll to hit, a roll to damage, and then some sort of armour mitigation. The most difficult decision was deciding on the number of dice to roll. Originally damage scores were determined with two dice, but during testing it just made combats too punishing and quick. Hence I reduced to one die.

**Were there any systems that you tried out for *DestinyQuest*? If so, why did they fall short?**
The game system really didn't change that much from my initial concept. I suppose there was some back and forth on how many dice players should roll for speed and basic damage – and through my playtesting it seemed to make sense to have the two dice for speed and one die for damage. The only other idea that changed dramatically through playtesting was the idea of 'hybrid' classes that would use both brawn and magic (the witchfinder and the inquisitor were two examples). But I found that almost impossible to balance and make work, so I ended up focusing on just one damage attribute. I'd still like to do hybrid classes in future books – as they seem like the next step in the game process.

**How did you come up with your immortality rule?**
It was an easy decision. Because of the combat system and the huge variance of player builds (as mentioned above), death is more common in a *DestinyQuest* book than, say, a *Fighting Fantasy* book. In the latter, I think a lot of people will admit to cheating and ignoring the occasional bad roll or repeating a combat again. Once you're a hundred or more pages into a book, do you really want to turn back to the start? I didn't want *DestinyQuest* to be frustrating in that way. If you think about it, computer games have checkpoints/save points – so it made sense that players could simply return to the map and start over again. I also thought it would be cool to make a player's immortality part of the storyline. Every character you play in the *DestinyQuest* series has a reason for their 'get out of jail' card!

**Did you know that there would be so many special abilities when you started?**
Coming from a *World of Warcraft* background, then yes I was certainly aware that the books would have lots of special abilities – they are, in many ways, the fun part of the creative process and help define each type of career and path. I always intended for each career (rogue, mage, warrior) to play quite differently – I'm not sure I ultimately achieved that goal, but that was certainly the intention, and the special abilities were a key part of that.

**Do you have a system for colour coding the missions? Do you decide on the colour codes and work out the monsters from there, or do you start with the monster and colour code it later?**
The starting point is the story and deciding what quests/storylines need to occur first, second, third and so on. That provides the framework to the colour-coded quests. I have a very rough template for what speed the monsters should be at for each quest level and the average speed that I intend heroes to reach at each milestone. Other than that, it is a case of writing the quests, putting in 'rough stats' for the monsters, and continue from there. Then once the book is completed, I go back and playtest the combats, making tweaks as necessary.

## THE EVOLUTION OF DESTINYQUEST

**How has *DestinyQuest* evolved since you started it? Where do you see it going?**
When I wrote *The Legion of Shadow*, I wasn't necessarily intending to write a 'traditional' gamebook with lots of options and pathways. I was more concerned with creating something that felt more like an action-orientated computer game, such as *Diablo*. The combat and the strategy were more important to me. However, I didn't take into account the expectations people would have coming to *Legion of Shadow* as 'gamebookers'. They wanted choices and lots of them – and when the book didn't quite deliver on that, I got heavy criticism

from some quarters. So, with *The Heart of Fire* and *The Eye of Winter's Fury*, I put decision-making at the top of my list. I still think I could push that further – but these are big books, and you can't keep throwing choice after choice into every quest, otherwise you end up with branching pathways going off in all kinds of crazy directions.

In *The Eye of Winter's Fury* I hope that I provided a more fulfilling experience in terms of player choice. There were significant consequences for some of the decisions that you made – and there were also open-world areas (such as Ryker's Island), where you had more freedom to explore and revisit locations, often multiple times in order to complete different objectives. It felt a bit more sandbox at times.

I suppose the thing that concerns me the most is combat. Obviously, that is the core of the game, but I think dice rolling and stat-keeping can kill the book for a lot of people, who simply just don't have time to do the combats. That is a real shame, but I acknowledge the problem. If I was ever to plan a new gamebook (in print) I would probably remove combat entirely, and focus purely on the character and the story, and offering compelling choices.

**You have a massive number of special abilities for both the hero and the opponents. How do you make sure that the book remains challenging yet fair with such huge variance?**

It is very difficult. I think, as a starting point, you have to ensure the enemies stats are within the range of the hero – i.e. what they are able to defeat. Then you add in the special abilities and tweak their stats accordingly. I usually have a very strong sense of how I want a combat to play. I like every opponent to have their own narrative, so that feeds into their stats and their abilities. Of course, once I have written a *DestinyQuest* book, I test and I test, then I test again. I don't like using probability tables or anything like that, I play the books as a player would. I then balance each combat as best as I can.

**All three of your gamebooks contain both epic stories and a very involved game system. Did you know from the beginning that everything was going to be epic?**

I suppose I wanted each book to feel like its own instalment of a 'computer role-playing game', like *Dragon Age* or *Elder Scrolls*. When you're dealing with heroic fantasy, you really have to ramp everything up to 10. While I like to have the quieter character moments, explore some of the offbeat game world, the main focus ultimately needs to be the big battles and world-changing events. I don't think all fantasy gamebooks should follow that model, but it works for *DestinyQuest* because the concept is based around combat – and I want the reader to feel like they are having an impact on the world.

**Which *DestinyQuest* book are you happiest with and why?**

I think it has to be *The Eye of the Winter's Fury*. While I do love *The Heart of Fire*, and in many ways, it offers the most well-rounded experience of the three, I felt I had more connection with the main character in *Winter's Fury*. I also enjoyed the setting and all the research. A lot of work went into *Winter's Fury* and I am very proud of it.

**Do you have a favourite quest from your books?**

My favourite quest is 'Waking the Dead' from *The Legion of Shadow*, which was actually cut from my original self-published version because I didn't have the space. Because I knew I was going to put it online (for people to download) I knew I had no space restraints, so I just went for it. In many ways it became one of my most complex quests ('The Toy Maker's Tower' is possibly a close second), because not only do you have multiple pathways through the content, but there are also time-travel opportunities too, which affect the environment later.

**Which *DestinyQuest* book was the hardest to write?**

Ha, all of them! I think each book presented its own challenges. For *The Legion of Shadow* I was under pressure from my agent to keep the book as short as I could (yeah, right) so hence I had to chop a lot of material out of Act 3 and make it more linear. The playtesting of that book was also a complete nightmare. For *The Heart of Fire*, the challenge was having the two factions in Act 1 and ensuring that the disparate storylines all met up and interacted correctly. For *Winter's Fury*, I guess it was the difficulties I was going through personally at the time, which made focusing on the writing quite a challenge. I was also forced to reduce a three act story into a two act story, which made things tough in terms of the narrative, and also ensuring players were able to gear up to the levels they needed to reach the end game.

**Tell us about the *DestinyQuest* accessories – bookmarks and cards. What lead you to make these?**

From the start I always saw *DestinyQuest* as being bigger than the books. In fact, my original wish was to have a selection of random item cards in every book (some rare, others common). I'd also planned on doing supplemental decks that you could buy, which would offer particular career rewards or allow you to build an instant PvP deck to play with. There could also have been laminated character sheets to go with these. In the end, I was at least able to create the bookmarks and loot cards. With this kind of genre, inspired by MMORPGs and games like *Diablo*, players like to collect things and get their hands on rare exclusives. Again, it comes down to my desire to expand the game experience from the printed page – to give players more options.

**You have an active community of fans on the forums and the website. How has that helped with *DestinyQuest*?**

I've received fantastic support from the gaming community and I am always

grateful for that. I think I may have struggled to find a mainstream publisher if it hadn't been for the devoted fan base – so I do thank all those who have bought the books and continue to enjoy them. It's also very rewarding as an author to receive such great feedback – and to also have new fans discovering the books for the first time.

**Have you got lots of background notes for your characters and locations?**
The character info sort of exists in my head, whirling around in a maelstrom of thoughts and ideas – often changing and reshaping as I plan each new book. I do have a rough map of Dormus (the world that *DestinyQuest* is set in) and I also have a timeline document that marks the key events in the *DestinyQuest* timeline. The latter helps me keep on track and also provides me with ideas that feed into the stories. For example, the witch queen in *Winter's Fury*, as well as being a tribute to the excellent *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook *Caverns of the Snow Witch* (one of my favourite covers), was born out of a sub-story that developed when I was writing my timeline – about a Mordland princess and her son.

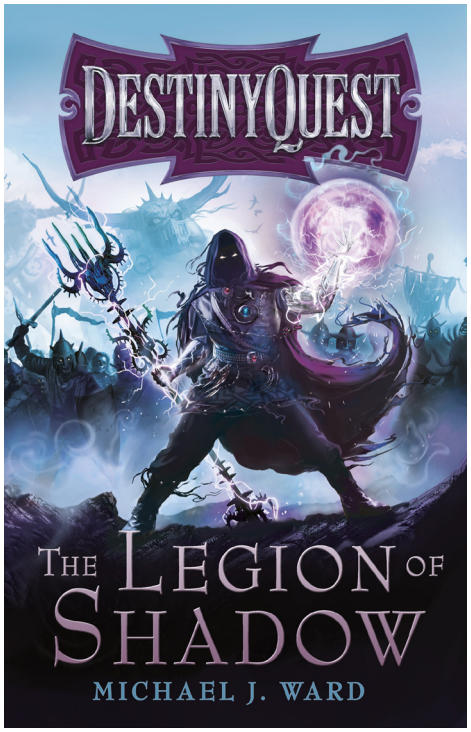
**Do you have some kind of program to help you with working out the combats and tests or have you simply run every combat several times?**
I'm afraid I do it the hard way and run through all the combats myself, playing through as a reader would. With the myriad of different item and ability combinations, I'm not sure how I would even start to create a program that could accurately assess the balance of combats. I'm not very technical so I'm forced to resort to the time-honoured tradition of simply rolling the dice!

***DestinyQuest* seems laden with many references to pop culture, fairy tales, fantasy and lots of other places. How do you come up with so many of them?**
It's not always intentional, but as I am writing and picturing scenes, or characters, sometimes I'll just get a line of dialogue or an image from a movie, game or book that I feel would be cool to reference. I'm sure many of my pop culture references go completely over most people's heads, but as long as they don't detract from the atmosphere and setting, then I do love popping them in.

**Are all the main characters interlinked?**
To a degree, yes. Each book, while offering a stand-alone adventure, also provides cross-over with previous titles. I like the idea that you can develop and play a character in one book, then have them cameo in other adventures that you play – even to the point of teaming up together. The stories interweave a lot. For example, many familiar characters would continue to return in future books – characters who you will know but may have changed (not always for the better!).

**Do you have any favourite characters in your books?**
I like writing the witchfinders, such as Eldias Falks and Virgil Elland, because they are that perfect blend of self-assured coolness and cold-blooded assassin. Anyone who dual-wields swords and flintlocks is always going to get a thumbs up from me.

**Bottom: The *DestinyQuest* website and accompanying forum. Visit at www.destiny-quest.com.**




**Has your editing and educational writing experience helped with writing *DestinyQuest*?**
My editing experience certainly helped when it came to self-publishing the first book, as I couldn't afford a proof-reader! I'm actually quite proud of what I achieved, as I think that first self-published book had less errors in it than my subsequent Gollancz editions! When it comes to the education side of my writing, I am often having to write for different audiences (teachers and children), and take quite dry concepts and make them exciting. I guess those skills helped with making a rules system that sounded fun and accessible, and a story that could be enjoyed by a wide audience of readers.

## THE LEGION OF SHADOW

**Was *The Legion of Shadow* the first book you wrote? Do you have other gamebooks elsewhere?**
*The Legion of Shadow* was the first gamebook I ever wrote – but no, I have been writing since as long as I can remember. I have a handful of unpublished novels and screenplays, some written for adults and others for children. Looking back, I can see how each one helped me to become a better writer. The best thing you can do is to keep writing – some projects will be successful, others won't, but you're always learning something.

**The first edition of *The Legion of Shadow* ended with a happy ending where your character was a hero amongst the people. In the 2nd edition, you created an extra adventure where the hero kills a mage called Lorcan who takes over the hero's body. He then appears in the next book.**

**Was there a big plan with all the heroes of the books?**
Lorcan was a character that I hadn't planned on adding. For the special edition of *Legion of Shadow*, my editor asked me if I could develop the bonus quest into something special. It had originally just been a few interlinked combats, designed to provide 'uber' challenges for end game heroes. I decided I needed to do more with it. At the same time, I was planning and writing *Heart of Fire*, and I had a better sense of the twists and turns that I wanted to explore with the character of the prophet. I'd also decided to include the team battles – but that left me with a problem. In *Legion of Shadow* your hero could be male or female. I wondered how I could get away with that without breaking immersion. So that is how I came up with the idea of Lorcan and the Nevarin becoming fused into his body. That meant I could include the Nevarin character in *Heart of Fire* and not have to worry too much about his former gender. (Having said that, future books would have settled on a definite 'look' for the Nevarin, which is male – and I guess I sort of had to go the male route with the prophet, so perhaps those female avatars are still getting short changed. Sorry!)

So, while Lorcan was a sort of wildcard addition, he still served the purpose of what I had intended for the Nevarin. I always knew his story (in re: *Legion of Shadow*) would end badly – or at least, he would return to being an outsider. His story would continue in Book Four through the eyes of other characters.

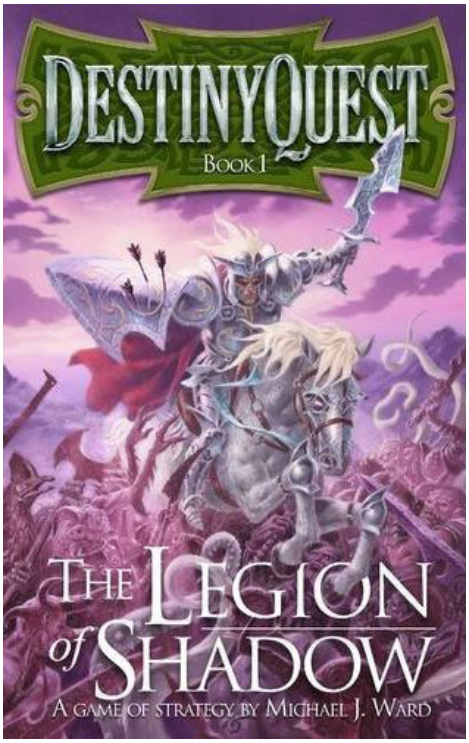
**You have also patched *The Legion of Shadow* with several upgrades. Is there anything else that you would like to change about *DestinyQuest*?**
I am still deeply unhappy with *The Legion of Shadow*. If I could, I'd probably just rewrite that entire book from scratch! Other than that, I think I am content with the second and third books, and the game system. It can be tough, at times, to adhere to the strict quest structure and I wonder if I could have changed that slightly (less quest difficulties perhaps). But all in all, I think the game plays well.

## THE HEART OF FIRE

***The Heart of Fire* introduced runes that allowed you to power up existing equipment. Why did you introduce this mechanic?**
I'm keen to offer players lots of different ways that they can customise their heroes. The runes serve a dual purpose. Firstly, they provide a means of boosting a hero's powers (by either adding a new ability or an attribute point). They also allow you to enhance an existing item – one that you might be keen to keep, but might be in danger of being out-levelled by other items. I think most players quickly got wise to the idea of adding most of their runes to items they replace less frequently (rings and necklaces for example) so they could benefit from all the added bonuses for as long as possible.

**In *The Heart of Fire*, you robbed Avian Dale of his magic. It seemed that he was the Gandalf or Yaztromo of *DestinyQuest* – the powerful wizard character who trains the hero – yet he died. Is no one safe in the land of *DestinyQuest*?**
Hey, who said he was dead? Yes, I have to agree that many characters meet a rather grisly end or at least experience extreme hardship in pursuit of their aims. Themes like sacrifice and struggle are always going to be at the heart of an exciting narrative. I want the books to feel dangerous and unpredictable – to both read and be a part of – the idea that this is a violent magical world, and these characters are going to be changed by that. I don't think, by the end of the seven book cycle, any character will emerge as a squeaky-clean valorous knight in shining armour.

**A lot of *Heart of Fire* takes place with the backdrop of the war between the Church and the Wiccans, but neither side is portrayed as totally good and totally evil. The heroes of the books seem to end up turning to what is traditionally seen as evil, but the demon from *Heart of Fire* helps out Prince Arran from *Eye of Winter's Fury*. Is there something more going on? Is there an absolute morality to your world or is it shades of grey?**
I sort of mirror the modern world we live in, which I believe is morally ambiguous at the best of times. I'm also a scholar of history and you'll find that with all wars and confrontations, each side had its own reasons and belief-structure for entering into conflict. I think it is a bit naïve to paint a 'good' side and a 'bad' side – people don't act in such a way. We are all complex creatures, capable of both kindness and cruelty. So yes, *DestinyQuest* is very much about painting a world in shades of grey. Of course, you have to have an overarching threat – a nemesis to pit your heroes against – but even then, you have to have motivations and reasons for everything. One of the main driving forces in *DestinyQuest* is revenge – and often characters will resort to any means necessary to achieve that aim. However, the course and end of their journey can

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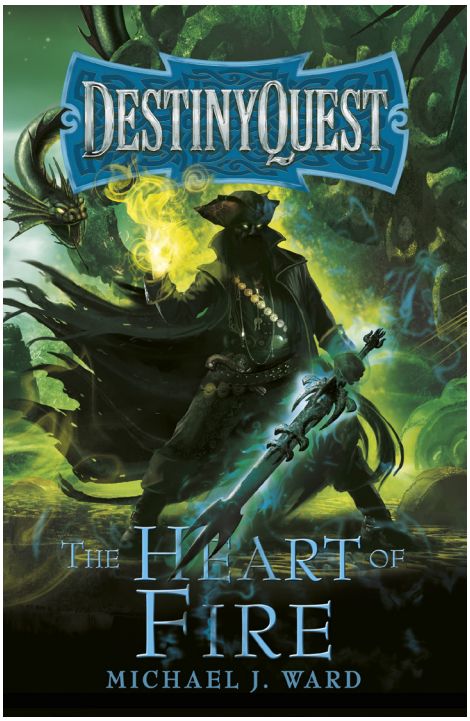
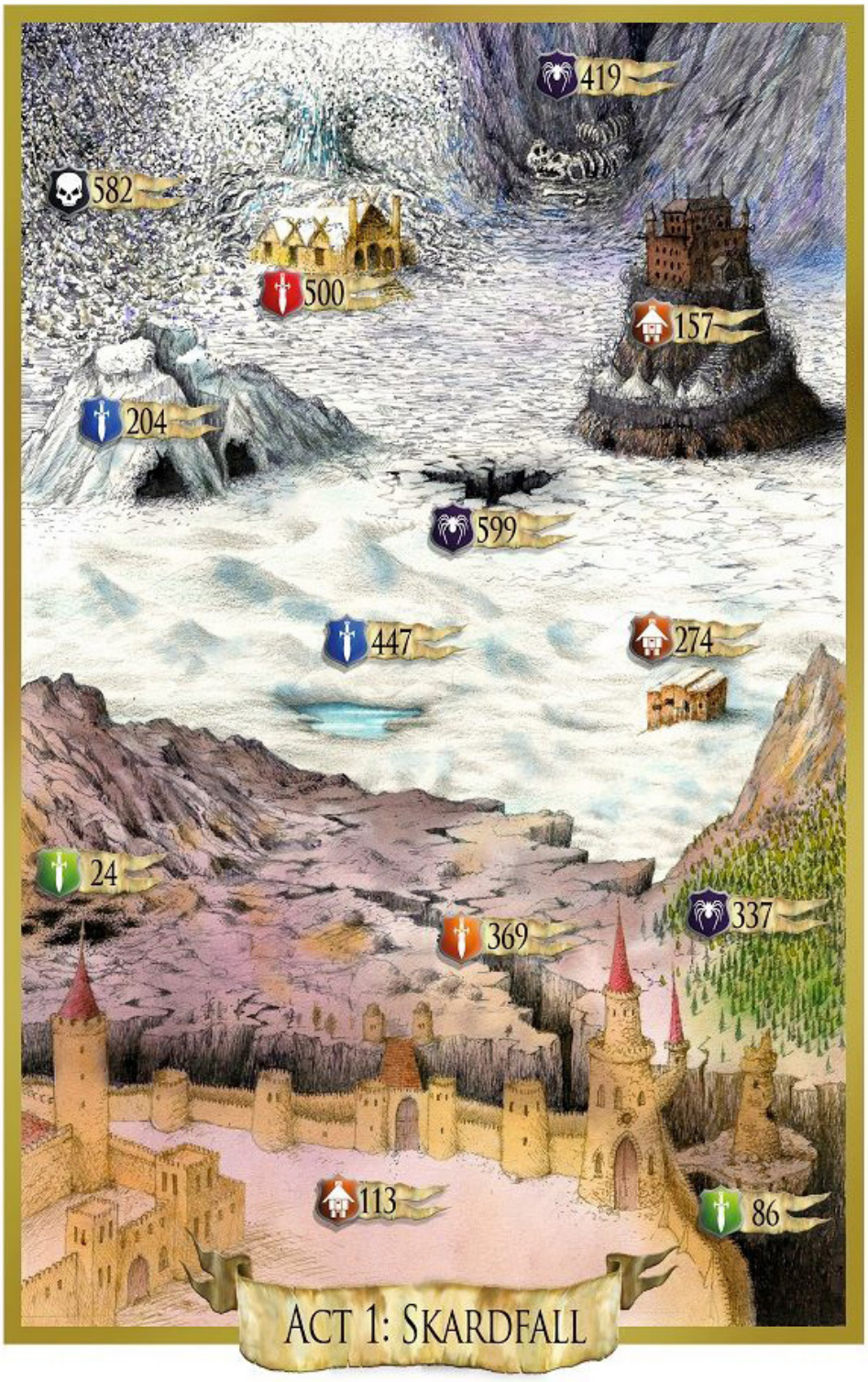





often prove be very different to what was envisaged. The characters are constantly growing – and learning their place in the world.

## THE EYE OF WINTER'S FURY

**_Winter's Fury_ is shorter with only 2 acts and 780 paragraphs. What lead you to go to two acts?**

It was my publisher's decision because it was cheaper to have colour on the inside covers than to produce a separate colour section at the centre of a book. I had originally planned *Winter's Fury* (and indeed all my books) as three act stories, so I had to really rethink things for *Winter's Fury*. It created a lot of problems with the itemisation, as I had to speed up the levelling and item acquisition in Act 1. On the whole I think it worked, although perhaps it felt a little more uneven in terms of career distribution.

**_Winter's Fury_ also introduced the death penalty so dying too many times makes you weaker. What was the thinking behind this?**

Well one of the criticisms aimed at *DestinyQuest* was that there was no sense of threat or danger. With limitless 'lives' you didn't have to worry too much about losing a combat or throwing yourself into a difficult challenge. I decided I wanted to change that with *Winter's Fury* and introduce some kind of penalty system. Once I had finalised my ideas re: the prince character, the death penalty system seemed to fit with his journey and make perfect sense. Again, the system needed to be balanced. I didn't want players to find themselves penalised to such a level that the game becomes unplayable. So, while you may suffer a few minor setbacks, none are game-breaking, and there are plenty of opportunities to remove your penalties – if you can find them!

**_The Heart of Fire_ introduced team combats, but they didn't make an appearance in _Winter's Fury_. What lead to this decision and were team combats planned for future books?**

It was simply a space issue. I had to cut loads of ideas out of book three. In my original plan, the prophet makes an appearance at the end of Act 1 and you actually had multiple endings (and boss monsters) to that act - both of which could be fought as team battles. There was also going to be a sequence of team battles at the end of Act 2, with the prophet and the prince having a longer journey together in the witch's city. I realised quite early on that I just didn't have the space to include those, and as I got to the end of Act 2 I realised most of the fights had already become pretty epic anyway, so adding in team battles just felt a bit much. However I did add one as a bonus download to my website.

I like the team battle idea but I never got much feedback on what readers thought of them in *Heart of Fire*. I guess for many, having to juggle that many abilities could be a chore rather than a pleasure. I always saw them as something akin to a MMORPG raid, so you'd put aside maybe an hour – lock yourself in a room, and just go for it. And, of course, you could do the battles with a friend, adding a little co-op action to your *DestinyQuest* experience. If I did *DestinyQuest* Book 4 then there would definitely be team battles (with a choice of using your *Legion of Shadow* or *Heart of Fire* hero – possibly Arran too), but I think I would have them away from the main storyline (a sort of 'super dungeon') or as optional versions of existing fights for better loot rewards.

## PUBLISHING AND PUBLICITY

**The first _Destiny Quest_ book was self published - why did you self publish the book?**

The short answer – no-one wanted it! My agent at the time was taking the manuscript around a lot of children's publishers (which, with hindsight, might not have been the best tactic). I got some great feedback on the book but the answer, time and time again, was that the gamebook genre was dead and it didn't really fit with their 'publishing lists'. In the end, I just simply refused out of stubbornness to assign another manuscript to the bin, especially as I felt I

had something special and unique – so I took the brave step of self-publishing the book myself.

**Do you have to pay a lot of money to self publish something?**

Well, it is certainly not cheap, although I guess there are more options available now – more so than when I was self-publishing *DestinyQuest*. I was very keen to have physical copies of the book. I chose Matador as they also have their own book-selling team, which help to get your book on shelves. Having a physical stock does mean that you pay more upfront for the printing – but your book is more likely to be taken on by highstreet bookstores. Print-on-demand is another model, where the physical printing occurs when someone actually orders the book. This is cheaper, but when I was producing *DestinyQuest* I was turned off this idea as I had heard stories that the printing wasn't as good quality – and print-on-demand books would often not show on bookstore databases (for the purposes of ordering – as they would always appear as 'out of print'). Now, this was about six years ago, so I guess the industry has moved on from there, so print-on-demand is probably a better choice, and eBooks are certainly a more viable model now, and cheap to set up. For me, I tend to be a traditionalist – and I like the physicality of 'owning' an actual book. My advice to anyone who is self-publishing is never pay more than you are willing to lose. There are no guarantees you will sell any books, so be prepared for that.

**What kind of skills do you require to self publish a book?**

Well, being a good writer is one of them, obviously! Passion is all well and good, but perfecting the craft takes a lot of time and practice. *DestinyQuest* was by no means the first book I had written, so I had experience to draw on when it came to the writing. If you lack that experience, then always have other people read your work. Iron out any problems and make sure it is as perfect as you can make it before even approaching a publisher. It is much harder to make large scale changes once the process has begun and your book is being typeset.

Being a good proofreader is always helpful. Most self-publishers will offer this service, although it can be costly. I proofread *DestinyQuest* myself, which was no easy task as it is always harder to scrutinize and pick up on errors in your own work. Again, an extra pair of eyes can help. If you lack experience in this area, then paying for a professional proofreader would be worth its weight in gold. There is nothing worse than getting your printed book and spotting a glaring error or two. They happen, but best to squash as many as you can.

Having a good idea of how you want

**"If you're passionate about your book and believe it has an audience, then do it! Although, I would always advise self-publishing as the last resort. Try agents and publishers first. If your work is great, then it might find a home at a publishing house, who will do all the hard work for you (and you'll get paid, rather than the other way round!)."**

to present your work is also important. When I produced *DestinyQuest* I wanted it to stand shoulder to shoulder with professionally produced trade paperbacks. Back in the day, self-published books did have (and still do, to some extent) a stigma of being 'lesser works' – and nothing says that more than a god-awful cover. Most self-publishers will offer book cover design services but I would honestly avoid these like the plague unless you want your book to have some 'stock image' slapped on it. Also, if a family member or relative (or even yourself) purports to be a fantastic illustrator, think long and hard about the quality of the artwork that will be produced. Depending on your book, I would always advise researching a good professional illustrator and getting them to provide the artwork. Most illustrators work digitally, so they could also do the type and other aspects of the cover design.

Presentation also feeds into the rest of the book – the paper quality, choice of font, size of font and so on. Look at the books you enjoy reading (or are in a similar genre) and use those as a template. Don't try and reinvent the wheel – go with what is selling at the moment.

The final skill you'll need is resilience. Self-publishing can be a long and drawn out process, particularly if you are doing your own proofing, managing the cover design, and overseeing the other aspects of your book's production. I guess it's possible to take a back-seat on many of those aspects, but this is your book and you want it to be the best that it can be, so sometimes it pays to be quite OCD about its production. Like any project, it can consume your life – but the end reward is worth it,

**Did you have to do the publicity for the book yourself?**

I used Matador for *DestinyQuest* who do provide some basic PR services. In the end, like with all books and publishers, the burden inevitably falls on the author to do as much as they can. I contacted book stores to arrange signings – I also set up my own *DestinyQuest* website to provide a hub of information for fans. Of course, social media is also a fantastic tool. If your book is aimed at a specific genre, then make contact with people who are interested in that area. They may be willing to mention your book or even review it. I also ran some paid advertising in magazines. That can be costly, but it really helps to raise the profile of your book.

**What advice would you offer to someone who wants to self publish?**

If you're passionate about your book and believe it has an audience, then do it! Although, I would always advise self-publishing as the last resort. Try agents and publishers first. If your work is great, then it might find a home at a publishing house, who will do all the hard work for you (and you'll get paid, rather than the other way round!). I know finding publishers isn't easy, trust me (the Artist's and Writer's Yearbook is invaluable here, by the way) – but their feedback might be helpful in helping you to fine-tune your book further. And then, if all doors still appear closed, then go for self-publishing and prove them all wrong!

**After your first book was a success, you got a publisher for later editions and later books. How did that arrangement come about?**

I discovered that Gollancz was one of the few fantasy publishers that accepted unsolicited manuscripts (i.e. you don't need to approach them via an agent). *DestinyQuest* was selling really well (I had sold out of my first print run and was just about to print a second), so I thought I had a strong case to pitch to a publisher. I put together a detailed proposal, which included my self-published book and a document that outlined my sales and my achievements to date. Basically I wasn't

just selling the book, but also myself as someone who was dedicated to seeing the success of my project. I was lucky I guess, and Gollancz liked what I had done.

**What is the process of working with a publisher?**
Once the contracts are out of the way (and that can be a long and drawn out process, and a little daunting if you don't have an agent!), you set about writing your book. You submit your manuscript, which is then checked by your editor. You'll then get it back with the editor's comments. Often these will just highlight narrative elements that may need looking at (such as inconsistencies, or clarification on what is happening in a particular scene). Once the manuscript is submitted again, it is copy-edited, which is a more ruthless check of the manuscript for any issues – and during this stage, the text is tagged (so the typesetter knows what headings etc. are used). You then get the manuscript back again to approve any changes that were made. Finally, the manuscript goes to a proofer who does a final check, then onto the typesetter. I then get the typeset document to check before it goes to the printers – so that is the last stage you can make minor changes. So basically, there is a lot of back and forth, and yes you'll be seeing and reading your manuscript a lot!

None of the above happens quickly. Sometimes it can be up to six months or more from submitting a manuscript to getting the copy-editor's version. During this time, the publisher may have already started on the cover; another process which you can be involved in as much or as little as you like (for all of the *DestinyQuest* books I provided sketches of exactly what I wanted on my covers and worked closely with Dominic Harman on the final designs).

**How long does it take to go from a complete manuscript to a published book?**
It can take roughly a year – perhaps a little more. It will depend on your publisher's schedule and where your book has been placed in that schedule. They seem to have certain months when they release, and often these can move around a bit (DQ3 was originally set to release at Christmas time but was pushed back to March the following year). You usually get your own copies of the book about two or three weeks before the official release.

**Do you have any advice for anyone trying to publish a physical book?**
Well, I'm not entirely sure I am expert. I went the self-publishing route and I got lucky; the book proved popular because it was different to anything else out there. I think the novelty value helped it to win fans and gain word-of-mouth. That in turn led to my publishing deal with Gollancz. I know for a fact that publishers have very little faith in physical gamebooks being commercial. But then, that was the same climate when I brought *DestinyQuest* out and I managed to enjoy some success, so my motto is always believe in yourself and the product. I think, for another gamebook to be successful in print, it would need to continue to innovate the genre – it would need to be completely different to anything we have seen before. Otherwise, sadly, I think a print gamebook is going to struggle with all the competition from apps and computer games.

## THE FUTURE OF DESTINY QUEST

***The Heart of Fire* left a sequel hook in the ending. *The Eye of Winter's Fury* also had a cliff-hanger ending. Is the series building up to something huge? If so, how many books will the saga last?**
I like to use the epilogue sections as a way of teasing readers with hints of what the next book might bring – keeps things exciting and the reader guessing. I suppose the books are building up to something pretty spectacular; I kind of see each book in itself being a stand-alone adventure with plenty of epic battles and a satisfying conclusion – but yes, when taken together they provide different snapshots of a much greater conflict.

I have plans for three more books. At the moment, I don't honestly know if they will ever see the light of day, but I certainly hope to at least write and publish a *DestinyQuest* 4 at some stage, as it will tie-up some of the loose threads and character arcs from *The Legion of Shadow* and *The Heart of Fire*.

**How did it feel when you found out that the series was not going to be continued?**
I won't lie, I was devastated. In fact, I am still trying to come to terms with it even now. It knocked my confidence and has taken me a long time to really get my creative drive back into gear. I suppose you can't dwell on the past and what might have been – and instead take it as a learning journey and look to the future.

**Did you consider crowdfunding for *DestinyQuest* 4?**
I have toyed with the idea and part of me still wants to – but I have a lot of reservations. Firstly, I think crowdfunding works best when a project is almost complete. I haven't started a Book 4 yet and would probably see the crowdfunding as a means of raising capital to actually write as well as produce the book. Secondly, the cost of self-publishing to the level of the previous books is expensive, which means I would need a lot of backers. And tied into that last point, as this would be the fourth book of a series I'm not convinced people would back it unless they had already read and bought into the other books. So, on the one hand my heart says 'go for it' as I dearly want to write more *DestinyQuest* books, but my head says differently – certainly when it comes to crowdfunding.

**What plans have you got for books 4 through 6?**
None at the moment, I am afraid. They exist as notes and sketches, and I think they would be great gamebooks, but I can't really act on my ideas at the moment. The sad reality is that I need to think about the work and projects that will bring in the money and help support myself.

**Do you have any plans for doing some *DestinyQuest* "spin off" adventures? For example, some short scenarios, either made by you or fans?**
I hadn't thought of that, but perhaps I could do some spin offs at some point. I'm a bit on the fence about fan-made stuff, as I'd worry people may take established characters and put them into situations that would be distinctly non-canon or inconsistent with the books. Things could get a bit messy. But I would never stop anyone having a go if they were mad enough and had the time.

**You have always experimented with new mechanics in new books. Were there any other mechanics planned for books 4 through 6? Were there any mechanics that you binned?**
Book Four would have introduced pet minions, which you either summon (as a mage) or have as a permanent companion (warrior/rogue). These would add additional benefits and also encourage you to explore deeper synergies between abilities. There would also have been a vault (to allow you to swap weapons and items before each combat) and monsters that would have immunities to certain elements/abilities. So, in a sense, I wanted to make combat more tactical. The main hero's power would also open up some unique combat strings, in a similar way to the death moves in *Winter's Fury*.

**Did you have reasons for the characters in books 4 through 6 being immortal?**
In Book 4 the hero has a similar 'get out of jail' ability as the prophet in *Heart of Fire*, so he is not immortal but there is a reason why he 'could' escape the grim reaper time and time again (and I say 'he' because he would be a named gender-specific hero, like Arran in *Winter's Fury*). Book 5 would tell a story through the eyes of three different heroes (at least that was the plan), one of whom would not be immortal. Book 6 I'm still unsure which character I would make the hero. There is a choice of two, one of whom you have already met as a supporting character.

**What kind of new features might we experience in further *DestinyQuest* books in terms of new twists on rules?**
Well, Book 4 would give you access to a 'vault' where you can store and re-equip items whenever you want (there is a narrative reason for this). So, that means

you can actually swap equipment (if you wanted to) right before a tough battle. Some opponents may have very high resistances against certain abilities, so it will become more tactical as to what items you decide to equip. I also want to introduce an extra layer of strategy by having pet minions – which will boost certain powers.

**You have three more *DestinyQuest* books planned. All of the heroes of the first three books ended them with a new mission. Will all the threads come together in the last three books?**
I hope so or I am really screwed! Actually, quite a few story threads come to a (sort of) conclusion in Book 4, but Arran's story (from *Winter's Fury*) would not continue until Book 5. Although the next three books are planned, the outlines are pretty sketchy. I don't really plan them in any serious detail until I need to. So I know the broad brushstrokes of the narrative, but the nitty-gritty (the fun stuff, you could say) is still to be explored.

***DestinyQuest* features many great characters, some of whom might even survive by the end of the series. Will any of them make repeat appearances in later books?**
Oh yes! You will see a lot of returning characters in future books. I think that is one of the great things about working on a series, is that you have a backlog of characters you can reintroduce and play with, explore them in different ways. Often I don't always see the opportunities when I first write them, but when I start to plan up later books I suddenly think 'oh wow, we could use this character instead. That would be interesting'. One minor character from *Legion of Shadow* will have a very big role in later books!

**Did you ever consider doing happy endings for your *DestinyQuest* heroes?**
Ha, that's make me smile. A happy ending, oh wouldn't that be good? Well, I think I've always been drawn to the concept of the 'doomed anti-hero' – the outsider, if you like. I probably get that from reading the likes of Michael Moorcock and M. John Harrison. I think characters that have to endure to survive, and are constantly forced to make difficult choices, are much more interesting to me than a 'hero' who saves the day. Although, who's to say Book 6 won't have a happy ending, you never know.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

**Are there any other *DestinyQuest* products planned for the future? Mini gamebooks, perhaps? Or a world guide?**
I would not be opposed to creating more spin-off products (I actually started tinkering around with a *DestinyQuest* card game, which was kind of cool), but I suppose you have to weigh up the time, the size of the potential audience and, of course, a publisher or developer who wanted to help fund and create your product. One idea I always did want to explore was to create a lavish book that was simply packed with team battle combats. You would select your team at the start and then see if you could fight your way to the end of the book. There would be maps and artwork of all the creatures, item rewards you could choose etc. I always envisaged it as something pretty cool – as a solo adventure or something you could get together and play with your game group.

**When you have finished with *DestinyQuest*, would you like to do another gamebook series?**
I don't know, is the honest answer. I probably wouldn't choose to – as I have several novel ideas I would like to pursue, but I am always open to offers and opportunities.

**Since you have written both educational materials and gamebooks, have you ever considered making an educational gamebook?**
I have wondered about that a lot, but so far I haven't really hit on an idea that has fired me up. But yes, I don't see why you couldn't teach children about – say, the Anglo-Saxons, or circuits and electricity – by giving them an interactive story filled with decisions and puzzles. Perhaps they'd need to be played outside of the classroom though! And I'm sure they'd much prefer to be playing *DestinyQuest*, right?

**What are you working on at the moment?**
I'm currently dabbling with a thriller (written under the pen name M J Eaton). I'm about a third of the way through. It's a very different book to anything I have written before, which is why it seems to be taking me twice as long(!). But I am very pleased with how it is shaping up. There is also a glimmer of hope on the horizon for another *DestinyQuest* book, but nothing has been confirmed yet so sadly I can't elaborate! Stay tuned to my website over the coming months…

**What plans do you have for the future?**
I would really love to write a fourth *DestinyQuest* book. As I mentioned previously, I may get a lucky chance to do that. If that doesn't happen, then I have some novel ideas that I want to pursue. One is fantasy, and the others are more mainstream. I'm not decided on which one I want to focus on, but once I know what the situation is with the future of *DestinyQuest*, I can start to channel my energies into the next project.

**What do you think the future of gamebooks is?**
I think the next few years may see quite a split in the genre – with gamebooks probably becoming more interactive and gamery (thanks to the blossoming app market), whilst more story/narrative focused 'gamebooks' may go the other way, removing the game and combat mechanics altogether (or at least making them transparent), and just solely focusing on narrative choices. I think there is a big market of readers who may enjoy the fun and control of reading a story where they are the 'hero' and can influence the narrative, but are put off by the more fantasy/game-orientated aspects.
I also think, with mobile technology, there is huge potential for gamebooks to cease being solo experiences – and instead, open up opportunities for readers to collaborate, be able to share and influence each others' narratives, give gamebooks almost an MMO feel.
I think it is quite an exciting time for gamebooks, particularly with the technology that we now have available. But I'm afraid, at heart, I'm still a print lover – so, I hope gamebook readers will keep supporting old fogies like me! (I still haven't grown the beard though…)

Fighting Fantazine *would like to thank Michael J. Ward for agreeing to the interview.*

### Skill, Stamina and Luck

Before embarking upon your quest, you should first determine your *Initial* SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK scores.

SKILL: Roll one die. Add 6 to this number and enter this total in the SKILL box on your *Adventure Sheet*.
STAMINA: Roll two dice. Add 12 to this number and enter the total in the STAMINA box on your *Adventure Sheet*.
LUCK: Roll one die. Add 6 to this number and enter the total in the LUCK box on your *Adventure Sheet*.

SKILL reflects your swordsmanship and agility. STAMINA represents your strength and general health; the higher your STAMINA, the longer you will survive. LUCK indicates how naturally lucky you are.

Your SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK scores will change constantly during the adventure. You should keep an accurate record of these scores, but remember to never erase your *Initial* scores. As the adventure progresses, you may receive additional SKILL, STAMINA or LUCK points, but these must never exceed your *Initial* scores unless specifically instructed otherwise.

### Fighting Battles

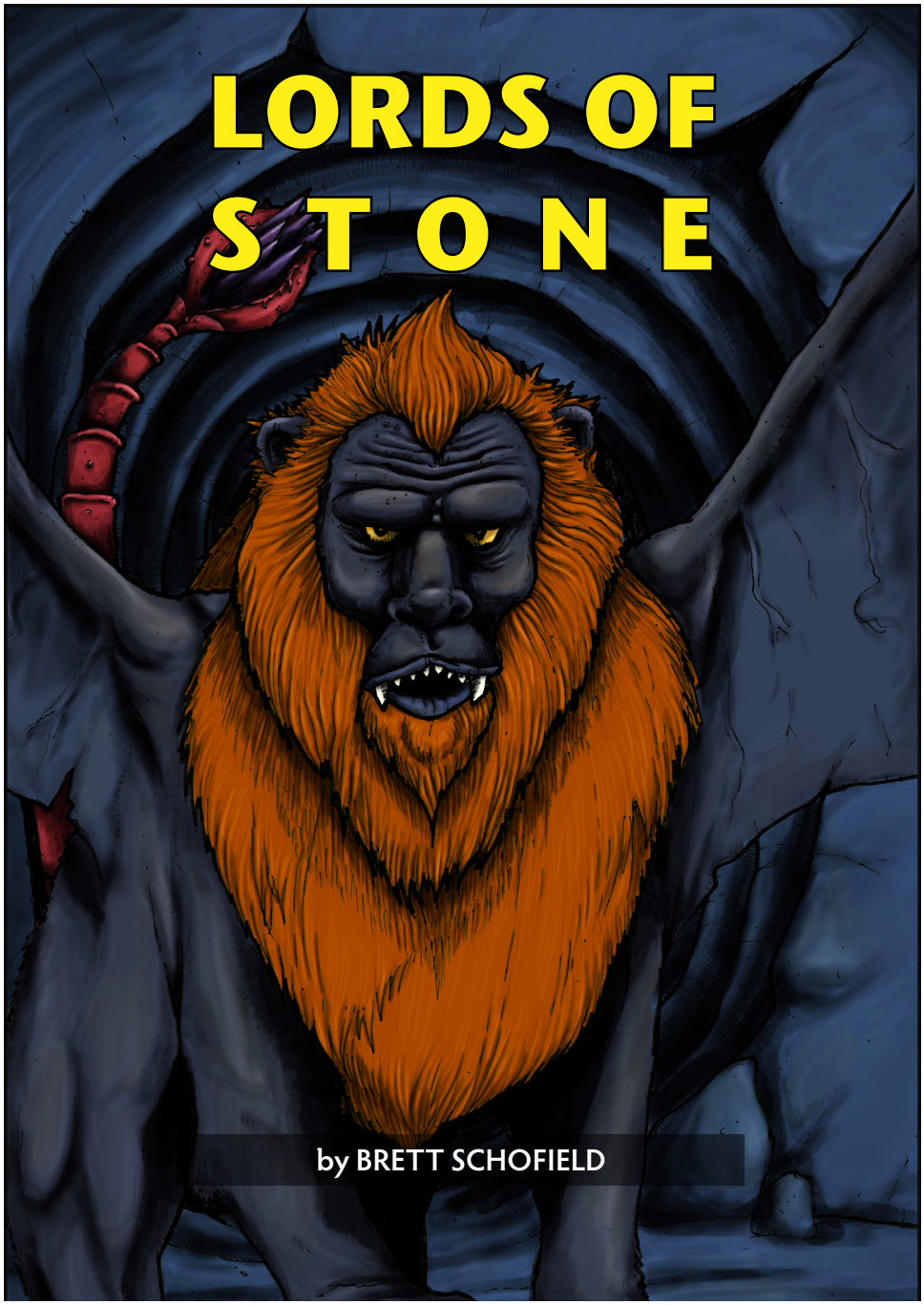
When you are instructed to fight a creature you should resolve the battle as described below. First record your opponent's SKILL and STAMINA scores on a separate piece of paper. The sequence of combat is then:

1. Roll two dice for the creature. Add its SKILL score. The total is the creature's Attack Strength.
2. Roll two dice for yourself and add your current SKILL score. This total is your Attack Strength.
3. If your Attack Strength is greater than that of your opponent, you have wounded it; go straight to Step 4. If the creature's Attack Strength is greater than yours, it has wounded you; go straight to Step 5. If both scores are the same, you have managed to avoid each other's blows – start the next Attack Round by going to Step 1.
4. You have wounded your opponent. Subtract 2 points from its STAMINA score (unless otherwise instructed). If you wish, you may use your LUCK here to do additional damage as described below. Go to Step 6.
5. Your opponent has wounded you. Subtract 2 points from your own STAMINA score (unless otherwise instructed). You may use LUCK at this point to minimise the damage.
6. Make the appropriate adjustments to either your opponent's or your own STAMINA score (and to your LUCK too, if you used it).
7. Begin the next Attack Round by going to Step 1.

This sequence continues until the STAMINA score of either you or your opponent has been reduced to zero, which means death.

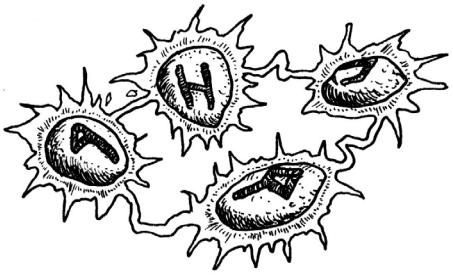
### Fighting More than One Opponent

If you come across more than one opponent in a particular encounter, the instructions will tell you how to handle the battle. Sometimes you will treat all opponents as a single monster; at other times you may have to fight each one in turn or all at once. You'll be given full instructions at the appropriate encounter.




### Escaping from Battles

At some encounters you will be given the option of Escaping from a battle. You may only *Escape* if it is offered to you in the text. If you do run away, the creature automatically scores one wound on you (subtract 2 STAMINA points) as you flee. You can use LUCK to minimise this damage in the normal way (see below).



### Testing Your Luck

Sometimes during your adventure you will be instructed to *Test your Luck* in order to see whether you are lucky or unlucky. Roll two dice. If the total is less than or equal to your current LUCK score, you have been Lucky. If the total is greater than your current LUCK score, you have been Unlucky. Each time you *Test your Luck* you must deduct 1 point from your current LUCK score. The more you rely on your LUCK, the more risky the procedure will become.

*Using Luck in Battles*

In combat you always have the option of using your LUCK either to inflict a more serious wound upon an opponent you have just hit, or to minimise the effects of a wound the creature has inflicted on you. If you have just wounded the creature, you may *Test your Luck* as described above. If you are Lucky, you will have inflicted a severe wound and may deduct an extra 2 points from the creature's STAMINA score. However, if you are Unlucky, the wound was a mere graze and you do only 1 point of damage to the creature instead of the usual 2 points.

If the creature has just wounded you, you may *Test your Luck* to try to minimise the wound. If you are Lucky, you have managed to avoid taking the full brunt of the blow, and may deduct 1 less point from your STAMINA than normal. If you are Unlucky, though, you have been hit by a more serious blow. Subtract 1 extra point from your STAMINA.

Remember to subtract 1 point from your LUCK score every time you *Test your Luck*, no matter the outcome.

### Equipment and Potions

You are armed with your trusty sword, leather armour and a lantern to light your way. You are also equipped with a backpack that is stocked with enough Provisions for ten meals. You may rest and eat when the options allow, or at any time when you are in an unoccupied room; you may eat only one meal at a time. Eating a meal restores 4 STAMINA points.

You may also take a magical potion that will aid you in your quest. You may take one of the following potions:

Potion of Skill – restores your SKILL score to its *Initial* value.
Potion of Strength – restores your STAMINA score to its *Initial* value.
Potion of Fortune – restores your LUCK score to its *Initial* value, and increases your Initial LUCK by 1 point.

The potion may be taken at any time during your adventure except in the middle of battle. The vial of potion you choose holds enough for one dose only.

# LORDS OF STONE ADVENTURE SHEET

**SKILL**
INITIAL SKILL =

**STAMINA**
INITIAL STAMINA =

**LUCK**
INITIAL LUCK =

**GOLD**

**EQUIPMENT**

**RUNESTONES**

| EARTH | FIRE |
|---|---|
| AIR | WATER |

**NOTES**

**POTIONS**

**PROVISIONS**

BACKGROUND

You are a seasoned adventurer and warrior, veteran of countless battles against the forces of Evil and Chaos. Once again you find yourself back in Stonebridge, the village of Dwarfs, to answer the summons of their ruler. You find King Gillibran seated upon his throne, grave concern etched deep on his venerable face.

'Welcome back, warrior', he says, 'You are no stranger to saving the folk of Stonebridge, I know, and we are grateful for all you have done for us. But I must ask for your help once more.'

You kneel before the King and beckon for him to continue.

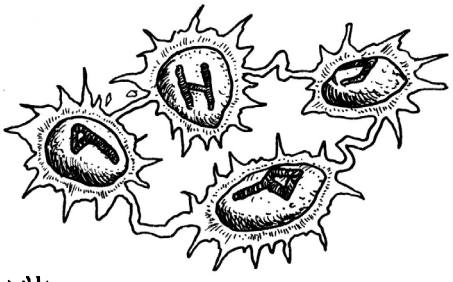
'A month ago we started receiving strange reports from the Iron Hills: cabins that inexplicably burnt to the ground, mines that flooded overnight or collapsed from sudden tremors. Good Dwarfs blown off cliffs by freak gusts of wind on an otherwise calm day. I dispatched a group of trusted soldiers to investigate, but of their number only two returned. They spoke of evil creatures made of fire, earth, wind or water, all of them controlled by a wicked sorcerer - a Dark Elf.' He almost spits the last words out.

'When I heard that one of those vile creatures was involved I beseeched the good wizard Yaztromo for aid. He knew of the Elf's name – Mor Orthor – and more importantly he learned what he is doing. The sorcerer has been experimenting with controlling Elementals, magical beings summoned from the four Elemental Planes of Earth, Air, Fire and Water. He and his cultists have set up inside an abandoned mine and have been testing their experiments on the noble Dwarfs of the Iron Hills. When Mor Orthor is ready I have no doubt he will set his sights on Stonebridge next.'

The King rises from his seat and points his mighty war-hammer at you. 'Go now, warrior, and put an end to that blasted Elf!'

You nod silently, rise to your feet and leave Gillibran's hall. Your mission is clear: venture to the Iron Hills north-west of here, find Mor Orthor's lair and slay him before his Elementals march on Stonebridge.

Now turn to **1**.



**1**

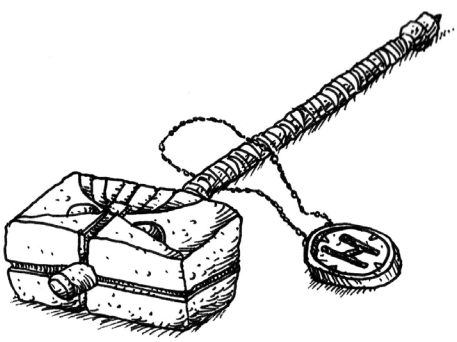
You march to the town gates and pause there to check your belongings. Your pack is filled with provisions supplied by the good folk of Stonebridge – enough for ten meals. Strapped to your side is your trusty sword, a weapon that has tasted the blood of wicked creatures countless times. You are about to set off when you feel a tug on your sleeve.

A white-haired Dwarf, clad in long brown robes, peers up at you. 'We Dwarfs are not ones to meddle in magical affairs,' he starts, 'we prefer to put our trust in steel instead, but Throff in her infinite wisdom has seen fit to bless her people with mastery over one particular branch of wizardry – that of runestones!'

The Dwarf opens a cloth bag and tips six round stones into your hand. Each one is engraved with a mysterious symbol. 'Elemental Runestones,' he explains. 'The four elements can be made to work in harmony, this is true, but they can also be turned against one another. Earth will destroy Air, Air will destroy Water, Water will destroy Fire and Fire will destroy Earth. Each of these Runestones has been imbued with one of the Elemental powers. If you find yourself faced with an Elemental, simply throw a Runestone of the opposing element and it will do the rest.'

You thank the Dwarf and take the Runestones. There are six stones in total, and each one is a Runestone of Earth, Air, Fire or Water. Note down which combination of Runestones you have taken on your Adventure Sheet.

The journey to the Iron Hills is arduous and you witness much evidence of Mor Orthor's destruction along the way. Eventually you locate the abandoned mine where he is said to have made his lair. Drawing your sword, you cautiously step inside. You are greeted by the slow dripping of water and the skittering of tiny feet as rats scurry back to their hiding places. Your eyes quickly adjust to the darkness as you advance down the tunnel. After several metres you come across a wooden door on your left. Will you open it (turn to **13**) or continue down the passage (turn to **88**)?



**2**

The tunnel ends at a sturdy wooden door. You put your ear to the wood and hear a low whimpering sound. You have no choice but to enter...

'Yeeeaaaaaaarrrrgghh!!!' A piercing scream greets you as you enter a large, lichen-covered room. A large opening in the far wall leads to another tunnel. Cowering in a corner is a bony Dwarf who kneels on a makeshift bed of rags and straw. His eyes are dim and sunken and his beard is little more than a few tufts of wiry hair. He emits another scream as you step toward him. You assure him that you mean him no harm and explain why you are here.

Eventually he calms down and reveals himself to be Ulfar, a fellow Stonebridge Dwarf. He entered the mines weeks ago, searching for any veins of ore that hadn't been completely tapped out. He walked straight into a patrol of Mor Orthor's evil servants and was captured. A couple of days ago he managed to escape his prison and has been holed up in this chamber ever since. 'I've just been waiting and hiding, quiet as a mouse,' he explains, 'for some reason those cowardly Elves don't come down this way often'.

You promise Ulfar that you will help guide him out of the mines as soon as you have slain the sorcerer.

'You'll never get near him!' he cries, 'He is surrounded by terrible demons of fire and ice. I owe you my life but I'm getting out of here!'

Ulfar leans in to embrace you, but all of a sudden he emits a sad whimper and slumps to the ground. A long spike of stone protrudes from his back. You look up to see a huge shadowy shape emerge from the darkness. It pads toward you on four clawed feet that support the muscular body of a great grey-skinned cat. An enormous bat-wing sprouts from each shoulder and a long armoured tail sways in its wake. Most horrible of all is its face, an almost man-like visage with a fang-filled mouth and savage yellow eyes. It is a dreaded CAVE MANTICORE, sent by your foe to destroy you!

The monster's tail cranes up over its back and shoots a volley of missiles toward you - If you possess a shield, turn to **110**. If not, turn to **143**.

**3**

You scrounge around the room but come up empty-handed. You are about to leave when your foot catches on something. It is a length of rope, hidden beneath years of dirt and rubble. Although old, it still looks as though it could support your weight if you needed to use it (add the Rope to your *Adventure Sheet* if you decide to take it). You leave the room and head down the

passage; turn to **88**.

**4**

Heart threatening to beat through your chest, you race along the ever-dwindling span as chunks of rock drop away beneath your frantic footsteps. You are only metres away from the other end when the remainder of the bridge collapses into the bottomless gulf. You make a desperate lunge for solid ground – *Test your Luck*!

If you are Lucky, you slam against the other side of the chasm but manage to grip on to the ledge. Slowly and painfully you pull yourself up and over the lip to safety. You pause a moment to catch your breath, then storm onward. Turn to **33**.

If you are Unlucky, your leap falls agonisingly short and you plummet into the chasm to your doom. Your adventure ends here...

**5**

Two huge, barrel-chested figures appear at the doorway. Their skin is grey and as hard as granite. Their legs are short and stumpy but their arms are like tree trunks that end in boulder-like fists. They are BOULDER BEASTS, evil Earth Elementals that have been sent here to destroy you! You position yourself behind the desk so that you can fight them one at a time.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| First BOULDER BEAST | SKILL 8 | STAMINA 10 |
| Second BOULDER BEAST | SKILL 8 | STAMINA 9 |

If you are armed with a war-hammer each blow you land on the Boulder Beasts will inflict 3 STAMINA points of damage instead of the usual 2. If you possess a Runestone of Fire you can sacrifice it to inflict 2 SKILL points and 6 STAMINA points of damage on an opponent (remember to cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*).

If you win, the two rocky creatures crumble into dust as their spirits are released back to their native plane of existence. You decide to exit the chamber through the side-door before any more arrive (turn to **138**).

**6**

Inside the chest you find a small silver amulet in the shape of an open book on a length of cord, a round shield with a polished surface and a tiny copper ring. Will you place the amulet around your neck (turn to **181**), inspect the polished shield (turn to **42**), or try on the copper ring (turn to **55**)?

**7**

The monstrous rat hisses angrily as it bounds forward to attack you. You ready your weapon in reply.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| KING RAT | SKILL 9 | STAMINA 10 |

The rat's fearsome claws and teeth will inflict 3 STAMINA points of damage with each successful attack instead of the usual 2. If you defeat your opponent you waste no time in leaving the nest and returning to the corridor (turn to **30**).

**8**

You slide back the panel and peek through the opening. There is a small room on the other side; its stone walls are covered in moss and lichen. It is too dark to make out anything else, so you take one of the torches off the wall and return to the panel for another look. The flickering light reveals a skeleton lying in the far corner of the room, a heavy chain affixed to one leg. Your eye catches the glint of something half-hidden beneath a bony hand. Will you open the door (turn to **56**), or continue down the corridor (turn to **168**)?

**9**

Legs pumping madly, you hurtle down the tunnel and then leap into the air. For one brief, terrifying moment there is nothing but a glowing stream of molten death below you... then a huge bubble of lava pops, showering your legs with burning liquid! Lose 4 STAMINA points. If you are still alive your legs crumple beneath you as you hit the other side. Agonising pain tears through your body as you crawl down the passage to where the air is mercifully cooler. Eventually you are able to struggle to your feet and hobble onward. Turn to **182**.

**10**

You dig carefully through the dangerous sludge, uncovering several bones and half-melted corpses, but also a tiny silver ring. Will you place it on your finger (turn to **100**), or leave it behind (turn to **166**)?

**11**

You get to your knees and shove an arm deep into the shaft. Your fingers brush against something smooth and soft. Will you grab hold and try to remove it from the hole (turn to **54**), or give up and move on (turn to **105**)?

**12**

Sweat pours down your face as you will your half-paralysed body toward the exit. Sand continues to fill the room until only your nose sticks out above the dunes. But it is no good; you are too weak to fight on. Eventually the sand covers you completely and you slowly suffocate, all the while unable to do a thing about it. Your adventure ends here.

**13**

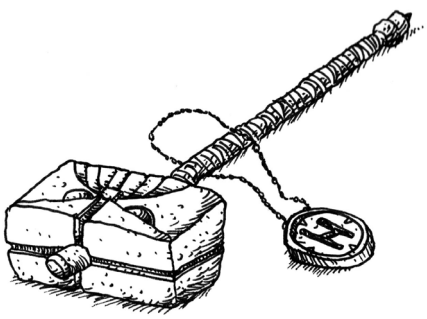
The door creaks open noisily, revealing a small room carved out of rock. Dried blood is caked over most of one wall and a pile of bones lie on the floor in front of you. Will you search the room (turn to **3**), or leave the room and continue down the passage (turn to **88**)?

**14**

You aim the sacrificial knife and let fly at the startled wizard. *Test your Skill*; if you are successful, the knife strikes his chest and you may deduct 2 points from Mor Orthor's STAMINA when you eventually fight him. If you are unsuccessful, your aim is off and the knife thunks into the bookcase. Now turn to **61**.

**15**

The door was boarded up in haste and you easily pry the wooden planks away with your hands. The door swings open and you step into a large empty chamber. Suddenly a peculiar gust of wind swirls through the room, slamming the door shut behind you. Try as you might, you cannot get the door open again. As you attempt to break it down you fail to notice dozens of ROCK GRUB LARVAE dropping from concealed holes in the ceiling. They swarm over your body, biting viciously and repeatedly with their tiny mandibles. Roll one die and subtract that number from your STAMINA. If you are still alive you hack the grubs apart. As soon as the last one is dead the door magically swings open again! Turn to **159**.



**16**

The three glowing balls buzz toward you, furiously spitting sparks in every direction. You draw your weapon and attack the magical creatures.

First
CAVE WISP SKILL 10 STAMINA 2
Second
CAVE WISP SKILL 10 STAMINA 2
Third
CAVE WISP SKILL 9 STAMINA 3

If you win, you quickly leave the cavern before any more Wisps appear. Turn to **76**.

**17**

Your keen senses spot the glint of metal from above. You leap into the air and swipe at the object with your hands. A single silver arrow drops to the floor, still half-wrapped in webbing. You clean the arrow as best you can and store it in your backpack (make a note of it on your *Adventure Sheet*). Now it is time to leave this chamber and get on with your adventure. Turn to **101**.

**18**

You curse as your throw goes astray and, instead of ensnaring the chest, loops around the rock creature's head! In an instant the beast springs to life, grasps the rope with two massive hands and pulls down with incredible force! *Test your Luck*!

If you are Unlucky, you unwittingly keep your grip on the rope and are yanked violently over the edge of the chasm to your doom – your adventure ends here.

If you are Lucky the rope shoots out of your grasp, leaving behind painful burns on the palms of your hands – lose 1 STAMINA point – but also leaving you with your life (cross the Rope off your *Adventure Sheet*)! Will you now cross the bridge (turn to **111**), or give up on attaining the crystal chest (turn to **132**)?

**19**

You enter a large study, furnished with a wide wooden desk and an ornately-carved high-backed chair. Bookcases line the walls, groaning under the weight of countless arcane tomes.

Standing before one of them is MOR ORTHOR, the target of your quest. He stands close to two metres tall and is clothed in tight-fitting black leather. Sparking yellow eyes stare at you from out of a dark, gaunt face. A purple cloak hangs from his shoulders and he carries a long staff topped with a glittering crystal.

If you are wearing a hooded cloak, turn to **173**. If not, the Dark Elf returns the book he was reading to the shelf. 'I did not expect you here so soon,' he says calmly, 'I didn't have time to prepare, but I shall kill you nonetheless.'

With that he raises his staff and mumbles some sorcerous words. A hulking WATER ELEMENTAL rises up out of the ground in front of you! If you are wearing a Charm of Learning, turn to **96**. If not, then turn to **49**.

**20**

You take the medallion from around your neck and offer it to the Dark Elf (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). She peers at it warily, but eventually unlocks the door and takes it from you. The moment she hangs it around her slender neck a familiar rumbling fills the air. Sure enough, another mighty Stone Golem wrenches itself from the tunnel wall and advances on your would-be captor. She can only manage a quick shriek of terror before being flattened by one swipe of the Golem's rocky fist. The enchanted creature then melts back into the wall as if it never existed. You decide to leave the golden medallion with the bloody smear of the Elf and hurry on down the corridor. Gain 1 LUCK point and turn to **168**.

**21**

You take an item from your backpack (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*) and lay it atop the pile of offerings. Suddenly there is a deep rumbling and the statue slides back, revealing a hidden compartment in the floor. Inside it you discover a long knife, forged of black steel and decorated with the same strange symbols that adorn the chamber. You may take it if you wish (note the Sacrificial Knife on your *Adventure Sheet*). There is nothing left to do here, so you return to the passage. Turn to **107**.

**22**

The black bottle contains a thick yellow paste. A few careful tests reveal it to be a Salve of Healing. There is enough in the bottle for three uses, and each use will restore 2 STAMINA points (note the Salve of Healing on your *Adventure Sheet*). Now, if you haven't already, will you inspect the boots (turn to **120**), or the fur cloak (turn to **197**)? Or will you leave the room and

continue down the passage (turn to **152**)?

**23**

You roll up a sleeve and plunge your arm into the stinking mess. Fingers brush against a variety of disturbing textures – slimy, hairy, and scaly – before reaching the wooden surface of the box. You start to pull the box out of the barrel, but as you do so something nips your arm and you lose your grip on it; lose 1 STAMINA point. If you are still alive you scan the murky contents of the barrel but can't identify what bit you. Will you try again (turn to **171**), or give up and get on with your mission (turn to **156**)?

**24**

Forcing the cowardly thoughts from your mind, you dig into your pack, withdraw the Runestone of Air and drop it to the floor (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). In a few short moments the ice melts away and the temperature returns to normal. Turn to **2**.

**25**

As you look around the room three small creatures blink into existence before you. Each one is vaguely humanoid in shape and seemingly made of living fire. They are FIRE SPRITES, and you must fight all three at the same time.

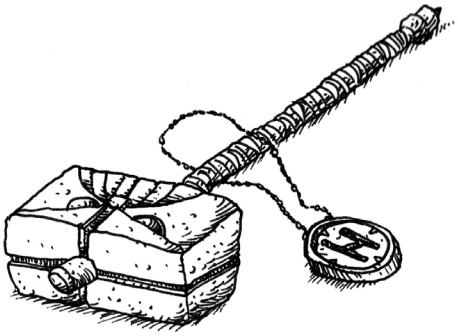
First
FIRE SPRITE SKILL 7 STAMINA 4
Second
FIRE SPRITE SKILL 7 STAMINA 4
Third
FIRE SPRITE SKILL 6 STAMINA 4

Each Attack Round you must choose which of the Fire Sprites to attack as the normal. Against the other opponents you will also need to roll your Attack Strength, but if you win the Attack Round you will not wound it – you have only managed to deflect its blow. If that Fire Sprite wins the Attack Round, however, it will have wounded you in the normal way. The Fire Sprites will inflict 3 STAMINA points of

damage with a successful attack instead of the usual 2.

If you possess any Runestones of Water you can sacrifice one to instantly destroy a Fire Sprite. If you are wearing a hooded clock you can use it to smother one Fire Sprite to death (remember to cross off any items you use from your *Adventure Sheet*).

If you defeat the magical Sprites you resume your search of the study. Sitting on the desk are three Elemental Runestones – one of Earth, one of Water and one of Air – as well as a small Potion of Stamina that will restore 8 STAMINA points when consumed. You take all four items (note them on your *Adventure Sheet*). Turn to **189**.



**26**

You wedge the blade of your sword beneath one of the boards and push down with all your strength. It slowly pops loose and you move on to the next one. Half an hour later, drenched in sweat and thoroughly exhausted (lose 1 STAMINA point), you finally pry off the last board and enter a rocky cave. Water drips monotonously from jagged stalactites that jut from the ceiling. Will you search the cave (turn to **139**), or return to the passage (turn to **194**)?

**27**

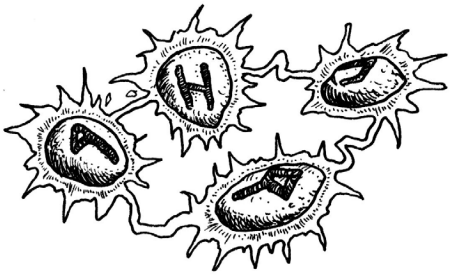
Following a hunch, you take out the Runestone of Air and drop it into the water (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). At first nothing appears to happen, but then the water level begins to drop, lower and lower until only a shallow pool remains. You splash down the passage, your belongings remaining dry and intact. After a hundred metres or so the tunnel ascends and the ground becomes dry underfoot once more. Turn to **119**.

**28**

The last of your opponents slumps to the ground dead, allowing you to finally take in your surroundings: purple drapes hang from the stone walls and a circle of skulls – Dwarfish by the look of them – is laid out on the floor. On each skull sits a black candle, lit and burning brightly. Behind the grisly circle stands a desk of dark wood, and seated behind that is another Dark Elf, clad in grey robes over a black chainmail vest. He grasps a glowing crystal in one

bony claw. 'You'd better have a good explanation for this,' he hisses. What will you tell him?

| | |
|---|---|
| That you are a mercenary for hire? | Turn to **129**. |
| That you are here to destroy him? | Turn to **164**. |
| That you are here to offer riches? | Turn to **70**. |



**29**

The passage bends to the right and soon terminates at a long flight of stairs carved out of the rock. You ascend them and at the summit find yourself staring down into a deep shaft several metres wide. The passage continues on the other side, so it seems your only choice is to take a running leap. As you are readying yourself you notice a scrap of paper peeking out from under a small rock on the floor. Will you pick it up (turn to **191**), or get on with it and jump (turn to **92**)?

**30**

As you advance down the passage the air around you becomes uncomfortably warm. The temperature rises with every step until the very walls are hot to the touch. Sweat streams down your body and you feel unsteady on your feet as the heat begins to takes its toll. If you are wearing a cloak you are forced to remove it and toss it aside (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*).

Eventually you arrive at the source of the heat – a stream of bubbling lava that cuts directly across your path. If you possess a Runestone of Water, turn to **147**. If not you will have to try and jump the stream. You back up a few metres, take a deep breath, and then charge toward the burning lava... *Test your Skill* - if you are successful, turn to **121**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **9**.

**31**

The sword appears to be made entirely of gold! You pick it up and admire it, but as you do so some of the slime runs down the blade on to your hand. It works like powerful acid, burning your flesh away – lose 4 STAMINA points. Stifling an agonized cry, you drop the sword into the muck and tend to your wound. You decide that it's not worth the trouble, no matter how valuable it appears. Return to **62** and choose an option you haven't taken already.

**32**

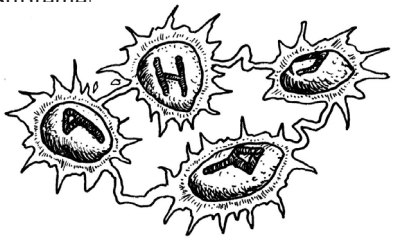
You lift the lid off the barrel and peer inside. It is filled with thick brown soup, on top of which float disgusting chunks of bone and eyeball, as well as a metal ladle. Through the murky slop you can just make out the shape of a box resting at the bottom of the barrel. Will you drink some of the soup (turn to **98**), reach in for the box (turn to **23**), or leave the barrel behind (turn to **156**)?

**33**

You hurry through the cavern, surrounded by darkness and the sound of your echoing footsteps. Finally the other end emerges out of the blackness; some sort of open temple fashioned from stone. Twin staircases run up the side of a sloped wall, marked at regular intervals with flaming braziers. At the top of the staircases is a flat platform where an enormous statue stands, sculpted out of black rock into the shape of a horned bat. Standing before the evil image is Mor Orthor, waving his staff wildly and chanting mystical gibberish. At your appearance he stops and glares down at you.

'Fool!' he hisses, 'Your weapon may harm mere flesh and bone, but it is useless against the elements. Fire, Water, Earth and Air – I am master of them all. I am the very stuff of life!'

The Dark Elf strikes his staff on the floor, sending up a flurry of colourful sparks. The cavern begins to shake, violent tremors dislodging colossal stalactites that crash to the ground around you. Wasting no time, you hurry up one of the staircases, watching as the sorcerer transforms with every step you take. His legs seem to disappear into nothingness, replaced by a swirling column of dust. One arm is engulfed in flames, the other in churning water. Finally his head hardens into solid rock – he has become an Elemental Supreme!



You reach the top of the stairs and ready your weapon as the awesome being floats toward you.

MOR ORTHOR, ELEMENTAL SUPREME SKILL 12 STAMINA 18

Each time your opponent wins an Attack Round, roll one die to see what form his attack takes:

| *Dice Roll* | *Attack and Damage* |
|---|---|
| 1 | Air Blast – A painful gust of air knocks the wind out of you: lose 1 STAMINA point and reduce your Attack Strength by 2 for the next Attack Round. If you possess a Runestone of Earth you can sacrifice one to ignore the reduction to your Attack Strength. |
| 2-3 | Fire Bolt – A blast of flames scorches your exposed flesh: lose 2 STAMINA points. If you possess a Runestone of Water you can sacrifice one to reduce the damage to 1 point only. |
| 4-5 | Head-butt – The wizard smashes his rock-hard head into you: lose 3 STAMINA points. If you possess a Runestones of Fire you can sacrifice one to reduce the damage to 2 points only. |
| 6 | Water Burst – a funnel of water slams into you, knocking you to the ground: lose 2 STAMINA points. You spend the next Attack Round getting to your feet and will not inflict any damage, even if you win the round. If you possess a Runestone of Air you can sacrifice one to reduce the damage to 1 point only. You can sacrifice any Elemental Runestones you may still possess (of any kind) to weaken your opponent. Each one will reduce his SKILL by1 point and his STAMINA by 3 points. |

If you win, turn to **200**.

**34**

You open the door and enter a small stone chamber. Dominating the room is the statue of a Dwarf king, splattered with gore. Its head has been broken off and in its place is a blood-stained skull. Standing before the statue is a hooded figure who appeared to have been praying but is now charging toward you, dagger raised!

DARK ELF SKILL 6 STAMINA 6

If you win, you search his body and uncover a Runestone of Water. You may also take his Hooded Cloak if you wish (note your new belongings on your *Adventure Sheet*). You take a moment to clean up the defiled statue as best you can before returning to the tunnel. You retrace your steps until you reach the side-passage. Turn to **169**.

**35**

The tunnel bends to the right. At the bend there is a small hole cut out of the rock wall. You look inside but can see only darkness. Will you reach into the hole (turn to **65**), or head down the passage (turn to **180**)?

**36**

You assess your options; there doesn't seem to be any way to get to the chest that doesn't involve crossing the bridge and facing the rock beast. Unless you have a rope, that is. If you do, you can attempt to ensnare the chest with it (turn to **97**). Otherwise you will have to either step on to the bridge (turn to **111**), or exit the cavern (turn to **132**).

**37**

The passage continues straight for some time before bending sharply to the left. Lying in the bend is the corpse of a Dwarf. One of his arms and one of his legs have been shattered. A carved war-hammer lies by his side and a golden medallion is hung about his neck. It is strange that these items haven't already been looted by Mor Orthor's minions. Will you try on the medallion (turn to **51**), take the war-hammer (turn to **118**), or leave the corpse behind (turn to **199**)?

**38**

You stride down the passage and soon come to a large door in the left-hand wall. You can hear a faint buzzing noise coming from within. Will you open the door (turn to **145**), or continue down the tunnel (turn to **76**)?

**39**

Heart threatening to beat through your chest, you dash along the ever-dwindling span as chunks of rock drop away beneath your frantic footsteps. Thankfully you reach the other end safely, but only a moment before the remainder of the bridge collapses into the bottomless gulf. Turn to **33**.

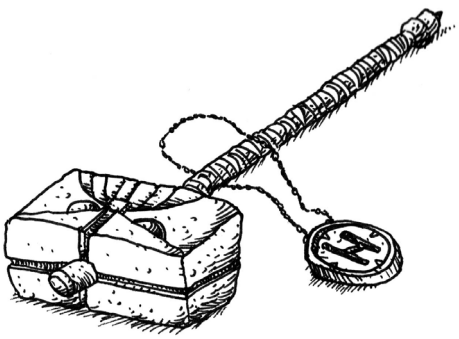
**40**

You quickly draw the silver arrow in your bow and fire at the nearest corpse. Your aim is a bit off but the arrow magically corrects its course and pierces the creature's heart. The undead Ghoul bursts into flames and crashes in to other two. Soon all three are alight and their dry corpses are quickly consumed by the fire. Once the flames die down you poke through the ashes but your arrow seems to have vanished (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet*). You do, however, uncover a tiny slver key stamped with the number "131" (note it on your *Adventure Sheet*). Now, will you inspect the altar if you haven't done so already (turn to **142**), or leave the room (turn to **77**)?

**41**

The foul Elf is nearly dead. Blood streams from the numerous wounds you have inflicted and his breath is coming in ragged gasps. Before you can close in for the kill he raises a crooked finger and mutters some sorcerous words. A dark bolt of energy shoots toward you - *Test your Skill*! If you are successful you manage to throw yourself out of its path. If you are unsuccessful it strikes you in the chest and fills your veins with magical venom - lose 4 STAMINA points.

If you are still alive, the wizard spits a final curse before collapsing in a heap. You nudge his body but he is quite dead - gain 1 LUCK point for defeating Mor Orthor's second-in-command. You can hear heavy footsteps coming up the corridor; will you risk searching the room (turn to **178**), or escape as quickly as possible through a narrow side-door (turn to **138**)?



**42**

The shield is well made and is decorated with the image of a griffon. If you use it in battle you may reduce your opponent's Attack Strength by 2. Note the Griffon Shield on your *Adventure Sheet* if you decide to take it. Now, if you haven't already, will you wear the silver amulet (turn to **181**), or try on the copper ring (turn to **55**)? Or, if you feel you have wasted enough time, will you leave the chest behind and head down the left-hand (turn to **115**), or the right-hand (turn to **29**) passage?

**43**

You can feel the rat's hot breath on the back of your neck. Suddenly savage claws rake your flesh and a crushing weight knocks you to the ground - lose 3 STAMINA points. If you are still alive you kick the giant vermin away and scramble to your feet. Turn to **7**.

**44**

The door suddenly slams shut in your face! The panel slides back and a DARK ELF smiles wickedly at you through the opening. 'The other one may have escaped', she says, 'but you aren't going anywhere!' You are a prisoner! Will you try to con your way out (turn to **188**), try to bribe your way out (turn to **48**), or wait for help to arrive (turn to **150**)?

**45**

'You are worthy,' intones the ghostly voice. You remove your hand from the flames and are amazed to see that it is unharmed. The door behind you grinds open and you quickly leave; gain 1 LUCK point and turn to **35**.

**46**

You cautiously push open the door and peer inside. It appears to be a dwelling of some kind. Plain straw mattresses are arranged about the room, ringing a large black cauldron that sits above a blazing fire. Stirring the contents of the cauldron is a DARK ELF, clad in bizarre leather armour. Two more of his kinds sit in the far corner, but they quickly leap to their feet at your entrance and arm themselves with serrated swords. You must fight them one at a time.

First
DARK ELF SKILL 7 STAMINA 8
Second
DARK ELF SKILL 7 STAMINA 8
Third
DARK ELF SKILL 6 STAMINA 6

If you are victorious, turn to **190**.

**47**

The door creaks loudly as you enter what appears to be some kind of torture chamber, filled with whips, pincers, thumbscrews and stretching racks. Tied to one of the racks is a Dwarf, who is moaning in pain. Hovering over him is a DARK ELF, who jumps at your sudden entrance. If you are wearing a hooded cloak, turn to **151**. If not, the torturer grabs a hot poker from a burning brazier - you must fight!

TORTURER SKILL 7 STAMINA 7

If you defeat your opponent, turn to **112**.

**48**

You dig through your pack as your captor looks on with interest. What will you offer her?

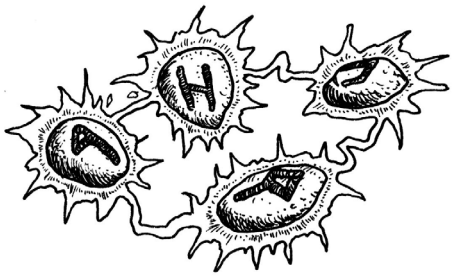
| | |
|---|---|
| A green jewel? | Turn to **134**. |
| A blue gemstone? | Turn to **73**. |
| A golden medallion? | Turn to **20**. |
| A jagged scimitar? | Turn to **150**. |

**49**

The Elemental gushes toward you, its liquid body bubbling and swirling in excitement. Mor Orthor watches on, a faint smile on his lips.

WATER
ELEMENTAL SKILL 7 STAMINA 7

If you possess a Runestone of Air, you throw it at the Elemental (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*), but to your dismay it passes straight through its body!
If you defeat the watery creature it disappears as suddenly as it appeared. Mor Orthor whirls his staff, seemingly untroubled. Turn to **127**.



**50**

You place the silver arrow on the cold stone altar and wait. Suddenly there is a blinding flash of light and you are forced to look away. When your eyes readjust to the darkness you notice that there are now two arrows! You collect them both and stow them in your pack (note the extra arrow on your *Adventure Sheet*). Will you inspect the corpses if you haven't done so already (turn to **69**), or leave the room (turn to **77**)?

**51**

You remove the medallion from the Dwarf and hang it around your neck (note the Golden Medallion on your *Adventure Sheet*). Almost instantly the ground begins to rumble. Sensing movement behind you, you turn to see part of the wall tear itself free and lumber toward you! It is a STONE GOLEM, summoned by the enchanted medallion. Sensing that you are not its owner, the magical creature moves to crush you with its boulder-sized fists.

STONE GOLEM SKILL 7 STAMINA 10

Your sword will only inflict 1 STAMINA point of damage on a successful hit due to its rocky hide. If you are wielding the war-hammer, however, your blows will deal 3 STAMINA points of damage with each successful attack. If you possess a Runestone of Fire you can sacrifice it to inflict 2 SKILL points and 6 STAMINA points of damage on your opponent (remember to cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*).
If you win, turn to **199**.

**52**

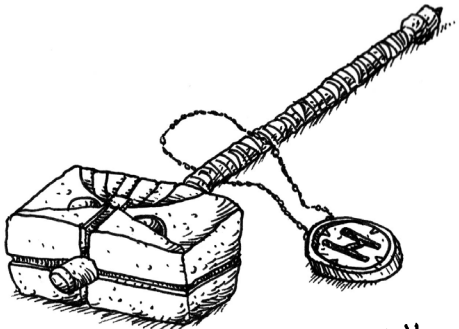
A decision must be made - will you head left (turn to **38**), or right (turn to **85**)?

**53**

The Manticore roars in anger and bounds toward you, claws and teeth bared. You must fight for your life!

CAVE
MANTICORE SKILL 9 STAMINA 12

Each time your opponent wins an Attack Round, roll one die. On a roll of 6 the Manticore stabs you with its tail and you lose 4 STAMINA points instead of the usual 2. If you somehow win this titanic battle, turn to **117**.



**54**

You grip the mysterious object tightly and start to pull it from the shaft. As you do so, a searing pain shoots through your hand – lose 2 STAMINA points! If you are still alive you release your grip and yank your arm from the hole. A split-second later a fat white CAVE SNAKE emerges from the shaft and slithers toward you!

CAVE SNAKE SKILL 7 STAMINA 5

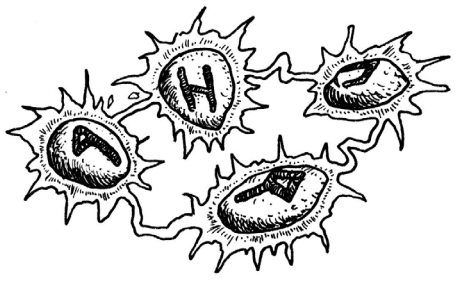
You can *Escape* down the passage at any time (turn to **105**). If you win, the snake's corpse sinks slowly back into the hole, preventing you from searching any further. It's time to move on (turn to **105**).

**55**

Pain shoots up your arm as you slide the copper ring on – lose 1 STAMINA point. Try as you might, you cannot pull the Ring of Pain off! From now on, each time you lose STAMINA you must subtract 1 additional point (this includes STAMINA damage incurred in combat). Cursing your luck, you violently kick the chest out of your way and decide which passage to take – the one on the left (turn to **115**), or the one on the right (turn to **29**)?

**56**

The door is unlocked and swings open silently. You enter a cramped room covered in moss and lichen. A skeleton lies in one corner, one leg chained to the wall. If you looked in the panel before entering the room, turn to **109**. If not, a cursory glance reveals nothing of interest in the room, so you move to leave. Turn to **44**.



**57**

You quickly place a hand into the fire. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **45**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 91.

**58**

What kind of item will you leave behind (ignore any item that you do not have in your possession)?

| | |
|---|---|
| A war-hammer? | Turn to **104**. |
| A silver arrow? | Turn to **50**. |
| A jagged scimitar? | Turn to **161**. |
| A shield? | Turn to **125**. |

If you do not have any of these items, will you can inspect the corpses if you haven't done so already (turn to **69**), or leave the room (turn to **77**)?

**59**

The tunnel ends at a massive iron door. Flaming torches are set into sconces on either side of the doorway and a bleached skull is mounted above it; you notice the word Kernithor has been etched into its forehead. You push against the door but it refuses to budge. It does not have a handle, but there is a small hole in the middle of the door that looks like it would fit a round stone. If you have a blue gemstone and wish to try it, turn to **198**. If you possess a green jewel and want to try it, turn to **122**. If you want to try a pebble from the tunnel floor, turn to **86**. If you would rather return to the side-passage, turn to **80**.

**60**

The door is unlocked and opens easily to reveal a small chamber strewn with thick cobwebs. Cocooned husks line the walls, all victims of the GIANT SPIDER that is creeping toward you! The body of the massive arachnid is at least a metre wide and is covered in thick, black bristles. Suddenly it spits a gooey strand of webbing at you - *Test your Skill*! If you are successful you dodge the webbing at the last second. If you are unsuccessful the webbing temporarily glues your arms to your sides and you lose 2 STAMINA points as the spider sinks its poisonous fangs into your side. Either way, you must now kill or be killed!

GIANT SPIDER SKILL 6 STAMINA 7

Every second Attack Round the Giant Spider will spit more webbing at you. You must successfully *Test your Skill* in order to evade the attack or become wrapped in sticky strands as your opponent inflicts 2 STAMINA points of damage. If you win, turn to **183**.

**61**

As you close in on each other the wizard fires a bolt of lightning from his staff and strikes you square in the chest. If you are wearing a Ring of Protection or you possess a Runestone of Earth, the artefact absorbs the bolt and you are unharmed (but cross the Runestone off your *Adventure Sheet*). If not, the blast sends a debilitating jolt through your body - lose 1 SKILL point and 2 STAMINA points. If you are still alive you are finally able to engage your enemy in mortal combat. Remember to deduct any points from his scores if you have previously injured him.

MOR ORTHOR SKILL 10 STAMINA 12

If you reduce Mor Orthor's STAMINA to 5 or less, turn to **116**.

**62**

The skeleton still has some rags clinging to its bones and a battered metal helmet rests on its skull. One bony claw clutches a wooden bow, the other a shiny sword half-covered in slime. Will you take the bow (turn to **83**), the sword (turn to **31**), or the helmet (turn to **157**)? Or will you investigate the grate, if you haven't done so already (turn to **130**), or leave the room (turn to **113**)?

**63**

You quickly rifle through the sorcerer's voluminous robes and uncover two Elemental Runestones - one of Air and one of Fire! You secure them in your pack (note them on your *Adventure Sheet*) and turn to face whatever is headed your way (turn to **5**).

**64**

The door creaks open noisily to reveal a tiny stone chamber. Several crude symbols, possibly painted with blood, adorn the rear wall. If you possess a Translator or a Charm of Learning, turn to **136**. If not, there is nothing more to be done here, so you return to the passage. Turn to **152**.

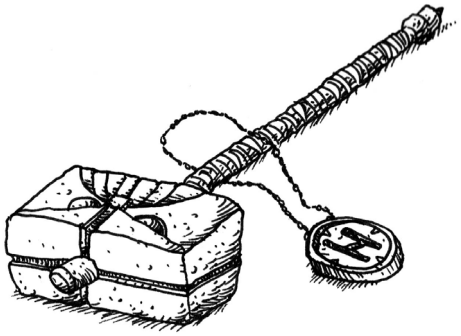
**65**

You jam your arm into the hole and reach about with your hand. Your fingers scrape against jagged rocks but also something small and cool. You grab hold and withdraw your arm. It is an iron key, the end of which has been fashioned into the shape of a horned bat. You decide to take it with you - note it on your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to **180**.

**66**

The intense cold quickly becomes unbearable. You drop to your knees as the chill seeps through your exposed skin and into your very bones. A voice in your head tells you to lay down in the frost and forget all about your mission. If you possess a Runestone of Air, turn to **24**. If not, roll three dice and *Test your Stamina*. If you are successful, you force the thought from your mind and slowly get back to your feet. Turn to **2**.

If you are unsuccessful, you collapse unconscious, your entire body frozen and numb - lose 1 SKILL point and 4 STAMINA points. If you are still alive you eventually reawaken in a pool of cold water. The ice has disappeared from the tunnel. You haul yourself to your feet and stagger down the corridor, teeth still chattering. Turn to **2**.



**67**

The side-passage ends after several metres at a wooden door, which has also been boarded shut. Will you try to open the door (turn to **93**), or leave it sealed up (turn to **176**)?

**68**

You place the key in the lock and turn it. There is a loud click and the great doors swing open. Turn to **19**.

**69**

The bodies don't appear to have been dead for long. You pull a spear free from one of the corpses, but the body remains in place. Its eyes flick open and a menacing hiss slithers out of its jaws. The other two bodies likewise spring to life and begin shuffling toward you. Do you possess a Bow and a Silver Arrow? If so, turn to **40** if you wish to use it. If not you must face the three hungry GHOULS with your melee weapon.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| First GHOUL | SKILL 7 | STAMINA 7 |
| Second GHOUL | SKILL 7 | STAMINA 6 |
| Third GHOUL | SKILL 7 | STAMINA 7 |

You can *Escape* the battle at any time by leaving the room (turn to **77**). If you are hit four times by the Ghouls you will become paralysed and they will feast on your helpless body!

If you manage to defeat your opponents without being hit four times, you search the their remains and uncover a tiny silver key stamped with the number '131' (note it on your *Adventure Sheet*). Now, will you can inspect the altar if you haven't done so already (turn to **142**), or leave the room (turn to **77**)?

**70**

The Dark Elf looks at you curiously. You reach into your pack and give him one of the items you have collected on your quest (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). The Elf takes it from you and places it on his desk. Turn to **164**.

**71**

The cave-in must have happened recently, as the bodies trapped beneath the huge rocks still have flesh on their bones. The victims all appear to be Dark Elves. Anything of value has already been stripped from their corpses, except for a scrap of parchment that is gripped by a hand poking out of the rubble. Will you take it (turn to **155**), or return to the junction and head down the other passage (turn to **37**)?

**72**

You hand the black-bladed knife to the torturer. He tests the blade with the edge of his thumb and nods in appreciation.

'To the Four, marshalls of the damned!' he cries, holding the knife above his helpless victim, 'To the Three, who sit on thrones of hate! And to the One, the unknowable, who waits for us all. Accept this gift on behalf of Mor Orthor, master of the elements!'

With that he plunges the knife deep into the Dwarf's chest; he gives a choked gasp and dies.

Ashamed by your inaction, you quietly exit the room and return to the passage,

leaving the torturer to exult over his sacrifice. Lose 2 LUCK points for letting the helpless Dwarf be murdered in such an awful fashion and turn to **167**.

**73**

You take out the gemstone and hold it up to the opening. The Dark Elf's eyes narrow - roll one die. If you roll 1-3, turn to 150. If you roll a 4-6, your would-be captor eventually unlocks the door and takes the precious stone from you (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*) before hurrying away down the corridor. You wait until you are sure your would-be captor is long gone before continuing on. Turn to **168**.

**74**

As you thrust a fist into the flames you instantly feel a searing pain - perhaps unsurprisingly, the fire is burning you! Will you take your hand out of the flames (turn to **91**), or leave it where it is (turn to **149**)?

**75**

You remove the stopper from the bottle, releasing a cloud of green gas. It is Stonemelt, an alchemical concoction used by Dwarf miners to weaken stone so that it can be more easily broken apart. You can't help but breathe in some of the toxic fumes - lose 4 STAMINA points as it scorches your lungs. If you are still alive you quickly leave the room. Turn to **176**.

**76**

Leaving the door behind, you walk on down the tunnel until you reach a side-passage to your right. Will you head down this new passage (turn to **169**), or stick to the course you are on (turn to **102**)?

**77**

The passage abruptly ends at a huge pile of rocks and dirt, likely caused by a cave-in. A misshapen skull sits on one of the boulders. You notice that the top of the skull has been cut in half, forming a lid. Will you lift the top off the skull (turn to **184**), or backtrack all the way to the junction and take the other passage (turn to **108**)?

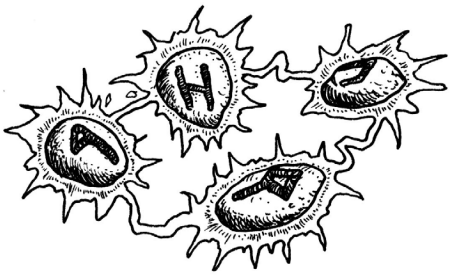
**78**

If you have an Iron Key you slip it into the lock and try it - it turns! The lid flips open easily and you inspect its contents (turn to **6**).

If you do not have a key you are forced to work open the chest with your weapon. There is a loud click as the lid flips up and a tiny needle shoots into your hand. You immediately feel weak and nauseous - lose 2 STAMINA points and 1 SKILL point. If you are still alive will you look inside the chest (turn to **6**), give up on it and head down the passage to the left (turn to **115**), or head down the passage to the right (turn to **29**)?

**79**

You reach into your pack and remove a Runestone of Earth (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). Mouthing a silent prayer to Throff, goddess of earth and Dwarfs, you drop the stone into one of the ever-widening cracks in the bridge. The effect is instantaneous: the fissures close up and the once-frail bridge magically knits itself back into a solid beam of rock. You are able to cross the rest of the way in safety. Turn to **33**.



**80**

As you turn into the passageway a thick cloud of yellow mist rolls down the tunnel toward you. A cruel face and two whipping tendrils emerge from the nebulous haze. It is a malevolent FOG ELEMENTAL, and you must fight it!

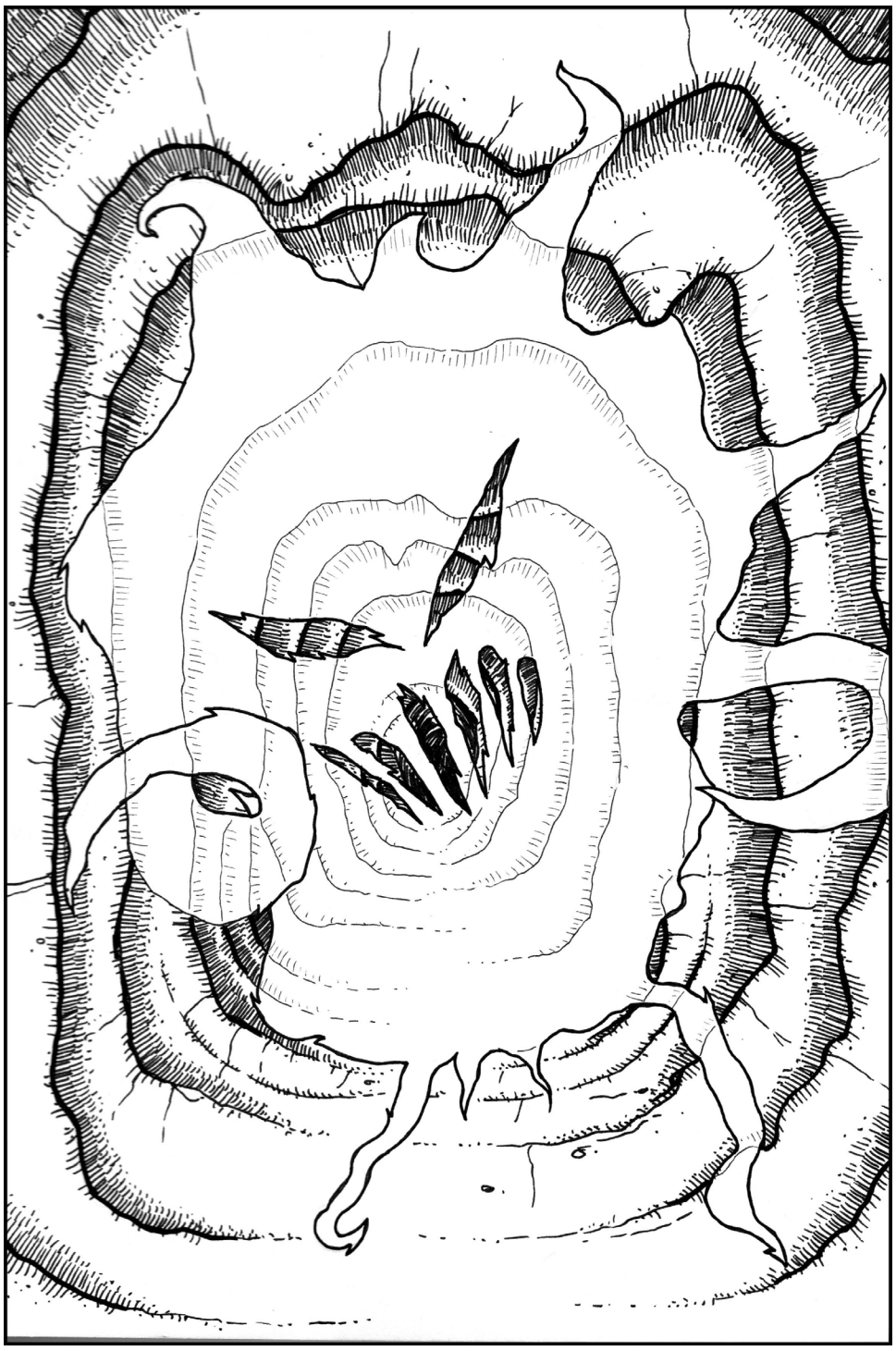
FOG ELEMENTAL SKILL 7 STAMINA 10

If you possess a Runestone of Earth you can sacrifice it to inflict 2 SKILL points and 6 STAMINA points of damage on an opponent (remember to cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*).

If you win your final blow disperses the creature into nothingness. You continue along the cold stone passage until you reach a small door on your right. It is covered in cobwebs and doesn't appear to have been opened recently. Will you open it (turn to **160**), or continue down the tunnel (turn to **35**)?

**81**

You wade through the sand to the skeleton, eyes fixed on the incredible treasure before you. Your reach out a hand to take it, but as your fingers brush against the yellowed bone of the ribcage you feel as if you have been cut. Pain surges through your body as you drop into the sand, paralysed from head to toe. The door bangs shut as if slammed by invisible hands. A gentle trickle of sand begins to fall from a hole in the ceiling, right on to your frozen face. If you possess a Runestone of Fire, turn to **148**. If not, the minutes pass and sand begins to pile up around you, threatening to block your mouth and nose. You strain every muscle in an attempt to move but it is no good, you are completely helpless. But a true adventurer never gives up, and you try again and again until you feel the slightest twitch of movement in your



limbs. Encouraged by the progress, you push on, managing to shuffle your body an inch toward the door. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **177**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **12**.

**82**

You draw your weapon and strike out at the torturer, catching him a fierce blow on the shoulder. 'Betrayer!' he spits, arming himself with an implement of cruelty. You close in to finish the job.

TORTURER SKILL 7 STAMINA 5

If you win, turn to **112**.

**83**

The bow looks perfectly ordinary yet you detect some kind of magic radiating from

it. Still, there's not much you can do with it unless you have an arrow to fire. Take it if you wish (note it on your *Adventure Sheet*), then return to **62** and choose an option you haven't taken already.

**84**

You arrive at another wooden door. You listen carefully but hear nothing except the distant dripping of water. Will you try the door (turn to **185**), or continue down the passage (turn to **107**)?

**85**

You head right and soon come to another doorway, this time set in the right-hand side of the passage. The opening has been boarded shut. Will you attempt to force your way through (turn to **128**), or continue down the passage (turn to **194**)?

**86**

You carefully insert the gemstone into the hole (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet*) and the door slowly grinds open. You step through the doorway into a large chamber – suddenly you detect movement from your sides! Before you can take in your surroundings two hooded DARK ELVES close in to attack you with long knives!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| First DARK ELF | SKILL 6 | STAMINA 5 |
| Second DARK ELF | SKILL 7 | STAMINA 6 |

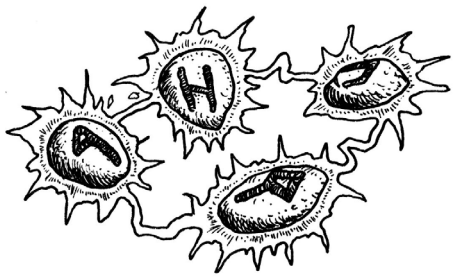
You will have to fight both assailants at the same time. Each Attack Round you must choose one of the Dark Elves to attack in the normal way. Against the other Dark Elf you will need to roll your Attack Strength, but if you win the Attack Round you will not wound it - you have only managed to deflect its blow. If that Dark Elf wins the Attack Round, however, it will have wounded you in the normal way. As soon as you have killed both opponents, turn to **28**.

**87**

You nock the silver arrow to your bow and loose it at the Dark Elf. The wizard attempts to leap out of its path but the bow performs its magic; the missile changes course and thuds into his shoulder. Deduct 4 points from Mor Orthor's STAMINA when you eventually fight him (turn to **61**).

**88**

The passage eventually ends at a junction. As you are deciding which way to go, you notice a small wooden box lying near your feet, decorated with intricate carvings of death and war. A massive green jewel is set into the centre of the lid. Will you open the box (turn to **170**), pry out the jewel (turn to **106**), or leave the box behind (turn to **52**)?



**89**

You take out the scroll from your pack and unfurl it before the Dark Elf. He watches silently as you stutter and stammer your way through the casting of the spell. At first nothing happens, but then a tiny flame erupts from your right palm. It grows in size until you are cupping a ball of flame as big as your head. Suddenly it bursts from your hand and shoots straight toward the Dark Elf! He yelps in terror but manages to duck at the last moment. The fireball slams into the drapes behind him, engulfing them in flames. The fire quickly spreads around the room. You duck through a narrow doorway in the right-hand wall as the Elf rushes about in a panic; gain 1 LUCK point and turn to **138**.

**90**

You scrape the acidic slime off the grate as best you can, then leverage it up and out of its resting place. You peer into the hole but can see nothing but blackness. As you are pondering how to proceed a slimy fist suddenly shoots out of the darkness - *Test your Luck*! If you are Lucky, turn to **146**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **179**.

**91**

'You are unworthy,' the voice rumbles, 'You must be purified!' Pain shoots up your arm as your flesh begins to cook - lose 1 SKILL point and 4 STAMINA points. If you are still alive you quickly yank your hand out of the fire and inspect the damage. Your skin has been burned away, exposing bubbling red flesh and your fingers are little more than blackened stumps. It is all you can do to avoid blacking out from the pain, but the door remains firmly closed. You will have to attempt the Test again. Which flame will you try this time?

| | |
|---|---|
| Titan's Strength? | Turn to **133**. |
| Courga's Grace? | Turn to **57**. |
| Sindla's Fortune? | Turn to **192**. |
| Telak's Courage? | Turn to **74**. |

**92**

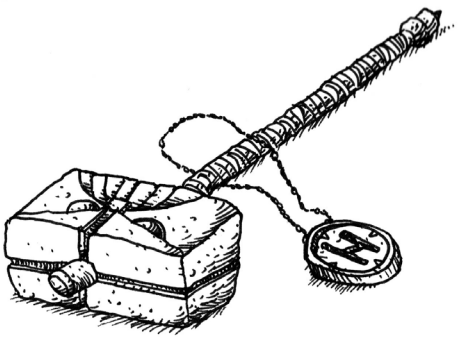
You back up to the edge of the stairs, then sprint toward the edge of the shaft and launch yourself into the air. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **103**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **141**.

**93**

The boards are hammered in tightly, but the nails are rusty and break under your strain. Soon the path the cleared and you open the door to reveal a large cave dotted with stalactites. You perform a quick search of the area but find nothing of interest apart from a small green bottle that someone has placed on a flat-topped boulder. Will you open it (turn to **75**), or leave it and the cave behind (turn to **176**)?

**94**

You rest after your strenuous battle with the rats, trying your best to ignore the rancid stink of their lair. The walls are covered in deep scratches and a large hole has been clawed out of the far wall. Suddenly there is an ear-piercing shriek and another rat clambers out of the hole. It is at least twice the size of the ones you have just slain. Will you try to distract the gargantuan rat with one of your Provisions (turn to **124**), attack it (turn to **7**), or run out of the room (turn to **43**)?



**95**

You soon arrive at a massive stone door on your right. Will you try to open it (turn to **172**), or continue down the dark passage (turn to **113**)?

**96**

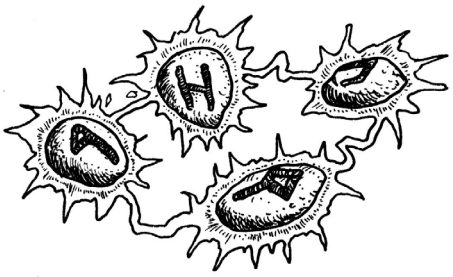
As you steel yourself for battle the Charm of Learning begins to glow around your neck. The watery Elemental vanishes into thin air as quickly as it appeared - it was only an illusion! Mor Orthor whirls his staff, seemingly untroubled (turn to **127**).

**97**

You tie a loop into the length of rope and hurl it toward the glittering crystal chest. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **165**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **18**.

**98**

You grab the ladle and use it to scoop up a mouthful of sludge. Gingerly you hold it up to your lips and then, after a moment's hesitation, slurp it down. Congratulations, you have just consumed Guursh, a crude Orc beer considered to be one of the most disgusting substances in the world. Immense pain racks your body as you try to stomach the ale - lose 3 STAMINA points. If you are still alive you crumple into the foetal position beside the barrel and wait until the agony subsides. When you feel well enough you clamber to your feet and shuffle down the tunnel. Turn to **156**.



**99**

You roll the body over and immediately recoil in shock - something has torn the Dwarf's face off, leaving a mangled mess of dried flesh and bone. You gingerly search the body but turn up nothing of interest except for the bottle, which is labelled as a Potion of Skill. You can drink this potion at any time outside of battle and restore your SKILL to its *Initial* score (don't forget to note it on your *Adventure Sheet*). You leave the room. Turn to **84**.

**100**

You slip the ring on to your little finger, but feel no different. Unbeknownst to you, you are wearing a Ring of Protection, which will absorb one spell or three successful attacks against you (you may ignore any SKILL, STAMINA or LUCK loss indicated in the text). Once its uses are up the ring will crumble into dust (note it on your *Adventure Sheet*). You clamber out of the hole and decide to leave the room and return to the main passage. Turn to **113**.

**101**

The tunnel you are following bends left and then straight. Soon you come to a narrow side-passage on your right. Will you head down it (turn to **67**), or continue on your present course (turn to **132**)?

**102**

As you walk a gentle breeze blows down the passage toward you. It increases in intensity with every step you wake until you are being buffeted by powerful gusts. Dust blinds your eyes and small stones flick painfully into your exposed skin. Coming your way is a swirling vortex of

air and dust – an elemental creature known as a PNEUMOZONE. You will have to kill it before it pummels you to death with violent bursts of wind.

PNEUMOZONE SKILL 8 STAMINA 8

If your opponent ever has an Attack Strength of 20 in combat, it will knock you down so that you are unable to attack during the next Attack Round (the elemental will automatically attack successfully and inflict 2 points of STAMINA damage on you). If you possess a Runestone of Earth, you can sacrifice it to instantly destroy the Pneumozone (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). You may *Escape* combat at any time by running back to the side-passage (turn to **169**).

If you defeat the Pneumozone you continue down the tunnel, which turns to the right before terminating at a large stone door. It appears to be unlocked and you can hear a low muttering coming from inside. Will you try the door (turn to **34**), or head back down the tunnel to the side-passage (turn to **169**)?

**103**

You glide through the air and easily make it to the other side. The passage ends after a few metres at another staircase, this one leading down. You descend them and find yourself in a cramped corridor, lit only by a few sputtering torches. There is an iron door set into the wall on your left; it features a panel that looks as if it can be moved. Will you slide the panel and look inside (turn to **8**), open the door (turn to **56**), or continue down the corridor (turn to **168**)?

**104**

You place the heavy war-hammer on the altar and wait (cross the war-hammer off your *Adventure Sheet*). Suddenly the weapon disappears in a bright flash of light, and in its place stands a beautiful helmet decorated with a snarling dragon and inscribed with the glowing rune of fire. You take the magnificent Dragonhelm and place it on your head (note it on your *Adventure Sheet).* From now on you will only suffer half damage from fire attacks (rounded down), regardless of whether the fire is of natural or magical origin. If you now find yourself without a weapon you will have to take a sword from one of the racks (reduce your Attack Strength by 1 until you find a better weapon, and don't forget to note it on your *Adventure Sheet*). Now, if you haven't already, will you inspect the corpses (turn to **69**), or leave the room (turn to **77**)?

**105**

The passage twists and turns beneath the Iron Hills, turning left, then right, then left again. Eventually you arrive at a large wooden door that is partially blocked by a pile of rubble. Will you try and open the door (turn to **135**), or continue down the passage (turn to **84**)?

**106**

It takes some effort but eventually you manage to work the jewel loose from its setting. It appears to be a fine piece of craftsmanship and should fetch a handsome amount of gold back in Stonebridge – should you make it out of here alive (note the Green Jewel on your *Adventure Sheet* if you decide to take it). Now, will you open the box (turn to **170**), or leave it behind (turn to **52**)?

**107**

The passage bends to the right then continues in a straight line for some time. Eventually you come across yet another wooden door on your left. Nailed to the door is a note that reads "Do not disturb". You can hear garbled screams of pain coming from inside. Will you try the door (turn to **47**), or continue down the passage (turn to **167**)?

**108**

As you walk down the passageway the air grows colder and colder. Soon you see ice forming on the walls as a chilling breeze blows toward you. In a few short minutes you find yourself forcing your way past huge chunks of ice and snow. If you have a cloak, turn to **163**. If not, turn to **66**.

**109**

You lift up the skeleton's hand to reveal a Runestone of Water! Note it on your *Adventure Sheet* if you decide to take it. There doesn't seem to be anything else of interest, so you turn to leave; turn to **44**.

**110**

You instinctively raise your shield a mere fraction of a second before a hail of sharp stone splinters thud into its hard metal. Now turn to **53**.

**111**

You gingerly place one foot on the bridge, then the other. It seems sturdy enough, but as you edge across it the stone creature springs to life and trudges toward you! The bridge shudders under its enormous weight. You must fight the BOULDER BEAST, suspended over a seemingly bottomless chasm!

BOULDER BEAST SKILL 8 STAMINA 10

You can *Escape* from your opponent by turning to **132**. Unless you are armed with a war-hammer your blows will only inflict 1 STAMINA point of damage on a successful attack. If you possess a Runestone of Fire you can sacrifice it to inflict 2 SKILL points and 6 STAMINA points of damage on your opponent (remember to cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). Should you lose three Attack Rounds in a row the Boulder Beast will knock you off the bridge to your doom!

If you win, the mighty stone beast teeters on the edge of the bridge for a moment before toppling into the chasm; you never hear it reach the bottom. You hurry over to the other side of the chasm and claim your prize, but as soon as your hands touch the magnificent crystal chest it disappears, leaving behind an iron key and some old animal bones! The chest must have been an illusion, a cruel trick created by some cowardly spell-caster. Cursing all magic-users, you place the Iron Key in your pack (note it on your *Adventure Sheet*) and leave the cavern. Soon you have backtracked to the main passage; turn to **132**.

**112**

You send the torturer crashing into a hot brazier, adding an especially painful touch to his final moments. As he dies you untie the Dwarf from the rack. At first he recoils at your touch, but then a wide grin splits his face.

'I never thought I'd see a friendly face again!' he exclaims.

He introduces himself as Kalion, a down-on-his luck miner who ventured into the tunnels in search of overlooked riches.

'I had a partner', he explains, 'Ulfar was his name. I never saw him again after we were captured, so he must certainly be dead'.

Kalion eases himself off the rack and hobbles out into the passage. With a final wave he heads away toward the mine entrance. You head the other way; turn to **167**.

**113**

It is not long before you come across another door on your right. You put your ear to its surface and hear a low moaning. Will you open the door (turn to **187**), or leave it behind (turn to **77**)?

**114**

The desk is covered with delicate scrolls and parchments, but the writing is in an unfamiliar language so you ignore them. If you gave the wizard one of your items you can now reclaim it (note it on your *Adventure Sheet*). You try one of the desk drawers but the moment you touch the handle a painful shock rolls up your arm – lose 2 STAMINA points. If you are still alive you decide to give up the search. The footsteps are nearly at the entrance to the chamber... Turn to **5**.

**115**

You stride down the passage for several minutes until you come across a cluster of sharp stalagmites that thrust up out of the ground. Above them a shaft has been cut out of the ceiling, disappearing into darkness. Wondering at their purpose, you carefully navigate through the spikes and continue on your way. A short time later you come to an iron door on your left. You press your ear to it but can hear nothing. Will you open it (turn to **64**), or continue down the passage (turn to **152**)?

**116**

Before you can land another blow the foul wizard backs away. You give chase but he melts into the wall and disappears! Will you search the wall for hidden doors (turn to **189**), or take a moment to examine the contents of his study (turn to **25**)?

**117**

Your last blow stops the stony-skinned beast in its tracks. Slowly it keels over and dies. Gain 2 LUCK points for defeating such a dangerous opponent. You check on Ulfar but he is dead, the Manticore's spike having pierced his heart. You search the fallen Dwarf and discover a half-empty flask of Healing Potion tucked into his rags. Drinking the potion will restore 4 STAMINA points, but there is only enough left for one dose.

There doesn't appear to be anything else of interest in the chamber, so you exit it through the large opening in the far wall. You find yourself in a wide passage that heads straight for some time before taking a turn to the left. At the bend is a large wooden barrel. Will you inspect its contents (turn to **32**), or leave it behind (turn to **156**)?

**118**

The war-hammer is a heavy and powerful weapon, capable of smashing both bone and rock with ease. You may take it if you want, but you will have to leave your sword behind (note it on your *Adventure Sheet* if you do). Now will you try on the medallion (turn to **51**), or leave it with its owner (turn to **199**)?

**119**

The passage ends at huge double-doors cast from iron and covered in fearsome metal spikes. The image of a horned bat stretches across the doors, embossed into the metal. If you possess an iron key, turn to **68**. If not, you have no choice but to knock! You rap your knuckles on the doors three times, and then wait. The minutes tick by without a response. Just when you are about to give up and retrace your steps the doors swing open... and out steps a massive humanoid brute made of rock! It peers down at you with glowing red eyes.

'I am the guardian of Mor Orthor. You do not have an appointment. You must die.'

You must fight.

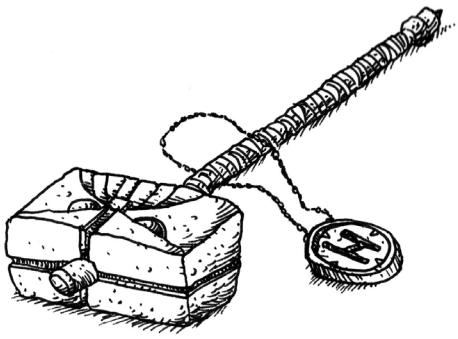
ROCK DEMON SKILL 10 STAMINA 16

If you possess a Runestone of Fire you can sacrifice one to weaken your opponent – each one will reduce his SKILL by 1 point and his STAMINA by 4 points. The Rock Demon will inflict 3 STAMINA points of damage with each successful attack instead of the usual 2. If you somehow manage to survive this awesome encounter, restore 1 LUCK point and turn to **19**.

**120**

The boots are well made and appear to be fashioned out of Snattacat hide. They will magically speed up your movements, making you more agile when you need it most. Any time you are asked to *Test your Skill* you may add 2 to the result (note the Snattacat Boots on your *Adventure Sheet*).

Now, if you haven't already, will you inspect the fur cloak (turn to **197**), or the small bottle (turn to **22**)? Or will you leave the room and continue down the passage (turn to **152**)?



**121**

Legs pumping madly, you hurtle down the tunnel and then leap into the air at the last possible second. For one brief, terrifying moment there is nothing but a glowing stream of molten death below you... then your boots strike solid earth once more. You made it! Wiping the sweat from your face you hurry along the passage as the air becomes mercifully cool once more (turn to **182**).

**122**

You place the glittering jewel into the hole. It is a bit loose in the socket, so you try to force it further in. Suddenly an electric shock runs down the length of your arm – lose 2 STAMINA points. The jewel drops out of the hole, blackened and cracked (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet)*. If you also have a blue gemstone and want to try it, turn to **86**. If you want to try a stone from the floor, turn to **198**. Otherwise you have no choice but to return to the side-passage (turn to **80**).

**123**

The tunnel you are following splits in two. Sitting on the ground before the junction is a large wooden chest. Will you open it (turn to **78**), take the passage to the left (turn to **115**), or the take the passage to the right (turn to **29**)?

**124**

Thinking quickly, you pull out one of your rations (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*) and toss it at the enormous rat. The behemoth sniffs the food suspiciously and then swallows the meal in one gulp! You run for the door at the rat thunders after you, sending tremors through the ground with each thunderous step. *Test your Luck* – if you are Lucky, turn to **153**); if you are Unlucky, turn to **43**.

**125**

You lay the polished shield on the stone altar and it disappears in a flash of light. In its place is a magnificent long sword, sheathed in a scaly scabbard. You pick it up and unsheathe a blade that seems to glow with an inner fire (cross the Griffon Shield off your *Adventure Sheet* and add the Dragonblade). If you win an Attack Round with this weapon, roll one die; on a roll of 5 or 6 the sword will deal double the normal damage. If your SKILL score ever drops to 8 or below, however, the Dragonblade will judge you unworthy and you will not be able to remove it from its scabbard. With a fabulous new weapon at your side, will you now inspect the corpses if you haven't already done so (turn to **69**), or leave the room (turn to **77**)?

**126**

The panel slams shut and after a few tense moments the door is opened by the sheepish Elf. You shove aside your would-be captor and stride down the corridor, her profuse apologies echoing in your ears; turn to **168**.

**127**

The Dark Elf sorcerer is too far away to engage in close combat, but you may be able to harm him from a distance. Will you:

| | |
|---|---|
| Shoot at him with a Silver Arrow? | Turn to **87**. |
| Cast Ransond's Inferno? | Turn to **140**. |
| Throw a Sacrifical Knife at him? | Turn to **14**. |
| Throw a Gold Medallion at him? | Turn to **158**. |

If you do not possess any of these items you advance on your enemy (turn to **61**).

**128**

You try to pull the boards free with your hands but they won't budge. Will you try using your sword (turn to **26**), or give up and continue on your way (turn to **194**)?

**129**

'A mercenary you say?' mutters the Elf. 'I have no use for hired muscle.'

You tighten your grip on your weapon and prepare to attack...

'What I really need,' he continues, 'is a new apprentice for the Master, one who has talent in the arcane arts.' If you know how to cast Ransond's Inferno, turn to **89**. If not, turn to **164**.

**130**

You step over to the grate and take a closer look. As you do so, you smell something burning – its' your boots! The green slime is eating away at the leather, so you retreat to the doorway and consider your options. If you are careful, you might be able to scrape the worst of the slime away from the grate with your weapon and then open it (turn to **90**). Or, if you would prefer to err on the side of caution, you can instead investigate the skeleton if you haven't done so already (turn to **62**), or leave the room altogether (turn to **113**).

**131**

You take the tiny key and slip it into the lock. It turns and the lid flips open to reveal a small paper scroll, resting in a bed of red velvet. You unfurl the scroll but the intricate writing on it is in an unfamiliar language. If you are wearing a Charm of Learning, turn to **196**. If not, the scroll is useless to you so you tuck it back into the chest and return it to the barrel. Will you now try some of the soup (turn to **32**), or continue down the tunnel (turn to **156**)?

**132**

It is not long before you arrive at an iron door on your left. You try the handle and find it unlocked. A snuffling sound can be heard from the other side. Will you enter (turn to **46**), or continue down the passage (turn to **123**)?

**133**

Gritting your teeth, you thrust a hand into the flames. Roll three dice; if the result is equal to or less than your STAMINA, turn to **45**. If the result is higher than your STAMINA, turn to **91**.

**134**

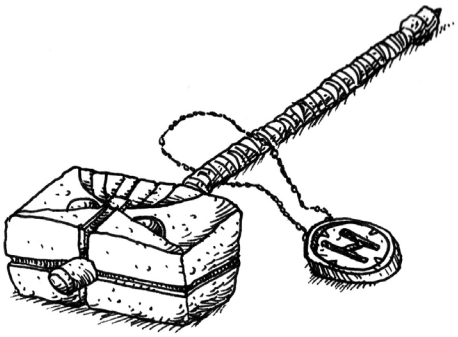
The Dark Elf's cruel eyes light up as you present the fabulous jewel. She quickly unlocks the door and snatches it from your hands (cross the Green Jewel off your *Adventure Sheet*). Cackling gleefully, your would-be captor hurries off down the corridor. You decide to do likewise; turn to **168**.

**135**

It takes some time but you succeed in removing the rubble from around the doorway. The door is not locked and opens easily. You step into a small cave, which is empty except for a corpse that is laying face-down on the ground. It appears to be a Dwarf, a miner by the look of his clothes. You notice a bottle of purple liquid clutched in one desiccated hand. Will you search the body (turn to **99**), or leave the cave and continue along the passage (turn to **84**)?

**136**

It is difficult work, but eventually you make some sense of the symbols. As far as you can tell the message translates as 'Lift Skull Treasure'. Scanning the chamber, you spot a humanoid skull lying in the dirt. You pick it up and discover that it is attached to a wire that runs into a hole in the floor. There is a deep rumbling as a piece of the rear wall rises into the ceiling to reveal a hidden alcove! Lying in the alcove is a pile of odds and ends which you eagerly sort through. Most of it is useless trinkets, something only a brain-dead Orc would consider treasure, but you also uncover three items of interest – a pair of fine leather boots, a fur cloak and a small black bottle. Which will you inspect first, the leather boots (turn to **120**), the cloak (turn to **197**) or the small bottle (turn to **22**)?



**137**

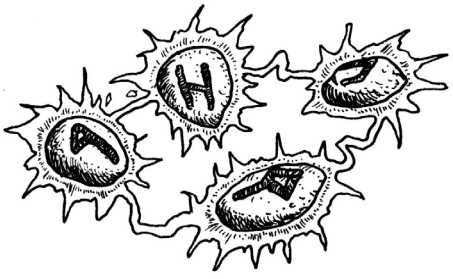
You must swim. Holding your pack high, you plunge into the icy water. It is tough going, and by the time you eventually reach dry land you are exhausted and chilled to the bone – lose 1 STAMINA point. If you are still alive you take a moment to examine your belongings. If you had any provisions left, the water has seeped into them and rendered them inedible (cross them off your *Adventure Sheet*). Turn to **119**.

**138**

The doorway leads into a cramped passage, thick with cobwebs, that twists this way and that. It eventually ends at a dead-end, but you discover a hidden lever. You pull down on it and the blank stone wall swings open, revealing another, wider passage that you step into; turn to **119**.

**139**

You search the cave from top to bottom but find nothing of interest. As you are leaving you slip in a pool of water and sprain your ankle – lose 1 STAMINA points and 1 SKILL point. If you are still alive you limp gingerly out of the cave and return to the passage, turn to **194**.



**140**

Concentrating hard, you try to recall the lines of the spell. You shout the words and send a ball of flame shooting from your hand toward the wizard. He casually points his staff at the incoming missile and transforms the fireball into solid ice! It drops out of mid-air and smashes into a hundred frozen fragments on the ground. You close in on the Dark Elf (turn to **61**).

**141**

You glide through the air and plant your feet on the other side of the shaft. Suddenly a rock comes loose underfoot and you plunge down into the hole. A cluster of long, pointed stalagmites awaits you at the bottom; roll 4 die and subtract that number from your STAMINA score. If you somehow manage to survive the fall you gingerly de-impale yourself and tend to your wounds as best you can. Once you are feeling strong enough you climb back up the staircase and return to the top of the shaft. Turn to **92**.

**142**

The altar is inscribed with a message: True strength of arms lies in those who have the strength to give them up. Perhaps if you left one of your belongings behind, you might gain something in return? Then again, perhaps it is a trick? Will you follow your hunch and place something on the altar (turn to **58**), inspect the corpses if you haven't done so already (turn to **69**), or leave the room (turn to **77**)?

**143**

You desperately lunge away from the spikes – *Test your Luck*! If you are Lucky you manage to avoid injury. If you are Unlucky some of the spikes graze your side; roll one die and lose that many STAMINA points. If you are still alive you scramble to your feet and face the terrible beast; turn to **53**.

**144**

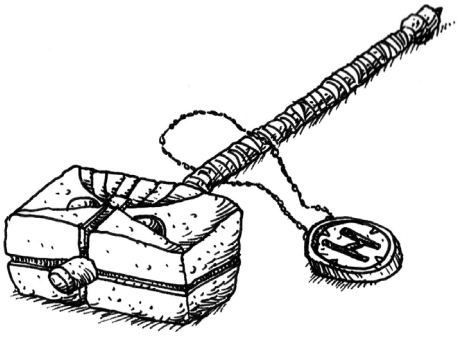
A closer inspection of the wall reveals the faint outline of a concealed door. You push against it with all your might and slowly force it open, revealing a hidden passage! Will you enter it (turn to **186**), or backtrack to the main passage (turn to **132**)?

**145**

The door swings open and you enter a large cave. Suddenly there is a loud crack from high overhead. You look up to see a huge chunk of rock hurtling toward you – *Test your Skill*! If you are successful you manage to leap out the way at the last second. If you are unsuccessful the rock slams painfully into your leg – lose 3 STAMINA points. Dusting yourself off, you turn to examine the cave. It appears to be bare, but you can still hear the buzzing noise. It grows in volume as three flickering balls of energy shoot out of the darkness toward you. If you have a Runestone of Earth, turn to **175**. If not, turn to **16**.

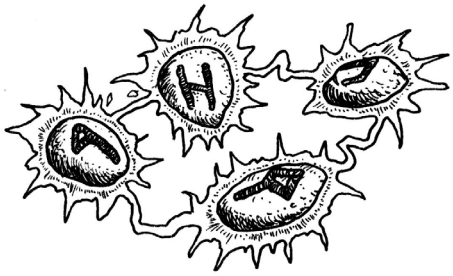
**146**

Your natural reflexes kick in instantly as you rip yourself away from the clutching hand and slam the grate back down over the hole. You have narrowly avoided a dangerous encounter with only minor burns from the slime (lose 2 STAMINA points). Now, will you investigate the skeleton, if you haven't done so already (turn to **62**), or leave the room (turn to **113**)?



**147**

You take out the Runestone and toss it into the churning molten lava (cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). A massive cloud of steam bursts violently into the air, forcing you to retreat down the tunnel. After several minutes of hissing and popping the steam subsides and you return to the stream to find that the lava has been transformed into solid rock! Amazed at the power of the Runestones, you hop across the petrified lava and continue down the passage, turn to **182**.



**148**

A blinding light shines out of your pack and the sand magically dissolves around you. Eventually you regain enough control of your body to climb back to your feet. You inspect the contents of your pack and discover that a Runestone of Fire is missing (cross if off your *Adventure Sheet*). Confused but glad to be alive, you push open the door and head back down the passage to the junction. Turn to **29**.

**149**

Ignoring all common sense, you keep your hand in the fire. The hairs on your arm quickly ignite and burn away. The skin on your arm starts to blacken and peel away. The feeling is pure agony. Will you now withdraw your hand before you are permanently crippled (turn to **91**), or let the flames continue to burn you (turn to **45**)?

**150**

The panel slams shut and you begin your wait. The minutes turn into hours, the hours into days. Help isn't coming, and soon your body will join the other skeleton in eternal rest...

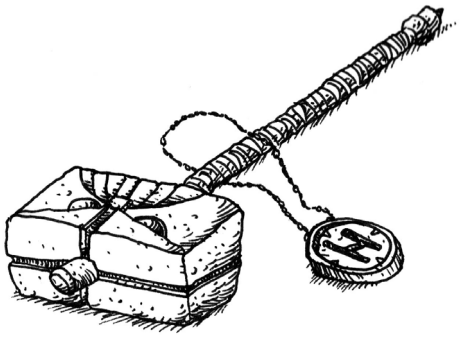
**151**

The torturer looks you up and down. 'Aren't you a little short for a Dark Elf?' he asks.

You stay silent, head bowed to better hide your features beneath the hood.

'Well, did you bring the sacrificial knife?' he snaps.

If you have the Sacrifical Knife, turn to **72**. If not, will you attack the torturer (turn to **82**), or mumble an excuse and return to the passage (turn to **167**)?



**152**

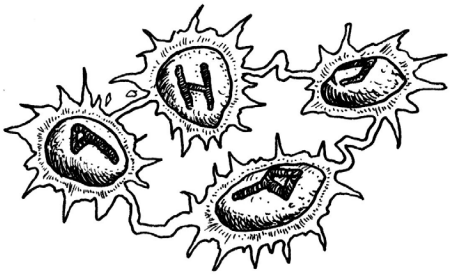
The corridor ends at a sturdy wooden door. You can hear no sound from the other side. Will you open it (turn to **162**), or backtrack to the junction and take the other passage (turn to **29**)?

**153**

You rush through the door, slamming it shut behind you. A moment later there is a heavy thump as the King Rat crashes into it. Thankfully the door holds and you are able to hurry down the passage. Turn to **30**.

**154**

The side-passage is a tight squeeze but you manage your force your way down it. It eventually ends at a small shaft that has been cut out of the ground. Unsure of whether there is even enough room to turn around and retrace your steps, you climb down into the hole and enter another, wider passageway (turn to **37**).

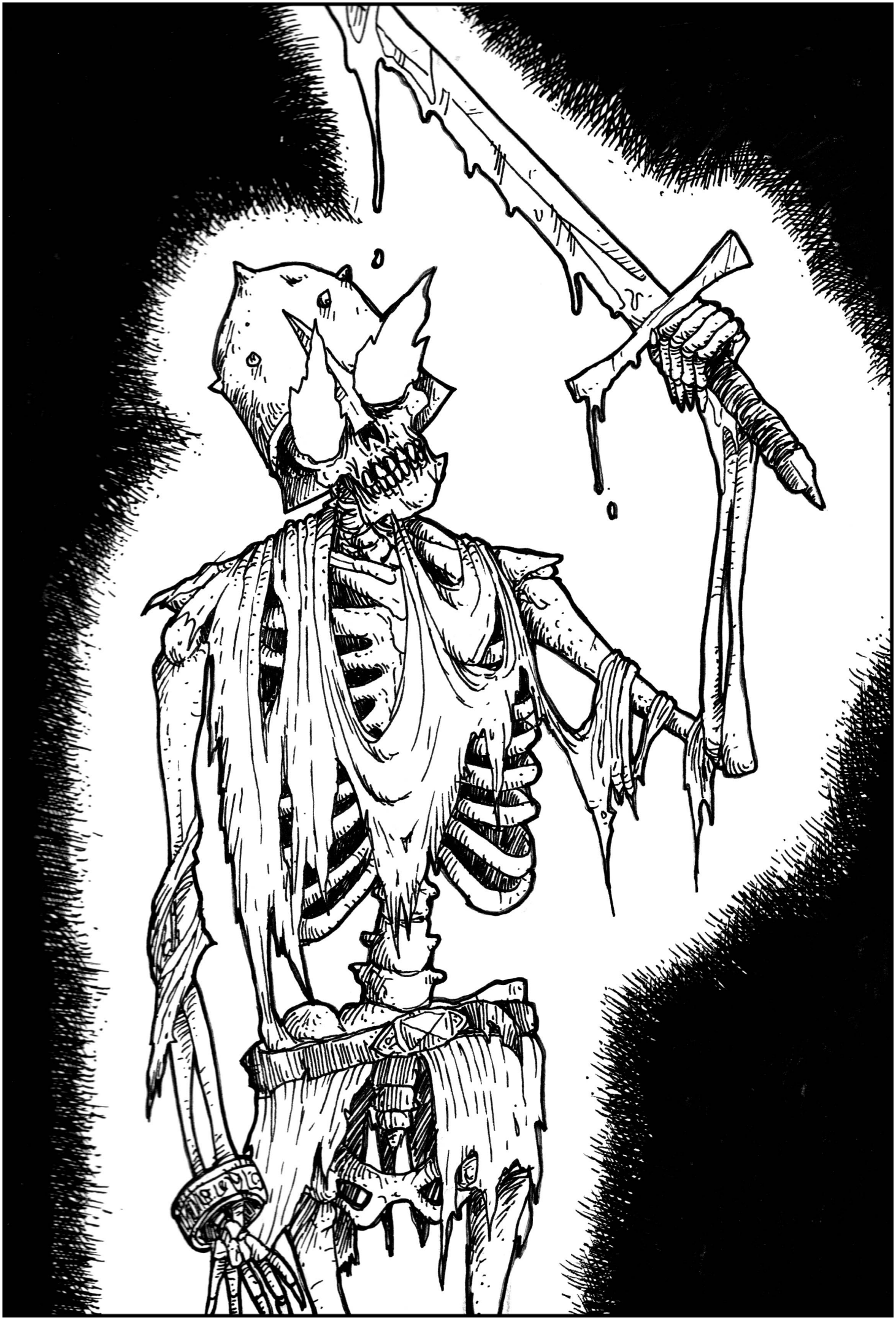


**155**

You pull the paper loose from the clutches of the lifeless hand. It is covered in complex symbols, and beneath each symbol is a word, possibly a translation of it into the common tongue. Add the Translator to your Adventure Sheet if you decide to take it. You return to the junction and head down the other passage, turn to **37**.

**156**

It is not long before you come across a side-passage that branches off to your right. From that direction you can hear a low growling sound echo through the darkness. Will you take the side-passage (turn to **80**), or continue straight on (turn to **59**)?



**157**

As you lift the helmet off the skull a crimson glow fills its eye sockets and the dead creature lurches into action! The SKELETON WARRIOR climbs jerkily to its feet and advances toward you, claws outstretched.

SKELETON WARRIOR SKILL 8 STAMINA 8

Bladed weapons will only inflict 1 point of damage on your opponent with each successful attack. If you picked up the bow and you possess a silver arrow (and want to use it!), turn to 193. You may *Escape* your opponent at any time by leaving the room (turn to **113**).

If you win, the skeleton collapses in a heap on the floor, its bones lifeless once more. You decide to leave the helmet with it. Now, if you haven't already, will you take its bow (turn to **83**). or its sword (turn to **31**)? Or, if you would prefer to leave the skeleton be, will you investigate the circular grate (turn to **130**), or leave the chamber altogether (turn to **113**)?

**158**

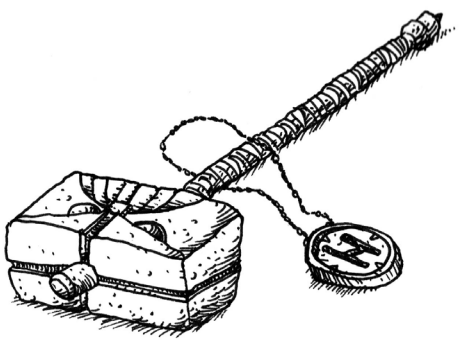
You hurl the medallion at the sorcerer. Clearly not expecting this kind of attack, he instinctively plucks it out of the air.

'What is this?' he smiles, 'a gift?'

He hangs the medallion around his neck. On cue the ground begins to shake as the Stone Golem melts out of the wall to attack the Dark Elf. The ensuing battle is fierce, with each opponent landing several brutal blows, but ultimately Mor Orthor is victorious. The construct crumbles into dust as your enemy turns to face you, eyes blazing with hatred. Deduct 2 points from Mor Orthor's SKILL and 6 points from his STAMINA when you eventually fight him. Now turn to **61**.

**159**

You soon come across another wooden door on your left. A hairy spider has been nailed to its surface. Will you open it (turn to **60**), or continue on your way (turn to **101**)?



**160**

The door does not open easily and you must push with all your might to move it. Eventually it grinds open and you step into a cold, dark chamber. Four flames suddenly burst into existence, one in each corner of the square room. At the same time the heavy stone door slams shut behind you.

'Only those deemed worthy may leave this room,' booms a deep voice, 'Place your hand into one of the flames – you shall be tested.'

There are no exits out of the chamber except for the door behind you, but it is firmly stuck. You take a closer look at the flames; each one is burning in a rusted brazier, and on each brazier is a nameplate. It looks as though you will have to take the Test of the Flames if you are to get out of here. Into which flame will you place your hand?

| | |
|---|---|
| Titan's Strength? | Turn to **133**. |
| Courga's Grace? | Turn to **57**. |
| Sindla's Fortune? | Turn to **192**. |
| Telak's Courage? | Turn to **74**. |

**161**

You pull out the scimitar and place it on the altar. The instant it hits the cold stone the weapon begins to spin in circles, whirling faster and faster as if moved by an invisible force. Suddenly the weapon disintegrates and tiny shards of metal explode outward in all directions. Roll one die and add 2 to the result; this is how many STAMINA points you must lose due to the flying shrapnel. If you are still alive you are forced to take a sword from one of the racks to replace the scimitar (reduce your Attack Strength by 1 until you find a better weapon, and don't forget to note it on your *Adventure Sheet*). You then hurry out of the room and back into the passage. Turn to **77**.

**162**

As soon as you pull open the door a wave of coarse yellow sand pours out into the passage, covering you up to your ankles. You peer in to a plain square chamber, empty except for lots more of the sand and an old humanoid skeleton. Sitting inside the ribcage of the skeleton is a massive diamond the size of your fist – it must be worth a fortune! Will you enter the room and take it (turn to **81**) or, thinking that it must be too good to be true, leave the diamond where it is, backtrack to the junction and take the other passage (turn to **29**)?

**163**

The intense cold becomes unbearable, so you don your cloak and pull it tightly around yourself. Although it doesn't cover you completely, it is better than nothing and keeps the worst of the chill at bay. The ice slowly recedes and soon it is gone altogether. You advance down the tunnel, leaving the mysterious frozen passage behind you. Turn to **2**.

**164**

'Fool', spits the Dark Elf, 'If the rest of Stonebridge is as idiotic as you are, the Master will have no trouble in wiping them out.'

Blood boiling, you stomp toward him, weapon raised.

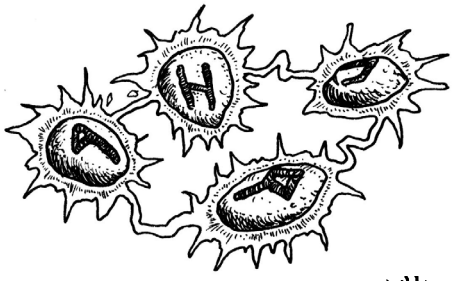
The Elf gets up from his seat and draws a long, thin dagger from his robes. 'If a fight is what you want', he cries, 'then a fight you shall have!'

KERNITHOR SKILL 9 STAMINA 11

The Dark Elf will assail you with dark spells as well as his dagger. Each time your opponent wins an Attack Round, roll one die and consult the table below to see what form his attack takes:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | The strength is sapped from your bones – lose 2 STAMINA points and 1 SKILL point. |
| 2 | Your skin burns as if it is on fire! Lose 3 STAMINA points. |
| 3-5 | His dagger cuts you deeply – lose 2 STAMINA points. |
| 6 | You feel crippled by self-doubt – lose 1 LUCK point. |

If you reduce the sorcerer's STAMINA to 2 points or less, turn to **41**.



**165**

You can't believe your luck as the loop lands neatly around the chest on your first throw! You tug on the rope ever so carefully and pull the snare tight, but as you do so the rope appears to pass through the chest, sliding toward you while the chest remains fixed in place. Disappointed, you retrieve the rope and consider whether to try again (turn to **18**), step on to the bridge (turn to **111**), or leave the cavern and return to the main passage (turn to **132**).

**166**

You hurriedly clamber out of the hole and decide to leave the room and return to the main passage. Turn to **113**.

**167**

You soon come across another wooden door. Something is scratching frantically at the other side. Opposite the door is a narrow side-passage that branches off to the left. Will you try the door (turn to **195**), take the side-passage (turn to **154**), or keep going down the main passage (turn to **30**)?

**168**

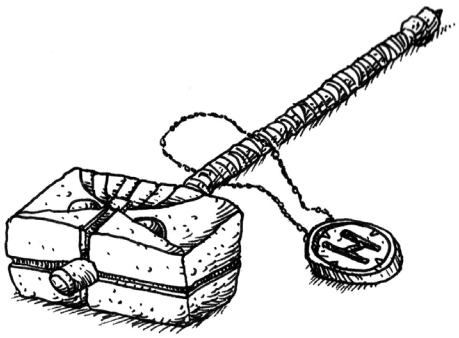
The corridor eventually ends at a junction. Both passages look the same, but you detect a chill breeze blowing from the right-hand one. Will you go left (turn to **95**), or right (turn to **108**)?

**169**

At a bend in the tunnel you come across a narrow shaft dug out of the floor. It is too tight for you to climb down into, but you should be fit an arm in, if you so dared. Will you reach into the hole and see what you can find (turn to **11**), or would you rather ignore it and continue down the passage (turn to **105**)?

**170**

You pick up the box and lift its lid. A murky emerald mist pours out of the box and envelopes you. Your legs buckle as the very strength is sapped from your muscles – lose 3 STAMINA points. Hideous laughter echoes down the passage as you drop the box and escape the cloud of mist. Turn to **52**.

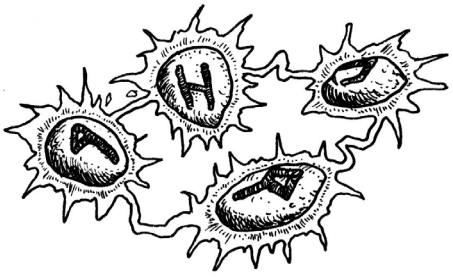


**171**

Once more you reach deep into the barrel and collect the box. This time nothing disturbs you and you pull it out of the soup without issue. You discover that it is actually a small chest decorated with silver filigree. You try the lid but it is locked tight. Do you possess a Silver Key? If so, you will know the number that is stamped into it – turn to the paragraph with the same number. If you do not have the correct key you will have to leave the chest behind. Before you go will you drink some of the soup (turn to **32**), or forge on down the tunnel (turn to **156**)?

**172**

It takes all of your strength to push open the door and your hurt your shoulder in the process; lose 1 STAMINA point. You enter a large stone chamber, cold as the grave and stinking like an Orc's armpit! Luminous green slime covers the floor, concentrated around a circular metal grate in the centre of the room. Hunched in a corner is a skeleton. Will you take a closer look at the skeleton (turn to **62**), investigate the grate (turn to **130**), or leave the room (turn to **113**)?



**173**

The Dark Elf looks confused; the disguise has bought you a few precious moments. Turn to **127**.

**174**

There is a lot of useless junk in the room, but your thorough search also uncovers a Ring of Stamina. This magical trinket will your restore your STAMINA to its Initial value one time only (note it on your *Adventure Sheet*). You also find a scrap of paper on which is scrawled the words "Beware the well".

As you are about to leave the room you hear a loud pop from inside the cauldron. You peer inside and discover that it is full of swirling water that bubbles angrily under the heat of the fire. Suddenly the water leaps out and strikes you in the face – lose 2 STAMINA points! The WHIRLPOOL is dragging you in and you must kill it to free yourself.

WHIRLPOOL SKILL 5 STAMINA 6

If you possess a Runestone of Air you can sacrifice it to instantly kill your opponent (remember to cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*). If you win you shake yourself dry and decide to leave the room; turn to **123**.

**175**

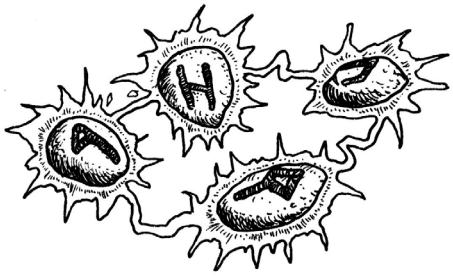
You recognise the scintillating spheres as CAVE WISPS, magical creatures that are known to nest in mines. You pull out a Runestone of Earth and toss it into the air directly in front of their path. There is a blinding flash of light and suddenly the glowing Wisps, and your Runestone, have vanished into thin air (cross the Runestone off your *Adventure Sheet*). You leave the cavern and continue down the passage. Turn to **76**.

**176**

You appear to be at a dead-end. *Test your Luck*! If you are Lucky, turn to **144**. If you are Unlucky you retrace your steps back to the main passage and turn right. Turn to **132**.

**177**

Sweat streams down your face as you will your half-paralysed body to the exit. Sand continues to fill the room until only your nose sticks out above the dunes. Finally you are close enough to the door and, with the last ounce of your strength, you lash out a foot and kick it open. The sand floods out of the room, carrying you out into the passage on a small wave. You are exhausted – lose 3 STAMINA points. If you are still alive you eventually regain enough control of your body to climb to your feet and stagger back to the junction. Turn to **29**.



**178**

You have only a few moments before you are discovered. Will you search the Dark Elf's body (turn to **63**), or his desk (turn to **114**)? Or, if you are having second thoughts, will you exit the chamber through the side-door (turn to **138**)?

**179**

The claw grips on to your arm and drags you into the opening. You fall several feet into a pool of glowing sludge, the lair of the VITRIOL ESSENCE that pulled you in. The malevolent creature closes in for the kill.

VITRIOL ESSENCE SKILL 8 STAMINA 6

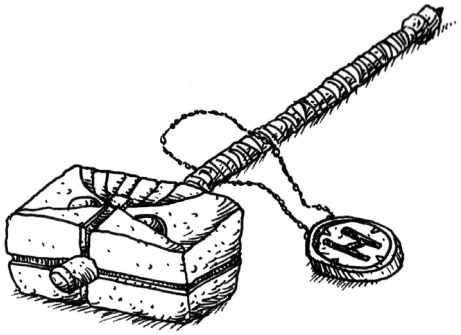
The acidic claws of your opponent will inflict 4 STAMINA points of damage with every successful attack. You must also lose 1 STAMINA point each Attack Round, regardless of who wins it, due to the slime of the lair burning your exposed skin. If you somehow defeat the monster, gain 2 LUCK points for surviving such a dangerous encounter. Will you risk searching the creature's lair (turn to **10**), or get out as quickly as possible (turn to **166**)?

**180**

The tunnel begins to dip down into the very bowels of the Iron Hills. The ground grows damp underfoot and soon you are sloshing through pools of cold water. The further you descend the deeper the water becomes, rising up to your ankles, then your knees and eventually your waist. You soon reach the point where you will have to swim in order to continue any further down the flooded passage. If you possess a Runestone of Air, turn to **27**. If not, turn to **137**.

**181**

A warm glow spreads throughout your body as you place the amulet around your neck. It is a Charm of Learning and may prove useful in the future; gain 1 LUCK point and note the item on your *Adventure Sheet*. Now, if you haven't already, will you inspect the polished shield (turn to **42**), or try on the copper ring (turn to **55**)? Or, if you feel you have wasted enough time, will you leave the chest behind and head down the left-hand (turn to **115**), or the right-hand (turn to **29**) passage?



**182**

The passage twists and turns this way and that and you lose all sense of direction. Will you ever find your way to Mor Orthor? The chances seem unlikely as the tunnel suddenly terminates at a dead-end. You despair at the thought of having to retrace your steps to the lava stream, but then you see it – the tell-tale outline of a secret door! Running your hands over the rough-hewn wall you find a button concealed deep within a seam in the rock. You press it and the hidden door grinds open, revealing another passageway beyond. You head down it and eventually reach a junction. Following a hunch, you strike down the right-hand passage, turn to **108**.

**183**

The enormous arachnid finally collapses into its own webs. Now *Test your Luck*! If you are Lucky, turn to **17**. If you are Unlucky you decide to leave the spider's lair and continue your quest. Turn to **101**.

**184**

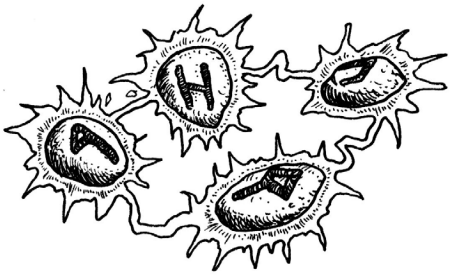
The moment you lift the top of the skull a glittering rock snake shoots out and sinks its fangs into your hand; lose 4 STAMINA points. If you are still alive you quickly hack the snake to pieces before it can strike again. Feeling nauseous from the venom, you stagger back down the passage to the junction, then head down the other path. Turn to **108**.

**185**

The door opens to reveal a large rectangular chamber. The stone walls are covered with carvings of mysterious runes and symbols. You examine them closely but can make no sense of it. Sitting in the centre of the room is a small stone statue, the features of which have been worn down so much that you cannot make out what it is supposed to be. At the foot of the statue is a small pile of bones, trinkets and coins. Will you place an offering before the statue (turn to **21**), or return to the passage (turn to **107**)?

**186**

The passage twists and turns before coming to an end at a large iron door. The misshapen skull of some monstrous creature sits above the doorway, glaring down at you with sightless eyes. You ease the door open and find yourself in a huge cavern, spit in two by a wide chasm. A thin stone bridge appears to be the only way over it. Standing motionless at the far end of the bridge is a broad humanoid formed out of stone. Its rocky legs are short and stubby, but its chest and arms are thick and powerful-looking. Lying at the creature's feet is a magnificent chest of sparkling crystal. Will you attempt to retrieve the chest (turn to **36**), or leave it to its guardian and return to the main passage (turn to **132**)?



**187**

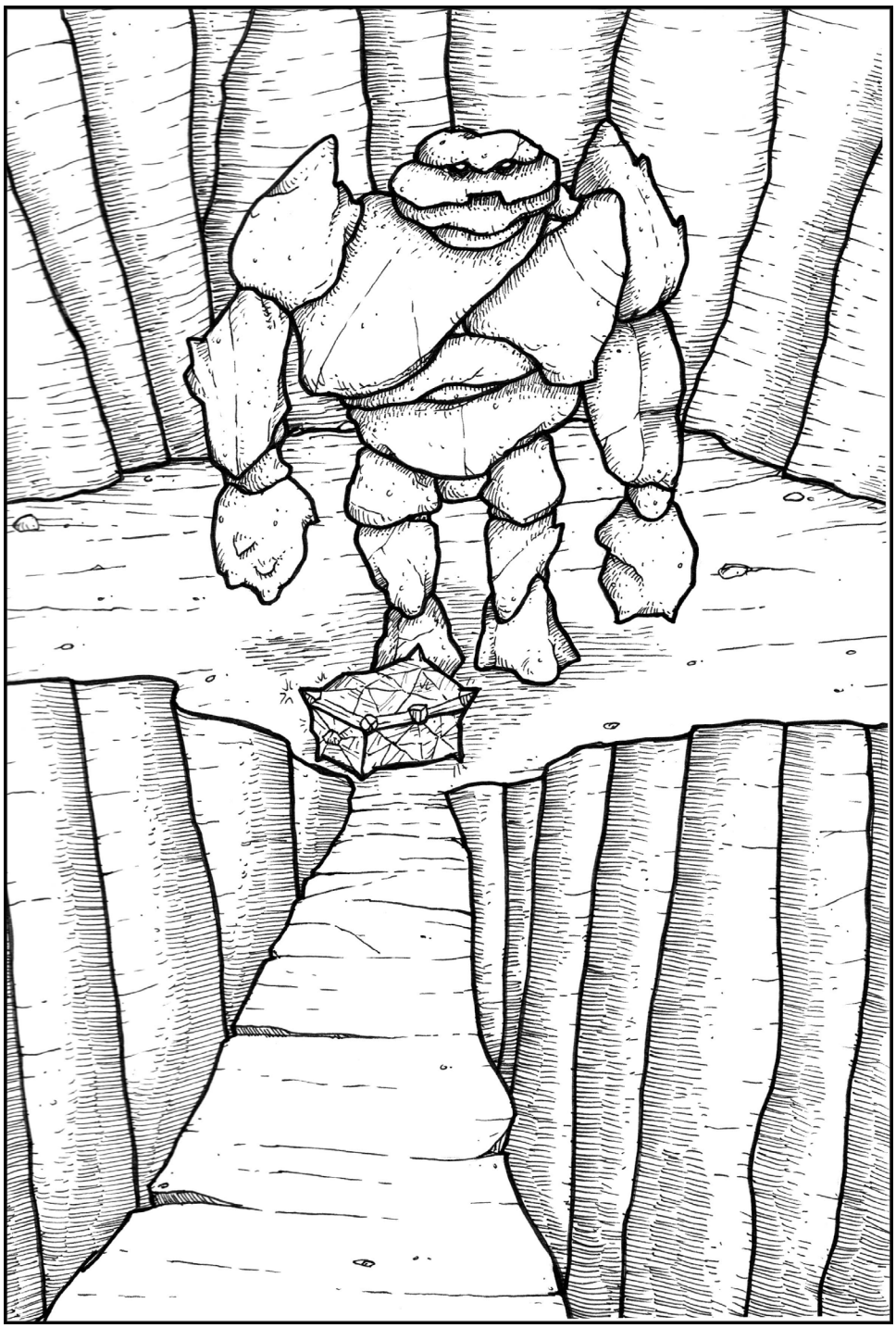
The door is unlocked and swings open soundlessly. You enter a large stone chamber, the walls of which are lined with racks of swords, axes, spears and other weapons. In the centre of the chamber is a low stone altar. Pinned to the far wall are the bodies of three dead Dark Elves, each corpse impaled by a spear. You sift through the weapons but find nothing superior to your own steel. Will you search the corpses (turn to **69**), inspect the altar (turn to **142**), or leave the room (turn to **77**)?

**188**

You claim that you are Mor Orthor's personal bodyguard and demand to be freed immediately, lest his master's wrath fall on them both. The Dark Elf peers at you warily – *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **126**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **150**.

**189**

You turn your attention the wall and discover a small button. The moment you press it your vision blurs and a peculiar feeling ripples through your body, as though you are being yanked through the air. When your eyesight returns you find yourself standing in a huge cavern. The walls stretch so high and far into the darkness that you cannot see where they end. Splitting the vast area in two is a giant chasm, probably hundreds of metres deep. The only way across it is via a narrow bridge of crack-riddled rock. You step on to the bridge and then edge cautiously along it. When you are halfway across the bridge starts to crumble and split apart! If you



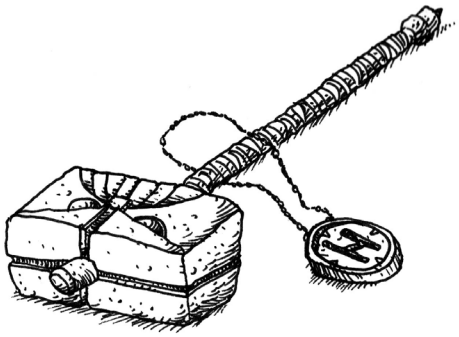
possess a Runestone of Earth, turn to **79**. If not, you will have to make a run for it – *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **39**. If you are unsuccessful, turn to **4**.

**190**

The last Dark Elf drops to the ground, blood spewing from its head. You risk a quick search of their bodies and uncover a shiny blue gemstone, worth a fair amount of gold. You inspect their jagged scimitars – they are vicious-looking weapons but feel unwieldy in your hands. If you choose to arm yourself with one it will inflict 3 STAMINA points on any living opponent with each successful attack (unless instructed otherwise), but you must reduce your Attack Strength by 1. You will also have to leave your original sword behind (note any necessary changes on your *Adventure Sheet*). Will you now search the room (turn to **174**), or return to the passage and get on with your quest (turn to **123**)?

**191**

The paper crumbles in your hand but you manage to save a fragment. On it is written the words The key is in the wall. You have no idea what it means but you make a mental note of it anyway. Now turn to **92**.



**192**

Your turn your face away and stick a bare hand into the fiery vortex. *Test your Luck*! If you are Lucky, turn to **45**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **91**.

**193**

You quickly retrieve the silver arrow from your pack and nock it to the bow. Although you are no archer, you find yourself calmly drawing back the bowstring, lining up your shot and letting the arrow loose in one smooth motion. The missile zips through the air and strikes the skeleton right in the middle of its skull. In an instant your opponent is scattered about the room, its bones blasted apart by some magical force – restore 1 LUCK point. You look for the arrow but it seems to have disintegrated along with the skeleton (remove it from your *Adventure Sheet*). Now, if you haven't done so already, will you can take its bow (turn to **83**), or take its sword (turn to **31**)? Or will you can investigate the circular grate (turn to **130**), or leave the chamber altogether (turn to **113**)?

**194**

You soon come to another junction. To your left the passage ends after a few metres where the ceiling has collapsed. To your right another passage disappears into the darkness. Will you head left (turn to **71**), or right (turn to **37**)

**195**

You open the door to find four GIANT RATS digging about a small room. They immediately stop their scratching and bound toward you. In the doorway you are able to fight them one at a time.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| First | | |
| GIANT RAT | SKILL 4 | STAMINA 4 |
| Second | | |
| GIANT RAT | SKILL 5 | STAMINA 5 |
| Third | | |
| GIANT RAT | SKILL 4 | STAMINA 4 |
| Fourth | | |
| GIANT RAT | SKILL 5 | STAMINA 4 |

If you defeat the overgrown rodents, will you explore the room (turn to **94**), or continue down the passage (turn to **30**)?

**196**

The amulet glows brightly around your neck and you suddenly understand the writing on the scroll! It is a destructive spell called Ransond's Inferno. Although you don't trust wizards as far as you can throw them, you need every bit of help you can get.

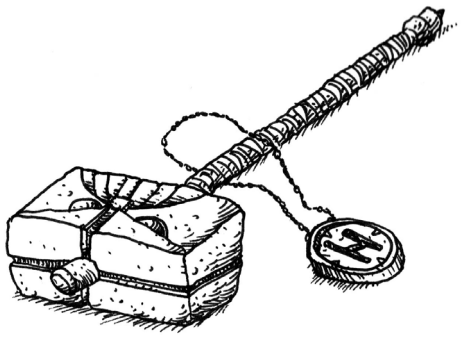
You may cast this spell before the start of any battle; if you do so, roll one die. On a roll of 1-5, you deal that much damage to your opponent. If you harm your opponent you may roll again, but this time you will need to a roll a 1-4 to deal that much damage. You can continue to make additional rolls as long as you deal damage to your opponent, but the required numbers to roll decrease by 1 each time (1-3, then 1 or 2, then 1 only).

The spell ends once you fail to roll the required numbers, or your opponent dies. It can be cast once only. Note the scroll on your *Adventure Sheet*.

Pleased with your find, you leave the barrel and continue on with your quest. Turn to **156**.

**197**

The cloak is thick but filthy and torn in several places. If you roll it up and place it over one arm, however, it will offer some protection in place of a shield. If you take it you may reduce your opponent's Attack Strength by 1. After six Attack Rounds, however, the cloak will be ruined and must be discarded (note the Fur Cloak on your *Adventure Sheet*). Now, if you haven't already, will you inspect the boots (turn to **120**), or the small bottle (turn to **22**)? Or will you leave the room and continue down the passage (turn to **152**)?



**198**

You collect a roughly spherical stone from the tunnel floor and wedge it into the opening. A jet of slimy grey liquid sprays out of a concealed compartment in the door, hitting you square in the face. It is a powerful acid that eats away at your skin and hair – lose 4 STAMINA points! If you are still alive you hurry away from the door and return to the side-passage (turn to **80**).

**199**

You leave the body behind and continue down the tunnel. It isn't long before you come to a boarded-up wooden door to your left. Will you try to open it (turn to **15**), or keeping moving onward (turn to **159**)?

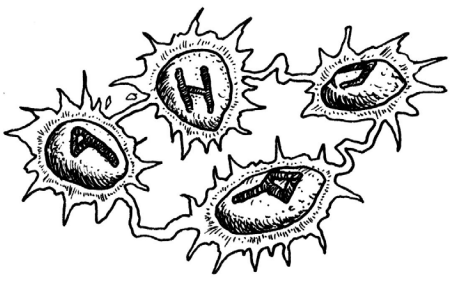
**200**

Your final blow sinks deep into the sorcerer, sending hairline cracks rippling across his body. In an instant the four separate parts of the Elemental Supreme are torn asunder and banished back to their native magical planes. Of the Dark Elf there is no sign save his staff, which you promptly break into pieces.

The journey out of the dungeon is quiet and uneventful, as if all of Mor Orthor's minions were banished into nothingness along with their master. Eventually you arrive back at the gates of Stonebridge, where you are welcomed by King Gillibran and his people.

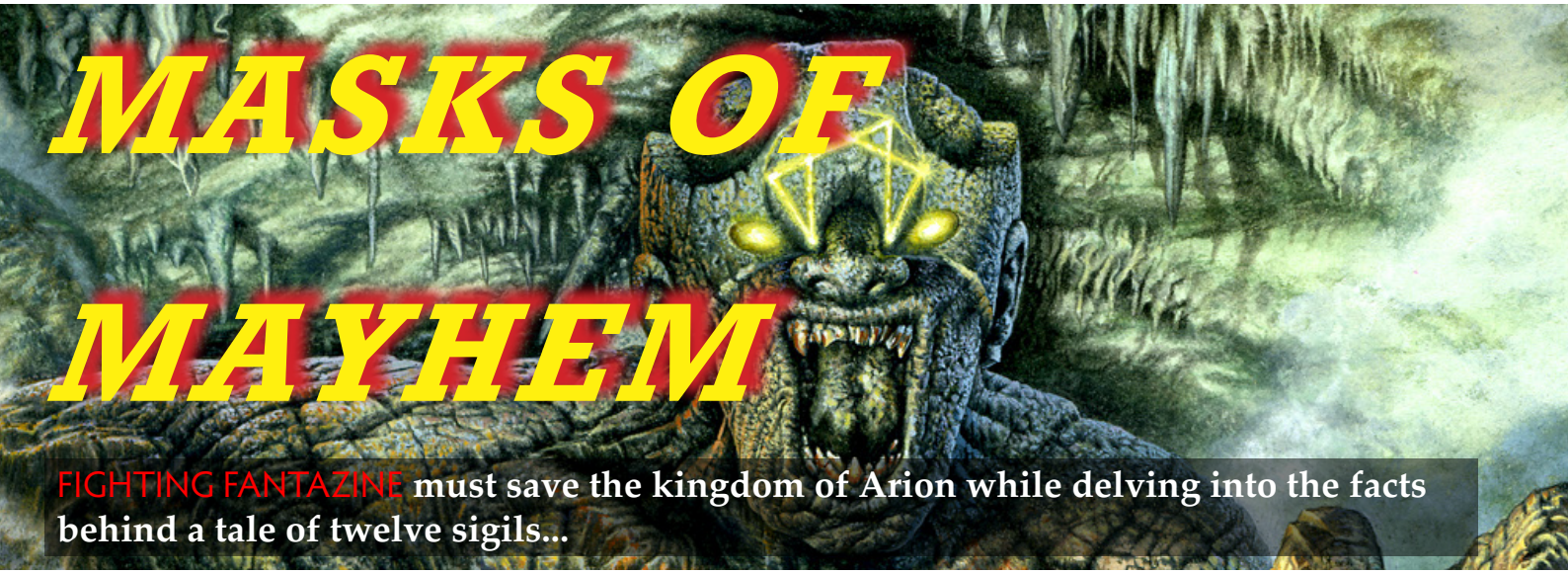
'Congratulations on your victory, mighty warrior!' he says, 'You have once again saved the folk of Stonebridge, and perhaps all of Allansia. You will be greatly rewarded, and my first gift shall be a mug of cold ale! Come now and drink, for I am eager to hear your latest tale of adventure.'

With that the King leads you in to the nearest tavern to the raucous cheers of the townsfolk. Your adventure ends here.



‘Yes, it must be you for our plan to succeed.’

# THE FACT OF FICTION



# MASKS OF MAYHEM

**FIGHTING FANTAZINE must save the kingdom of Arion while delving into the facts behind a tale of twelve sigils...**

Feature by ALEXANDER BALLINGALL

While both *Scorpion Swamp* (Steve Jackson (US), 1984) and *Seas of Blood* (Andrew Chapman, 1985) would retroactively be inserted into Khul thanks to *Titan - The Fighting Fantasy World* (Marc Gascoigne, 1986), which was published at the same time as this adventure, and *Sword of the Samurai* (Mark Smith & Jamie Thomson, 1986) was effectively shoe-horned into the continent at the last minute, *Masks of Mayhem* really marks the first proper story to be set in the third and final continent of Titan. This is clearly evident in the fact that the rules section of the book is titled “How to Fight the Creatures of Khul”!

Fittingly then, the task of this first step was given to series consulting editor of the time, Robin Waterfield. Khul was earmarked to be the playground of those *Fighting Fantasy* writers who were not the UK-based Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, the two co-creators of the range, who had reserved Allansia for themselves. In practise this wasn’t always true with *Midnight Rogue* (Graeme Davis, 1987), *Battleblade Warrior* (Gascoigne, 1988), and *Slaves of the Abyss* (Paul Mason & Steve Williams, 1988) almost immediately making a mockery of those plans by also being set in Allansia. Still, from this point on writers had a third continent of Titan explore and mark parts as their own. And any universe where Titan is without the likes of Kazan, Transoxalia, and the Wastes of Chaos, is a poorer one.

“The Fact of Fiction” is a series of articles designed to take a deeper look at the information presented in a *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook, whether it be in-jokes, goofs, continuity with other gamebooks, the background to the creation of the book, or similar things. In many ways it is to act like a DVD commentary for the book, telling you things that you might not have already known.

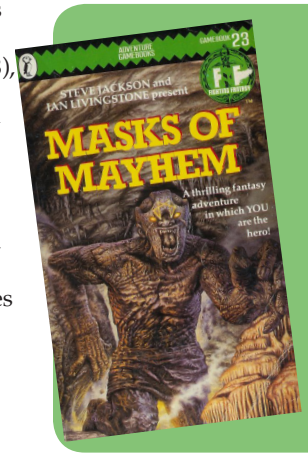
## Map

❖ The map marks artist David ‘Dave’ Andrews first contribution to the main *Fighting Fantasy* series. He had previously been responsible for the maps used in *Out of the Pit* (Gascoigne, 1985), the two *Clash of the Princes* books (Andrew Chapman & Martin Allen, 1986), and would go on to provide the map for the following book *Creature of Havoc* (Steve Jackson, 1986).

❖ With a name like Krill Garnash, one has to wonder if writer Robin Waterfield was working a pun. Krill are small crustaceans that occupy a position near the bottom of the food chain in the oceans. Meanwhile, ‘Garnash’ sounds somewhat like ‘garnish’, which is an item of food used as decoration or an additional contrasting flavour on a meal. Are we supposed to infer that the mountain is garnished/covered by something that looks like krill?

❖ Marsh Vile is a name that needs no translation/interpretation. It is a vile marsh!

❖ Pikestaff Plain takes its name from the infantry weapon of the Middle Ages. A pikestaff was a pole weapon, a long thrusting spear used in various formations in battles. Earliest records of their use date back to the time of Philip II of Macedon (382–336 BC) where they were known as sarissas. The sarissa was a 4-7-metre spear with a bronze spike on the bottom end to allow it to be driven into the ground for extra purchase during an enemy attack.




## FURTHER INFORMATION

**AUTHOR** Robin Waterfield
**INTERIOR ARTIST** Russ Nicholson
**PUBLISHED** October 30 1986
**PUBLISHER** Puffin
**GAMEBOOK NUMBER** 23
**COVER ARTIST** John Sibbick
**AVAILABILITY** Out of print.

❖ With Fallow Dale the first part of the name refers to the part of crop rotation where a field would be left unplanted (fallow) for a year in order to allow it to recover. Originally this meant a two-field system where one year field A would be planted and field B would be left untouched or fallow, and in the following year the use of the two fields would be swapped. By the time of Charlemagne (c.747-814) this had become a three-field rotation – a field of seed crops (wheat for example), a field of legume crops (peas for example), and a third field left fallow. By the 18th century a fourth rotation (fodder crops for livestock) had been added. In more recent times the need for crop rotation has given way to planting and harvesting with soil nutrition restored through the use of fertilisers. The other part of the name, 'dale', is an Old English word which means 'valley'.

❖ Affen Forest uses the word *affen*, which comes from the German word for 'monkey', perhaps suggesting the primary inhabitant of this forest.

❖ Lake Nekros clearly takes its name from *nekrós*, the Greek word for a dead person. This is apt given the toxic nature of the water of the lake and the vile creatures that inhabit it.

❖ Arion takes its name from the Greek poet, credited by Herodotus (c.484–425 BC) with the creation of the dithyramb – a hymn sung and danced in honour of the Greek god Dionysus. However, he is best remembered for his tale of being kidnapped by pirates and escaping by being rescued by dolphins. It has since become the name of Arion Games, the currently publishers of *Advanced Fighting Fantasy*.

## Dedication

❖ Born in 1955, Philippa Dickinson (see photo) has an important place in the history of *Fighting Fantasy*. Initially she joined Puffin Books as part of the Puffin Club team before moving on to editorial roles.

It was in that capacity in 1981 that she was called upon to edit what would become *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* (Steve Jackson & Ian Livingstone, 1982) and helped iron out inconsistencies in the gameplay and style of the book, which would serve the series well in the future. She would also serve as desk editor for the first five issues of *Warlock* magazine (1984-85). Later she became deputy head of Puffin Books before leaving for a new job at Transworld in 1986 to work on their Corgi Books imprint. She now works for Random House as managing director of the children's books division.

## Background

❖ Ifor Tynin gets his first name from the Welsh name, which means 'Lord', which is appropriate as the Background section clearly indicates that he is an equal to the player-hero of the adventure, who is ruler of Arion. Meanwhile, his surname, Tynin, is of Gaelic derivation and means 'dark' or 'dusty'. Given his name then could translate as 'Dark Lord' it is little wonder that (spoilers!) he is the traitor who sent you on the false mission in the first place.

❖ Morgana clearly takes her name from one of the most infamous female sorceresses of myth and legend, Morgan le Fay from the Arthurian legends. She first appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's (c.1100 – c.1155) *Vita Merlini* (c. 1150) where she is the chief of nine magical queen sisters who dwell on the Isle of Apples, also known as Avalon. In later retellings of the myth she is Arthur's half-sister and his adversary. Clearly what Waterfield is hoping for here is that the reader will infer that they are some kind of King Arthur analogue for the world of Titan, which would then make Ifor the equivalent of Merlin! Recent modern interpretations of Morgan (which sometimes combine her character with that of her sister Morgause, or that of Nimue, the Lady of the Lake) include the UK television series *Merlin* (2008-12), the computer game *King Arthur II: The Role-Playing Wargame* (2012), and the novel series *The Sisters Grimm* by Michael Buckley (2005-12).

❖ For information on the 12 sigils, see the box-out "What is a sigil anyway?".

### 1
### In the armoury the hero meets Kevin Truehand.

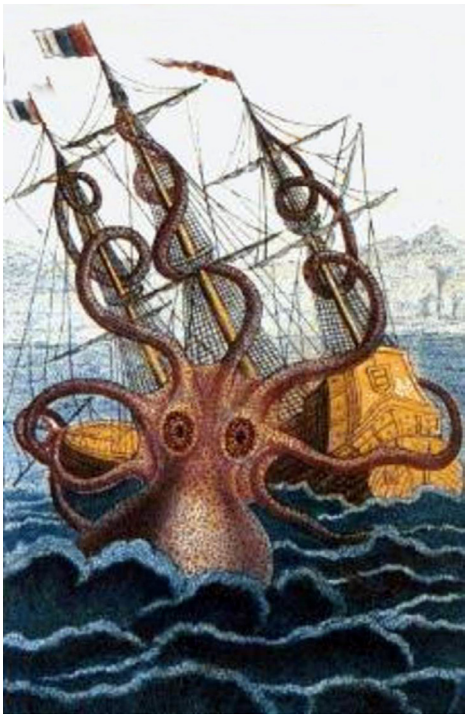
❖ Hever, which in this story gives us both a person and a horn, likely takes its name from Hever Castle in the village of Hever, located in Kent, England. This castle was built in the 13th century and for a time was the seat of the Bolelyn family where Anne Bolelyn (c.1501-1536), one of King Henry VIII's (1491-1547) wives, grew up as a child. The nearest understanding of the word is the Hebrew word חֵבֶר (*hever*) which translates as 'friend' - a good description of the character Hever himself!

❖ This use of Hebrew fits in well with the use of Golems in the story. See "What is a sigil anyway?" and 22 for more.

❖ As with using the name Hever to suggest a trustworthy character, Kevin Truehand gets the surname 'Truehand' which needs little interpretation. It is interesting that such hints are in a story that features a traitor to the kingdom the hero must ferret out.

### 12
### The sword sinks into the flesh of the Kraken, causing it to retreat.

❖ The Kraken is a legendary sea monster, probably based on sightings of Giant Squids (genus *Architeuthis*). These creatures are estimated to have grown to at least 13m in length (making them slightly smaller than the Colossal Squid). In popular culture the creatures have made appearances in many media, including



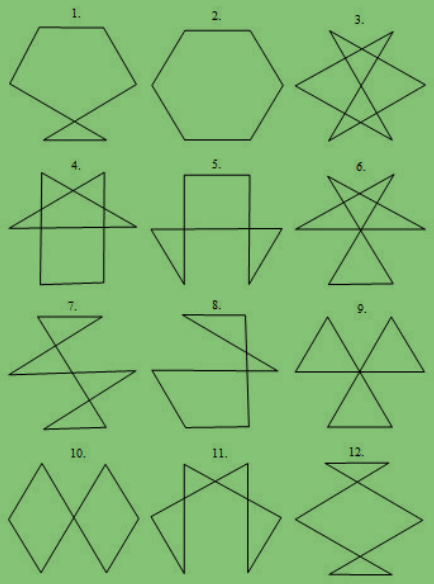
■ The adventure placed 57th (out of 70) in the *Fighting Fantazine* 2010 survey of fan opinion, scoring a total of 59.6%.

■ This book was the second-to-last of the "Adventure Gamebooks" banner titles, the familiar green 'zig-zag' being phased out at the end of 1986 with its last appearances being on *Creature of Havoc* and *The Riddling Reaver*.

■ This title was the first cover by artist John Sibbick, who would go on to contribute the interior art to *Crypt of the Sorcerer* and the cover and interior art to *Midnight Rogue* (both in 1987).

■ This was the second of four books from Robin Waterfield (who was also an editor on the *Fighting Fantasy* range for several years).

# WHAT IS A SIGIL ANYWAY?



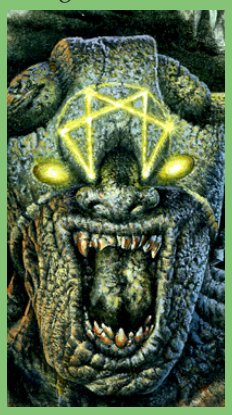

Graphic by Warren McGuire

❖ Sigil is from the Latin *sigillum*, which means 'seal'. It may also have origins in the Hebrew term הלוגס (*segula*), which means 'talisman' or an item of spiritual effect. This is interesting in light of the fact that a sigil is used on a Golem, a creature of Jewish folklore (see "The Fact of Fiction" in issue #2 for more information on Golems).

❖ In the occultism of the Renaissance period, from which the current terminology derives, a sigil was the pictorial representation of the demon or other entity that a magic user might summon.

❖ A common method of creating sigils was through "magic squares", where the names of the spirits are converted into numbers used to locate points on a square, with the points then being connected by lines to form an abstract figure.

❖ Writer Robin Waterfield explained the origin of the sigils in the book: "The sigils came from a nest of ideas that some friends and I were playing around with. If you have a circle with six dots placed at even intervals around the circumference, there are in theory 6! (= 6 factorial) ways that those six points can relate to one another. 6! = 720, but if you link the six dots in all 720 ways, only 12 patterns emerge, which we called the 12 sigils. We found this interesting and perhaps even metaphysically or astrologically significant." (*Fighting Fantazine* #12, October 2013)



❖ The Golem as depicted on the front cover has sigil form number 11 (see graphic, above).

notable examples such as: Alfred Tennyson's poem *The Kraken* (1830), Jules Verne's novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), John Wyndham's novel *The Kraken Wakes* (1953), and the film *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006). Giant Squids also appear in *Trial of Champions* (Livingstone, 1986), *The Riddling Reaver* (Paul Mason & Steve Williams, 1986), and *Dungeoneer* (Gascoigne & Paul Tamlyn, 1989). Creatures referred to as Krakens, presumably Giants Squids based on the descriptions and illustrations, also make appearances in *Demons of the Deep* (Steve Jackson (US), 1986), *Beneath Nightmare Castle* (Peter Darvill-Evans, 1987), and *Master of Chaos* (Keith Martin, 1990). The location and behaviour of the Kraken here brings to mind the 'Watcher in the Water' from *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954) by J.R.R. Tolkien, a squid-like creature that attacks the fellowship party by the gates of Moria.

**14**

**The hero fights against a group of six thieves.**

❖ Pygmy Orcs are a feature of Waterfield-only *Fighting Fantasy* titles, with their only other appearance occurring in *Phantoms of Fear* (1987). That said, one other non-Human, pygmy creature has made appearances. A Pygmy Lizard Man appears in *Seas of Blood* and they later feature in *Titan - The Fighting Fantasy World*. Pygmy Humans occur more often in the *Fighting Fantasy* universe, appearing in *The Forest of Doom* (Livingstone, 1983), *City of Thieves* (1984), *Island of the Lizard King* (Livingstone, 1984), *Out of the Pit*, *Clash of the Princes: The Warlock's Way*, *The Riddling Reaver*, *Night Dragon* (Keith Martin, 1993), *Allansia* (Gascoigne & Tamlyn, 1994), *Curse of the Mummy* (Jonathan Green, 1995), and *Bloodbones* (Green, 2006). But what exactly is a pygmy? The term itself, considered something of a pejorative word, comes from the Greek πυγμαῖος (*pygmaios*) meaning the measure from elbow to the knuckles. In Greek mythology the word was used to describe dwarfs from areas like India or Ethiopia. Anthropologists define a pygmy as any member of an ethnic group whose average height is less than 150cm. Several such groups can be found in parts of central Africa, including countries such as Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola.

**22**

**Raising the orb causes a screen to appear before the hero.**

❖ Vashti (the ageless) takes her name from Queen Vashti (יתשו), the first wife of the Persian ruler King Ahasuerus from the "Book of Esther" in *The Bible*. When she refuses to appear at a banquet at the order of the King, she is banished and the King takes a new wife - Esther.

**26**

**The hero seeks out Hever in the Privy Chamber.**

❖ 'Privy Chamber' refers to what was originally the private apartment of any English royal residence. This 'chamber' consisted of a study space, library, bedroom, and toilet, and permission to enter this apartment was heavily contested as it allowed intimate access to the monarch. Many of those who served in the Privy Chamber gained considerable status and influence from their service – although this could also lead to the downfall of many who fell from favour with the monarch. The Privy Chamber originated during the reign of King Henry VII (1485-1509) and by the time Henry VIII took the throne in 1509 it had established regular positions and traditions. One such position was the Groom of the Stool, which had begun prior to the creation of the Privy Chamber and involved cleaning the King's body after their ablutions. By the time of the creation of the Privy Chamber, the Groom of the Stool was effectively in charge of helping set the King's fiscal policies.

**30**

**The statue turns out to be dedicated to the goddess Cholumbara.**

❖ Cholumbara appears here as an agricultural goddess worshipped in Khul. Given that *Masks of Mayhem* and *Titan - The Fighting Fantasy World* were published the same day, it would be interesting to know who out of Waterfield and Gascoigne actually created the goddess. Either way, her name has to do with her occupation. *Cholum* is a Tamil word sometimes used for the plant *Sorghum bicolor*, which is commonly called sorghum and is a grass that is cultivated for its grain. Bara meanwhile is from Hebrew (ארב), which means to 'create'. Put together it is easy to see why farmers might pray to her for a good harvest!

**37**

**The hero camps out on the northern side of a hill.**

Photo © Luc Viatour, 2015. Visit www.lucnix.be

❖ The Wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) is a species of cat (see image on previous page) spread across Africa, Europe, and Asia. While smaller than many other cat species, the Wildcat is bigger than the domesticated housecat (*Felis catus*). In Celtic mythology the Wildcat was associated with divination and otherworldly encounters, which make it fit in neatly with things like Vashti (see 22) and Galrin amongst other encounters in the book. The photo on the opposite page is an example of the European wildcat (*Felis silvestris silvestris*).

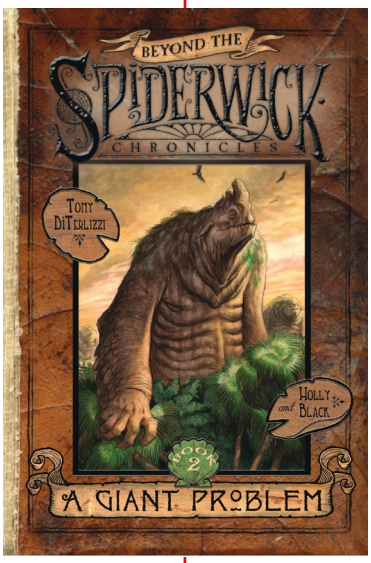
**41**
**Blinded by the snake attack, the hero must fight the snake while disadvantaged.**
❖ The name 'Spit Viper' is a fairly generic name as in the real world there are several non-Cobra snake species known to spit (or fling) venom. Among them are the Rinkhals (*Hemachatus haemachatus*) or Ring-necked Spitting Cobra (who are not true Cobras) from southern Africa and *Protobothrops mangshanensis*, which is commonly known as the Mangshan Pitviper and comes from the Hunan and Guangdong provinces of China. Some spitting species can spit/fling venom up to 2 metres. Spit Vipers reappear in *Deathmoor* (Robin Waterfield, 1994).

**42**
**Many people appear at the table of Hever, among them Bird Men.**
❖ Bird Men are most likely taken from the Aarakocra that appeared in the *Dungeons & Dragons* title *Fiend Folio* in 1981. They are mentioned in *White Dwarf* #39 (March 1983), a gaming magazine created by Jackson and Livingstone. This may have had some influence on Jackson, who would write *The Shamutanti Hills* for publication later that year and in which the Bird Men of Titan first appear. Bird Men have also appeared in *Out of the Pit*, *Titan - The Fighting Fantasy World*, *Creature of Havoc*, *Dungeoneer*, and *Allansia*.

**43**
**The hero engages in a fight with an Alligator.**
❖ The Alligator comes from the order Crocodilia which first appeared about 83.5 million years ago during the Late Cretaceous period. In addition to the two living species of Alligator (the American and the Chinese), fossils of several other extinct species have been found. It is believed that the term 'alligator' is from *el lagarto* which is Spanish for 'the lizard'.

**44**
**After a conversation, the hero is directed to the Juja.**
❖ Juja likely draws his name from the Kenyan town of the same name, which reputedly takes its name from two idols named Ju and Ja that led locals to believe the area was cursed.

**64**
**The hero gropes about the floor of a cave in search of an item of distraction.**
❖ The Nandibear ('Nandi bear' as it is referred to outside of the world of Titan), is also known as 'Ngoloko', or as 'kerit' to the local Nandi people from who the legend of this animal comes. The Nandi bear is a cryptid, an unconfirmed animal reputed to exist - in this case in Africa. Unlike the Titan equivalent, which is somewhere between an Ape and a Bear in appearance, the Nandi bear, as descibed by witnesses, appears to be closer to a cross between a Hyena and Bear. Nandibears also feature in *Armies of Death* (Livingstone, 1988), *Deathmoor*, and *Curse of the Mummy*.




**82**
**During the journey across Fallow Dale, the hero suspects they see a Tiger.**
❖ The Sabre-tooth Tiger, also spelt as Sabre-toothed Tiger, is based on the group of animals known as Sabre-toothed cats. Despite the 'cat' in their name, they are not related to modern large cats (Lions, Tigers etc.) and ranged the globe from around the Eocene epoch (roughly 42 million years ago) through to 10,000 years ago when the last of the various sabre-toothed cat species became extinct. The species of Sabre-toothed cat most people would be familiar with the depictions of would be the Smilodon, which was one of the latter species to develop (existing between 2.5 million and 10,000 years ago). These 'Tigers' also make appearances in *Island of the Lizard King*, *Sword of the Samurai* and *Battleblade Warrior* (Marc Gascoigne, 1988) among others. Writer Jonathan Green has obviously kept up with the correct terminology as he goes from mentioning a Sabre-toothed Tiger in *Knights of Doom* (1994) to a Sabre-tooth-Cat - not Tiger! - in *Stormslayer* (2009).

**85**
**A small army of spectres stands in front of the hero, offering their help.**
❖ The spectral army of the dead that features here is a clear nod to the same thing that appears in *The Lord of the Rings* (J.R.R. Tolkien, 1954-55). In Book V, "The War of the Ring", Aragorn confronts the Dead Men of Dunharrow. They end up fighting against the armies of Sauron and in return Aragorn lifts the curse that is upon them. Waterfield's version has the dead soldiers offer help in return for being freed from bondage upon the death of the Kraken.

**93**
**The body of Kevin is possessed by a Hellfire Spirit that attacks the hero.**
❖ It is unclear whether or not the Hellfire Spirit featured here is the same as the Fire Demon that first featured in *The Forest of Doom*. What suggests they are the same is the similarity in name and that both brandish a whip.

**106**
**The hero goes through the items dropped by the fleeing Spriggans.**
❖ Spriggans come from Cornish faery lore, particular to West Penwith in the far south-west of Cornwall. They are generally depicted as small and ugly (although with the ability to swell to double their normal size). They are believed to haunt ruins and barrows (see 156 for more on haunters of barrows), making mischief as thieves as well as blighting crops and replacing children with Changelings. In modern pop culture Spriggans feature in *A Giant Problem* (2008), the second volume of the *Beyond the Spiderwick Chronicles* series by Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black, appear as tree-like creatures in *The Elder Scrolls* series of video games (1994-2014), and make an appearance in an episode of the series *Lost Girl* (2010-present).

**112**
**Amongst the items in the Doragars' lair is a Snattacat tusk.**
❖ With the Snattacat, the word *snatta* comes from Swedish where it can mean 'to steal'. While there is no evidence that the cats in question are known for stealing things, the fact that they are able to become invisible does certainly suggest the ability to steal things unnoticed whilst also 'stealing' up on their prey. Snattacats feature most prominently in *The Seven Serpents* (Jackson, 1984).

**123**
**On walking through the pass the hero has disturbed the sleep of a Chion.**
❖ Fittingly for a giant, worm-like creature that is some ways resembles a snake, the Chion takes its name from the *Chionactis* genus of snakes, commonly known as shovel-nosed snakes. In addition, the suffix of *chion-* or *chio-* can be used from the Greek to mean 'snow' (where this fantasy creature is found) and is thus used often to denote 'white': the white-coloured mineral chiolite, the white-scale insect *Chionaspis*

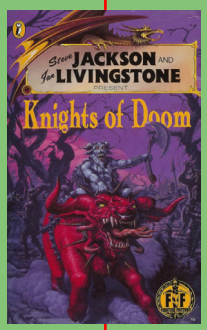
# MINI-GAMES

Paragraph 240 features a mini-game involving the hero, with the aid of hunting dogs, tracking a Tiger through Affen Forest. This, however, isn't the first or even last mini-game to appear within the *Fighting Fantasy* series. Here is a selection of just a few others from the pages of *Fighting Fantasy*...

**Titan - The Fighting Fantasy World (p.126/299)**
A popular pastime in many parts of Titan is 'Ten-Ten'. This features a board of 64 squares, half of which are black and the other half white. Each square has a random number from 1-9. Players take turns throwing a dart at the board. A black square means the number hit is added to the player's running total, a white square means the number is deducted. The game is won when someone reaches either 10 or -10 exactly.

**Daggers of Darkness (77)**
In a chamber of 49 spaces, the player must move from point "A" to point "B", trying to avoid those marked "S" which have a poisonous snake on them (three snake bites and the player is dead, regardless of STAMINA points). Movement is determined by the roll of 1 die: 5-6 means the player can move up or down 1 space, 3-4 means the player can move left or right 1 space, while 1-2 means the player does not move (losing 1 STAMINA in the process). You can move back to a block previous used (losing 1 STAMINA as a result if the player is then unable to move). *Something similar features in* Fangs of Fury *102.*

**Spellbreaker (246)**
Drogo introduces the two-player game of 'Eclipse', which is played with a stake of between 5 and 10 Gold Pieces. The game uses one die, two player tokens, a circular board divided into 20 sections and 20 counters, 5 of which are shaped like the moon and the rest like the sun. Players take turns rolling the die and moving their token the number of spaces in an anti-clockwise direction. If a player lands on a space with a token, they take it. If a player lands on a space occupied by the other player, the othe rplayer must hand over 1 sun counter. Once all the counters are collected they are totalled up (sun = 1, moons = -1).




**Knights of Doom (244)**
Features a two-player boardgame called 'Dragon's Hoard'. The player can take on a nameless soldier in the game. The stake is 6 Gold Pieces and it requires a marked board of 25 squares (5x5) and two dice. Two squares are marked with a Dragon's head and a sword, representing the 'home' positions of the player and the 'dragon'. The 12 coins are spread evenly over the board on every second square. The objective of the player is to collect as many coins as possible and return 'home' without being landed on by the 'dragon'. Players take turns rolling two dice and moving their piece the given number of squares based on a guide (ie. if the player rolls a total of 8 or 9 they can move 2 spaces). The pieces can only move horizontally or vertically, not diagonally.

**Curse of the Mummy (274)**
The player plays against the ghost of Nemset in a game of the two-player game 'Tenet'. The board is divided into 5 rows of 10 squares. The 5 white pieces line up in the far left-hand column and the 5 black pieces in the far-right column. The players can only move their pieces 1 or 2 spaces forward (horizontally along the row). If their way is blocked they can then move sideways (up or down) into a new row, provided the square is empty. White plays first. The objective is to get one of your pieces to the opposite end of the board.

*Other Interesting Moments*

**Phantoms of Fear (309)**
The 'Trial of Ghosts' is a 7x7 grid of numbered squares (although 12 are blacked out) that requires the player to pass through five of them to reach the "?" in the centre of the grid. The total of the five squares determines the paragraph the player turns to.

**Sky Lord (48)**
A player with no money can end up 'playing' their way in a game of 'Galactic Joust'. Played with four players and three rings, the game involves rotating the rings to either reveal or screen enemies from view (Diagram 2 on the inside front cover).

**Sky Lord (200)**
The player must navigate the floor of a room covered in square and circular tiles (Diagram 1 on the inside front cover). The tiles cycle through orange, blue, and green, changing when that type of tile is stepped on (i.e. the square tiles change colour if the player steps on a square tile and the circular tiles don't change).

**Spectral Stalkers (81)**
Vaguely akin to draughts, the player is mixed up in an on-going game between two powerful figures. The untitled game involves real people as the playing pieces and a 'board' of 49 (7x7) squares in a field. There are white and black 'pieces' which can move either 1 square left, right, or ahead (moving backwards is not allowed). The objective is to eliminate opposition pieces by flanking them, one piece on either side (including diagonally).

*pinifoliae*, and *Gaultheria hispidula*, also known as *Chiogenes hispidula*, which produces white fruit.

**125**
**The hero camps for the night on the edge of Marsh Vile.**
❖ Marsh gas is a common name for a form of biogas, primarily composed of methane, that forms in wetlands. The methane is produced by rotting vegetation that is trapped away from oxygen, thus undergoing anaerobic digestion and fermentation. If the conditions are right, this methane can be ignited and combust. This can lead to the phenomenon of Will-o'-the-wisp (for more on this see "The Fact of Fiction" in issue #2).

**145**
**The hero battles a Chimera while on a rope bridge.**
❖ The Chimera (Χίμαιρα) comes from Greek mythology, with Homer's (c. 8th Century BCE) description in the *Illiad* (c.760-710 BCE) being the earliest surviving literary example. It is possible that this Greek myth is based on an older Neo-Hittie myth. Chimera also appear in the *The Riddling Reaver*.

**159**
**A river crossing proves to be perilous due to the chances of being swept away.**
❖ The three rocks seen here become 'four rocks' in paragraph 188.

**177**
**The hero returns in shame to Hever's castle.**
❖ The Skylarks mentioned here will be based on the Eurasian skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa. With the species population now a tenth of the numbers there were 30 years ago due to changes in farming practices, some farmers are paid to maintain certain fields as habitats for the birds. The term 'skylark' was used by sailors to mean 'playing about' and is generally thought to be the origin of the term 'lark' to mean silly behaviour.

**184**
**The hero and Hever talk and are soon joined by a young bard.**
❖ Bard is a Scottish Gaelic loan word (*bàrd*) used to describe the individuals that (as a form of professional employment) preserved genealogies and family histories of the ruling classes through song and poetry prior to the point that the recording of history in written form began. By the 16th century AD, the term 'bard' was beginning to be used as a derogatory name for an itinerant musician, although the term was later rescued and romanticised by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). The major centre of bardic tradition in the 21st century is Wales, which promotes the skill through festival events like Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru (National Eisteddfod

of Wales).
❖ The tale of 'Pyke and the Firefox' that the hero can request the bard retell, given author Robin Waterfield's background in classical literature, probably has some basis in the story of Cupid and Psyche from Books 4 through 6 of the ancient Roman novel *Metamorphoses* (also known as *The Golden Ass*) by Apuleius (c.124-c.170 CE) which features both eagles and dragons (but not buzzards). Given that in the term 'fox' used in such things as foxfire (the bioluminescence created by some species of fungi present in decaying wood) is derived from the French word *fols* meaning 'false'. Perhaps this again is a false or 'cold' fire as foxfire was perceived to be in classical times.

**236**
**A caravan owned by Canches, an alchemist and trader, comes into view.**
❖ Canches possibly takes his name from the character of Maestro Canches. This is the name given to the learned sage (usually identified as a Jew in later retellings) who, in *Livre des figures hiéroglyphiques* (1612), is described as the one who identified a strange book Nicholas Flamel had acquired as *The Book of Abramelin*, the contents of which would lead Flamel to develop the Philosopher's stone. While Nicholas Flamel lived c.1330-1418 (working as a scribe) and the earliest manuscipt for *The Book of Abramelin* comes from 1602, the story of Flamel and his immortality granting stone in *Livre des figures hiéroglyphiques* led to several 'sightings' of a living Flamel in the 17th and 18th centuries.

**254**
**The hero stumbles on the encampment of two Blackhearts.**
❖ Brendan Bloodaxe most likely borrows his rather lurid surname from Eirik Haraldsson (c.885 – 954) who was nicknamed (probably in later narratives) Eric Bloodaxe. While historical evidence is not plentiful, Haraldsson is believed to have ruled Norway as king (931-933) and Northumbria on two non-consecutive occasions (c. 947–948 and 952–954).
❖ The idea of Blackhearts being a cross between Orcs and Dark Elves probably takes something from the many possible origins of the Orcs as mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings* material (*The History of Middle-Earth* (1983-96)) that was later published by Christopher Tolkien (b.1924). Blackhearts reappear in *Deathmoor*.
❖ The Great War referred to here is the Great War Against Evil which was the Khulian portion of the Chaos Wars that engulfed all three continents of Titan. Marc Gascoigne would go into greater depth about those events in *Titan - The Fighting Fantasy World*.

**296**
**The hero listens to the tale woven by the bard.**
❖ The Wyvern is a mythical creature that is similar to a Dragon, but most literature portrays it as a lesser creature, smaller in size and possessing only two limbs instead of four. The name comes to English from the Latin *vīpera*, which means 'viper' or 'adder'. Wyverns also appear in *The Forest of Doom*, *The Riddling Reaver*, *Armies of Death*, and *Stormslayer*.
❖ Is the Wailing Island here a reference to the events of Enid Blyton's (1897-1968) 1962 book *Five Have a Mystery to Solve* in which there is a Wailing Island?

**323**
**During their travels the hero encounters a trader by the name of Canches.**
❖ Heather is the common name for the Ericaceae family of plants, which includes cranberries and blueberries. Bilberries, which are mentioned in this reference, are from the same family and are very closely related to blueberries (the two are often confused by people). In this paragraph Waterfield is probably thinking of *Vaccinium myrtillus*, which is the regular variety of bilberry. In traditional medicines the leaf has been used for treating various conditions, including diabetes.
❖ Water Buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*) originate from south Asia and China, with the river type having been domesticated somewhere in India around 5,000 years ago. Currently, with over 130 million in existence, the domesticated Water Buffalo is the animal most relied upon by humans.

**325**
**A fall inside the colony of Bats puts the hero in the middle of a fight.**
❖ Regular-sized Bats (for the giant variety see "The Fact of Fiction" in issue #6) make appearances in *Creature of Havoc*, *Chams of Malice* (Luke Sharp, 1987), *Bloodbones*, and *Dungeoneer* among many others.

**333**
**Having succesfully captured the tiger, the hero is given the Horn of Hever.**
❖ While the Yachar is a demon in the Titan fictional mythology, the word is most likely Hebrew in origin (רחי) and can be translated as 'upright', the complete opposite of a demon!

**335**
**Bony hands erupt from the walls to grab at the hero.**
❖ Is the wall of hands seen here inspired by Roman Polanski's 1965 film *Repulsion*? In that film the main female character, Carol (played by Catherine Deneuve) hallucinates many things, including arms reaching out of the walls (see the still below).

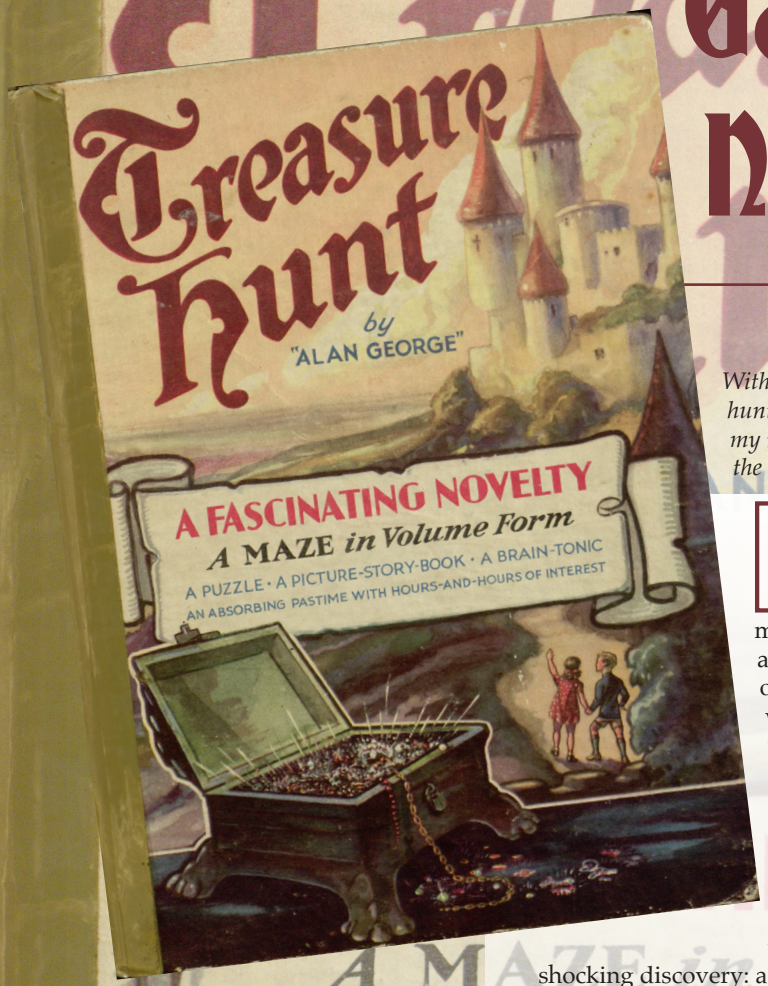
**375**
**The hero's campfire draws the attention of two Mordidas.**
❖ These creatures, the Mordidas, take their name from the Portuguese word *mordida*, which means a 'bite' or the act of biting, a fitting name for a Hyena-like creature. Mordidas reappear in Waterfield's next two *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks: *Phantoms of Fear* and *Deathmoor*.

**396**
**At the far end of the field the hero is beset by two dogs.**
❖ The use of the term 'Kalagarian' here for the two Ridgeback dogs is a nod to the northern port of Kalgar, which was first introduced in *Titan - The Fighitng Fantasy World*. It is possible that the port takes its name from 'kal agar' (ل ک ر گ ا) which roughly translates from Urdu to 'tomorrow if'. Given Waterfield's background in the classics it is possible this is an intentional meaning. Meanwhile, it has been suggested (*Fighting Fantazine* #1, September 2009. McGuire, Warren. "Can't Find Gundobad on a Map? Maybe We Can Help...") that Kalagar may be an analogue for the settlement of Kalamdar as seen on the maps for *Clash of the Princes* (Chapman & Martin Allen, 1986).

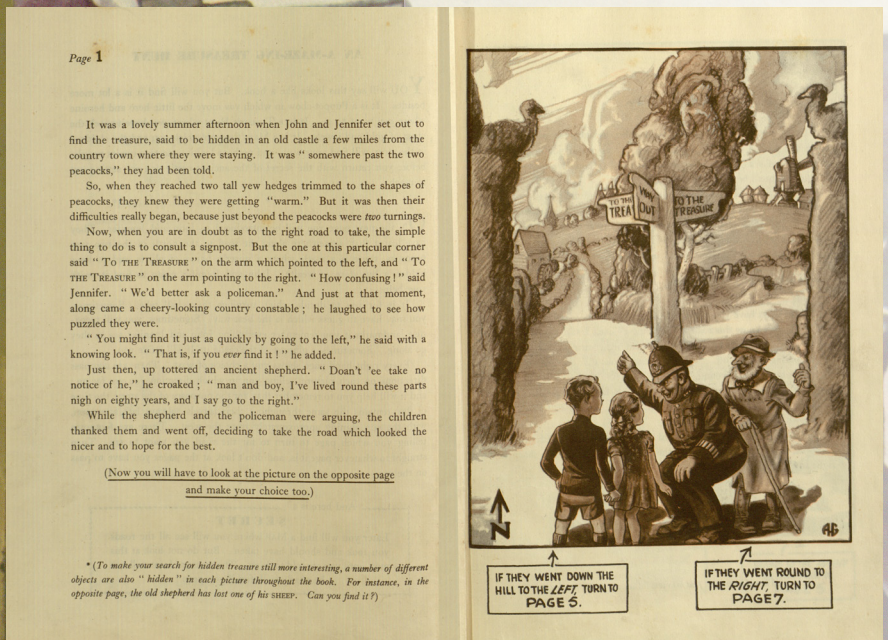
# The Early History of Gamebooks: Some New Discoveries

by DEMIAN KATZ

*With thanks to Ferenc Price for starting me on this particular treasure hunt, and to Robert Kirkpatrick, who contributed some key information to my research and very kindly took the time to examine* Seeking a City *at the British Library.*




It is a very risky thing to make assertions about the "first" of anything. This was proven to me when, after many years of believing I understood the basic chronology of gamebook development. I was faced with a somewhat shocking discovery: a fully-formed gamebook apparently published in the 1940's, a time when I believed that gamebooks were, at best, a theoretical idea in a couple of Jorge Luis Borges tales. Like so many of my discoveries, I owe this one to a reader of Gamebooks.org who kindly dropped me an email to report that his family had owned a copy of this title for many years. Fortunately, I was then able to acquire a copy of my own from a used book shop in Australia to confirm the existence of the book. It proved to live up to all the claims.



Page 1

It was a lovely summer afternoon when John and Jennifer set out to find the treasure, said to be hidden in an old castle a few miles from the country town where they were staying. It was "somewhere past the two peacocks," they had been told.

So, when they reached two tall yew hedges trimmed to the shapes of peacocks, they knew they were getting "warm." But it was then their difficulties really began, because just beyond the peacocks were *two* turnings.

Now, when you are in doubt as to the right road to take, the simple thing to do is to consult a signpost. But the one at this particular corner said "To THE TREASURE" on the arm which pointed to the left, and "To THE TREASURE" on the arm pointing to the right. "How confusing!" said Jennifer. "We'd better ask a policeman." And just at that moment, along came a cheery-looking country constable; he laughed to see how puzzled they were.

"You might find it just as quickly by going to the left," he said with a knowing look. "That is, if you *ever* find it!" he added.

Just then, up tottered an ancient shepherd. "Doan't 'ee take no notice of he," he croaked; "man and boy, I've lived round these parts nigh on eighty years, and I say go to the right."

While the shepherd and the policeman were arguing, the children thanked them and went off, deciding to take the road which looked the nicer and to hope for the best.

(Now you will have to look at the picture on the opposite page and make your choice too.)

* (*To make your search for hidden treasure still more interesting, a number of different objects are also "hidden" in each picture throughout the book. For instance, in the opposite page, the old shepherd has lost one of his* SHEEP. *Can you find it?*)




As a story, this book has little to recommend it; one can only imagine that most children of the era when this was published would have preferred to go on a harmless adventure outdoors than to read about other children doing the same thing, especially given the rather anticlimactic (though not unexpected) ending of the tale. However, in spite of the inconsequential storyline, as a game, the book is surprisingly sophisticated. The illustrations of the scenery are dynamic and varied, consciously endeavoring to pull the reader into the book's world through use of interesting perspectives and repeated landmarks. As a bonus for game-players, each spread includes some hidden objects for the reader to find, and the book also includes a crossword puzzle with clues related to the game world. As if that were not enough, the reader is also provided with a page of suggestions for alternate

ways to play the game, such as assigning point values to particular landmarks and taking turns with another player to try to achieve a high score while navigating through the book. All in all, this is a fascinating book, anticipating some of the mechanics that would drive the gamebook boom of decades later while also offering some unique novelties of its own.

While it is fairly easy to assert that *Treasure Hunt* is a "real" gamebook – and a surprisingly clever one at that – it is difficult to say much else about the book with absolute certainty. The first question one might ask is "when was it published?" Unfortunately, the book itself contains no dates, although the British Library Catalogue estimates its publication year as 1945, and my copy has an inscription dated "Christmas 1950," so it can be fairly comfortably stated that this very likely came out in the late 1940's, or at the very latest, sometime during 1950.

**Another couple of pages from *Treasure Hunt*.**

The next obvious question is "who wrote the book?" Again, the answer is not entirely clear-cut. The book attributes its authorship to "Alan George", and all of the illustrations are signed with a stylized AG. The name on the cover enclosed in quotes, which seems suggestive of a pseudonym. Once again, the British Library Catalogue implies through its selection of author heading that this "Alan George" is, of all people, Major-General Alan George Bingham Buchanan.

The Major-General wrote, in 1947, a book entitled *Seeking a City: A Pilgrimage by a Major-General*, published by Pax House. This volume, also attributed to "Alan George," is part biography, part religious essay, and its biographical details clearly link it to Buchanan, but it is certainly not a gamebook and bears absolutely no superficial resemblance to *Treasure Hunt*. The shared use of the "Alan George" pseudonym and the 1940's publication date are certainly suggestive that *Treasure Hunt*'s author is the same person, but it is nonetheless a startling thought that the gamebook may have been invented by a British Major-General shortly after the close of the Second World War! At the same time, the detail-oriented, intricately mechanical nature of Treasure Hunt is not entirely incompatible with Buchanan's engineering background, which seems to have been the focus of much of his military service. The authorship question is further complicated by the inclusion of an "edited by Susan French" credit; the name Susan French was associated with *Daily Mail Annuals* for a time, and may also have been a pseudonym, but as with "Alan George" it is hard to say for sure whether this is more than coincidence (though once again, the British Library Catalogue explicitly states that this is "Susan French of the Daily Mail").

Clearly, the question of authorship simply leads to more questions: What was the relationship of author and editor? Does further evidence exist somewhere to reinforce or contradict the possible identities of the book's creators? Is there some military precedent, such as a training tool, that might have inspired gamebook mechanics? Might there be other interactive surprises hiding in children's annuals of the period?

There is one question that *Treasure Hunt* just might answer: "what inspired *Tracker Books*, the very early gamebook series, published from 1972-1980?" The *Tracker Books*, published in the UK by Transworld, are a somewhat mysterious entity, as they didn't seem to fit well with the previously established gamebook chronology. Their extremely visual design, consisting of linked two-page spreads with text and detailed illustrations, did not obviously link up with their known predecessors. However, this design is nearly identical to *Treasure Hunt*, and it seems plausible (though not currently provable) that *Treasure Hunt* served as an inspiration for this pioneering series.

Before we get too hung up on all of the details of *Treasure Hunt*'s origins, we should also take a brief journey a further two thousand years back in time (give or take a century), where further surprises await us. In a 2011 scholarly monograph, *The Iliad in a Nutshell: Visualizing Epic on the Tabulae Iliacae*, Michael Squire performs a detailed analysis of the Tabulae Iliacae, Roman marble tablets created between 100 B.C.E. and 100 A.D. and containing text and illustrations relating to Greek and Roman history and mythology. Squire points out, in a chapter entitled "Choosing Your Own Adventure", that scholarly criticisms of the illustrations as diverging from the text may be misplaced and reflective of a much more contemporary notion of how text and images are supposed to interact. He argues that the intricate illustrations of the tablets actually have game-like aspects (strangely evocative of *Where's Wally/Waldo*?) and convey information in a non-linear fashion. While Squire is certainly not declaring that he has discovered a two-thousand-year-old gamebook, his arguments do serve as a reminder that the novelty of gamebooks derives in part from contemporary expectations about linear narratives, and that those linear expectations have not always been as strong as they were at the time when gamebooks arose during the 20th century. It is interesting to ponder the possibility that, as the Internet age once again changes expectations about linearity, our process of thinking about narratives may actually be moving closer to an earlier state – but that is a topic for an entirely different article. For now, let it suffice to say that there is nothing new under the sun.

If anyone can shed any further light on any of the mysteries touched upon in this article, I would be most grateful for any information they would be willing to share.

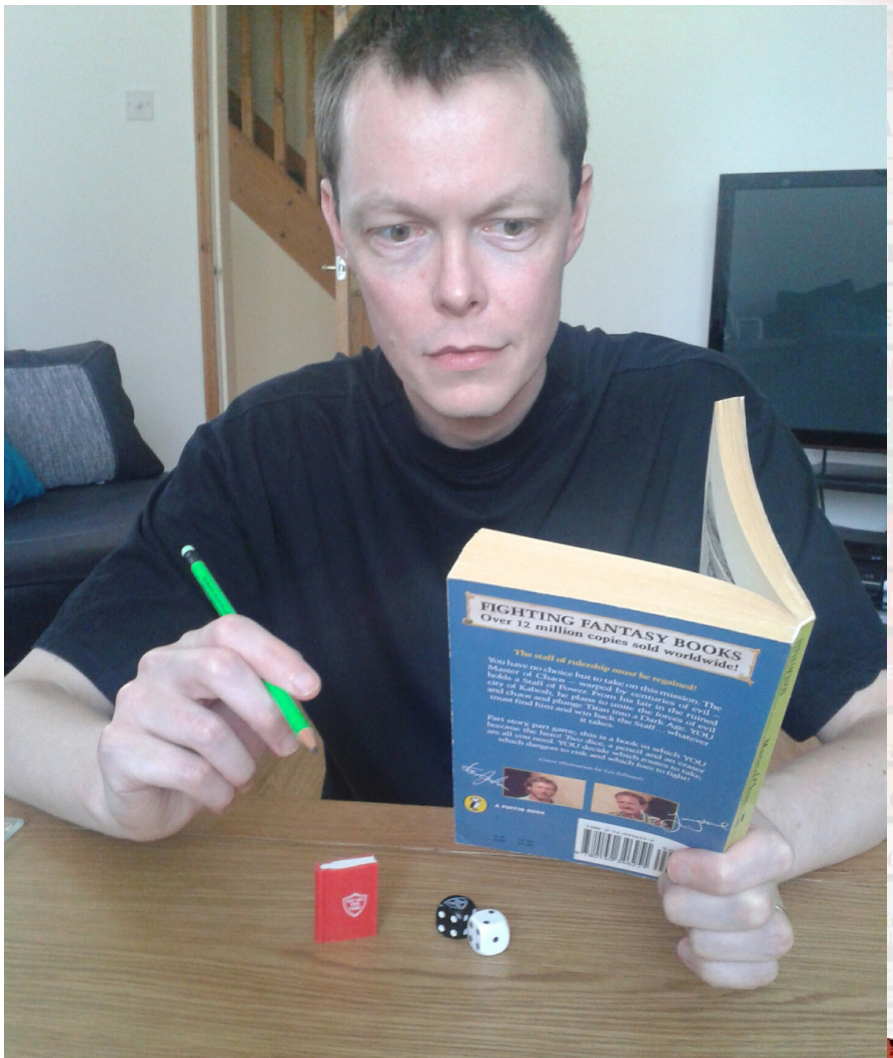
# The Magic Quest

## The 59 Steps:
## A familiar 30-plus-year journey from Firetop Mountain to the DIY store (to get more bookshelves)

by MARK LAIN

For those who consider themselves to be *Fighting Fantasy* fans (or fans of gamebooks in general), the memory of where we were and when it was that we each got our first gamebook is rather like the comment you often hear from a previous generation that they can always recall where they were when they heard the news of JFK's assassination. Defining moments in one's own history always stick in the conscience and the question of "When did you get your first gamebook?" naturally followed with "What was it?" is often asked in fan forums and is as effective an ice-breaker as the university freshman's standard opening line of "Where are you from and what course are you doing?" The latter I must have answered hundreds of times in my first week at university and the two parts of the former form the starting point (or the *Background* that precedes paragraph **1** to use an *Fighting Fantasy* analogy) of where I'm going with this intro. Ask most thirty- or forty-somethings whether they remember "those books where you make a choice and turn to a numbered section to see what happens next" and most will say that they do, regardless of whether they are enthusiasts of the format or not. The fact is that most people brought up in the 1980s owned (or at the very least, came in contact with) a gamebook of one type or another at some point. They were a massive phenomenon at the time and, like reality TV now, no-one of the target audience seemed to be able to avoid at least giving them a try and, also like reality TV, many who dabbled in gamebooks became hooked, even if only for a few years or so.

I consider myself lucky to be the right age to have been there when it all started for *Fighting Fantasy* and my first real encounter with the series was on Christmas Day 1983. I was a keen reader anyway and, on opening a parcel containing a copy of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, I assumed it was a fairly lurid-looking Puffin fantasy book that I'd probably like reading at some indeterminate point in the future, as I had no idea at the time what a gamebook or fantasy role-play were. I can only speculate on whether the book (bought by my parents) was intended to encourage me to read, to boost my already quite keen imagination, just something they thought I might get into, or a combination of all of these, but, once I had given it a first go there was no turning back. To put some perspective on this, at the time, playing the books was an interactive event where my Dad would read the (at times quite complicated for a seven-year-old) text and I would



act out what I wanted to do, make my choices, roll the dice for myself, etc and he would roll for the monsters to make it feel a bit more like I was up against something tangible. I loved being shown the pictures of what I was hearing described and tried to deliberately reach the paragraphs that had accompanying images so that I could get my head around this new world I was being introduced to. I hated *Testing my Luck* and my Dad always delivered the instruction using an ominous tone of voice to add more lurid colour to the experience. To help combat my phobia of this I always insisted on choosing a Potion of Fortune rather than the more obviously handy Potion of Strength and I had an equally suicidal attitude to my STAMINA by refusing to ever eat Provisions. Most importantly, I was not allowed to cheat. If I died, failed a LUCK test, or headed off in a wildly stupid direction, so be it - that was the game and, in spite of the seemingly insurmountable odds of having to play strictly by the rules and my general reluctance to enter rooms that did not have noises emanating from within (combined with the fact that finding things like the true path just wasn't happening then), the concept of roaming the corridors of Zagor's (or just "The Warlock" as he was still then known) domain really caught my imagination. I had never heard of Goblins, Orcs, or Ghouls before, but knew enough about Dwarves and Vampires to be able to assimilate an understanding of basic fantasy races and creature types as I went along. I loved the Undead in particular and finding the Giver of Sleep was a basic requirement – if I didn't have it in a playthrough I had failed as far as I was concerned (stuff the Eye of the Cyclops, that was just a nice-to-have!) Given my obvious enthusiasm for this book, my parents realised this was worth building on and took me on a trip to WHSmith on Newbury High Street to show me the other books in the series ("You mean there are more of these? Where do I sign?") Looking at the sheer scale of the series now belies the fact that so far only five books had been released. This was the period before "Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone Present" had started to greatly vary the quality and style of the books and it was not yet veering wildly between brilliant and awful books ranging from simple wandering adventurer themes through to very high-concept multi-dimensional or, at the very least, multi-stat-based series entries. With this in mind, I had four books to pick from. Being a big *Star Wars* fan, my attention was drawn to *Starship Traveller* and my parents tried desperately to make this one seem like the right choice. Being a child with a child's bizarre outlook on things, the cover of *City of Thieves* looked pretty scary so we left with book number 5 instead of the series' debut Sci-Fi offering. Many would say that I'd made the right choice - even if number 4 did still finish up being the third one I was bought! With three books to my name, imagine my excitement when numbers six and seven appeared on the *Fighting Fantasy* shelf in WHSmith. From this point on, an *Fighting Fantasy* book was a standard purchase for birthdays, Christmas, pocket money, journeys, holidays and any other half-legitimate excuse I could find to coax my parents into buying me another one. I was unquestionably hooked and by the age of nine I was getting each new release within days of it coming out. Rather like Puffin Books, I was of the view that there was not enough *Fighting Fantasy* to satisfy my demand for new books, so I experimented with other series in between the weeks when another all-important numbered green zig-zag surfaced in the shops. *Choose Your Own Adventure* was on offer from my school book club so I tried two of those next. It won't come as a surprise for people to learn that no more of those were required as the chair was too soft (as it were), so *Falcon* was the next experiment. But the metaphorical chair was too hard this time around, with its still very sophisticated system of game mechanics that was frankly beyond me at the time. I gave *Skyfall* a go but the fact that it just wasn't as comfortably familiar a chair as *Fighting Fantasy* did for it, although a friend who had defected from *Fighting Fantasy* to *Lone Wolf* and *Greystar* did manage to get me more than passively interested in those two series, although not enough to ever draw me away from *Fighting Fantasy* completely and, as he bought them as they came out in the same way as I did with *Fighting Fantasy*, I never actually needed to own any of them. And so my obsessive demand for more and more *Fighting Fantasy*

product escalated and escalated – *Clash of the Princes* and *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* boardgame were duly bought on release, as were several of the later ZX Spectrum *Fighting Fantasy* titles and each issue of *Warlock* magazine.

But then something happened that, at the time, offended me to the core. I must have felt that *Creature of Havoc* was the absolute pinnacle of what the series could achieve in terms of concept and quality. Steve Jackson had bailed out of the series as a writer and Ian Livingstone was becoming increasingly less self-evident as well. *Warlock* magazine had been axed at Issue 13. The release of *Beneath Nightmare Castle*, with its gold dragon cover in place of the comfortingly familiar green zig-zag just did not work aesthetically for me. The revised book cover style was the last straw and I ducked out of the series after number 25 was bought for me in February 1987 and thus my interest ended… until a chance find in a charity shop not long after finishing university raised a spark in my long-extinguished mental tinderbox.

Those who have read my blog will know that I, like many *Fighting Fantasy* fans, do not consider the Sci-Fi titles to be generally anything like up to the standard of the (to use a very broad term) 'Medieval' ones. When I collected the books in my youth, as and when they came out, there was only one book from numbers 1 through 25 that I never got due to a combination of disinterest in the genre and just never getting around to it, that book being *Space Assassin*. It was this 'missing' book that I found for just 75p and purchased purely to fill the gap for old times' sake. Curiosity got the better of me and I played it, just to see what I'd missed. Two things struck me as I finished the book: 1) It was very easy, and 2) It was almost indescribably awful. My (very vivid) memories of reading/playing the books as a child were of usually very difficult and almost always very brilliant books, not the dross that this book seemed to be. So I dug out some of those I remembered better and re-played them. I'm pleased to say that they were still (as an adult) very difficult and very brilliant. I was hooked yet again so I set out to re-play and try to beat all the books in sequence, including those that I had not managed to complete originally. As a point of note, the books I'd finished (without cheating) as a child were: *The Forest of Doom*, *Island of the Lizard King*, *Scorpion Swamp* (all three ways), *The Rings of Kether*, *Demons of the Deep*, *Sword of the Samurai*, and *Robot Commando*. Those I had never completed (by fair means or otherwise) were: *The Citadel of Chaos*, *House of Hell*, *Seas of Blood*, *Appointment with F.E.A.R.*, *Rebel Planet*, *Masks of Mayhem*, *Creature of Havoc* and *Beneath Nightmare Castle*. The remainder from the first 25 books had been completed only by cheating and I had never won fairly.

Playing them all again as an adult yielded remarkably similar results, so I changed my approach and started refereeing role-playing sessions with friends using *Fighting Fantasy* rules. This was an uneven affair involving me starting with what were probably good ideas for adventures, but which I couldn't see though to fruition and which almost always ended with me arbitrarily killing off all the players when I lost interest. This had two outcomes, the first being a gradual loss of players from my sessions and the second being a curiosity to find out what happened beyond the personal death-knell of book number 25. So I bought numbers 26 and 27 from eBay and these two books really encapsulated my experience of re-discovering the series as *Star Strider* was incredibly easy (and so-so Sci-Fi), whilst *Crypt of the Sorcerer* was probably the definitive expression of Ian Livingstone's design-brilliance mixed with his apparent psychosis towards the player (although subsequent experience of the series as a whole does show that this book is especially tough!)

These two previously untried and therefore 'new' (to me, at least) books reminded me just how fresh each new trip into the world of *Fighting Fantasy* could be and, more to the point, how seemingly undated and contemporary the series in general was. Some internet research and speculative eBay searches revealed there to be all of 59 of these books that I'd originally abandoned at number 25. I knew there were at least 50 as I'd stumbled across *Return to Firetop Mountain* in Waterstones when it first came out, but what came as rather more of a shock was the prices people were paying for numbers 55 through 59 in particular. Being a fan of comic books as well made this especially bizarre as the reverse is true of most 'cult' series, where number 1 is the low-production Holy Grail for collectors and the later entries are of far less interest. It's easy to understand the rarity of the later books in hindsight, but this was certainly fairly fascinating to the re-discoverer of the series. What was, and still is, equally interesting is the way (and this can be said for most areas of collecting) that people list things wrongly on auction sites and think what they have is rare when it is not the correct version, whilst other sellers don't realise what they have. I was lucky enough to get the much-coveted *Magehunter* for the Buy It Now price of £1.75 and *Revenge of the Vampire* for £9 (with four other books) because the seller confused it with *Vault of the Vampire* and listed that book for £40 instead! Missing books were systematically

purchased and it wasn't long before I had the rest of the Puffin set. Then came redundancy and the need to sell all the ones that weren't from my childhood just to help keep myself afloat financially (making sure I got premium prices where possible, of course!)

There's an important point to raise here and that is my refusal to part with numbers 1 through 25. I've already suggested that *Fighting Fantasy* is often part of the make-up of the 70s/80s generation and many of my books from childhood tell a story: *Talisman of Death* still has the staining from being taken to school and getting caught in the crossfire of a chocolate milk disaster in my schoolbag; *City of Thieves* and *Starship Traveller* have *Adventure Sheets* that have worn-through holes where my stats were repeatedly rubbed out and changed in replay after replay; my original dog-eared *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* is sadly lost so its replacement, bought in Wells in 1986, is in unusually good condition; *Seas of Blood* was bought at Trowell Services on the M1 during a food and toilet stop on an epic car journey from my grandparents' in Sunderland to our house in Wiltshire; *Freeway Fighter* was the product of a pilgrimage to the (then massive) Aladdin's Cave Games Workshop store in Nottingham; *House of Hell* has many spine and cover creases due to the million attempts I must have had at playing it. I would go as far as to say that I could tell you if not the shop, then certainly the location where each of books 1 through 25 were bought for me. This all seems anally trivial, but it shows how big a part *Fighting Fantasy* played in my life and I'm sure I'm not the only person who can recount a story like this.

Moving on to 2005 and a chance sighting of *Eye of the Dragon* in the Wizard editions in Waterstones yet again sparks my curiosity. A new book and it's by Ian Livingstone. It had to be too good to miss so I bought it for old times' sake. Anyone who has read my blog will know my views on this book, but the point is that the interest was re-kindled by this spark and I set about re-acquiring the books from number 26 onwards that circumstance had forced me to part with a few years before. From a very young age I've always been a hoarder and list-maker, and this time around the collecting bug kicked in hard and has not left me since (time and money permitting along the way!) I had become a collector, and not just of the books, but of the wider world of *Fighting Fantasy* product in general. I even had to have emulator versions of the ZX Spectrum and C64 conversions.

Naturally, of course, the same excitement I felt when I was a child on hearing that a new release was coming out was still there when *Blood of the Zombies* appeared and still continues whenever Tin Man Games announce a new *Fighting Fantasy* app. Clearly, *Fighting Fantasy* is not just for Chrstmas (1983!), it's for life and whilst many of us now run blogs, fanzines, groups, etc on the internet, we are still basically playing the games how we always did. To write a review I have to play the gamebook, otherwise I have no idea what I am talking about. When a fan-written sequel or prequel is written, playing the original book is essential. If we play the new apps we are still playing the books, but in a 21st century form. The basic concepts, words and systems are still the same as they were over 30 years ago. Attitudes are certainly different now: some adults in the 80s perceived the books as food for the imagination (my teachers at school could never understand why I insisted on capitalising and assigning stats to every creature I ever included in a story!) and encouraged us to develop our reading and decision-making skills; others saw them as the product of a dangerous neo-Satanic cult trying to brainwash kids; most just though they were yet another fad. Granted, the series has fallen dormant and then been resurrected several times in several different formats, but it remains what it always was: interesting, exciting and, above all, harmless fun.

Whilst this is an account of one person's personal experiences (which hopefully ring true for many people), there is a key message to come from this, that being the evolution of the *Fighting Fantasy* fan from game-player through re-discoverer to collector. Many of the recent posts on forums relate to people sharing their collection pictures, as opposed to direct debate on the nature of the games themselves. However, as soon as an individual book is mentioned, the immediate reaction is to either comment on its ease or more often its difficulty, sight-specific favourite encounters or cameos that stick in the mind, or maybe praise the artwork, rather than whether the book in question has eight different cover formats. Whilst we have undoubtedly all become collectors and coveters (and we are compelled to acquire the various editions) we are still basically interested in the books for the same reason they originally appealed – they are games to be played and enjoyed. Okay, a book might be worth over £30 but, once we've got a copy, I am sure that our first instinct is always to look through it at the art, read section 400, then roll up our stats and play it, just like we did when we got our first gamebook and just like we did whenever a trip to the shop with our parents/pocket money yielded the latest new release. I know I still do...

# BEYOND THE PEN: HOW AND WHY I WROTE "BEYOND THE PIT"

by ANDREW WRIGHT

Perhaps surprisingly, *Out of the Pit* was not the first gamer's collection of monsters that I read.

**The List Begins**

That honour goes to the manual for the computer game *Questron*, purchased when living in Hong Kong, which contained a long list of improbable beasts with names such as the Leopard Yeti, the Flesh Render, the Bone Displacer and the Slime Golem. Suitably primed, I read through the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Fiend Folio* in a shop while on holiday in London and was entranced by the Russ Nicholson artwork and the bizarre creatures: the Babbler, the Quaggoth, the Githyanki and the Slaad.

Returning to Australia, I bought a copy of the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Monster Manual*, thinking it would be similar, and was severely disappointed. David C. Sutherland III's artwork was lacklustre (although the late great Dave Trampier's art was excellent), and the monsters were a standard collection of normal fantasy tropes, alongside weird things apparently based on plastic dinosaur toys from the 1970's (the Bulette, the Rust Monster and the Owlbear), and a few that were just plain ridiculous-looking (the Brain Mole, the Intellect Devourer, the Morkoth, and the Thought Eater). Worse still, the text was nothing but a long list of game abilities and rules – there was no flavour, no quasi-medieval colour.

***Out of the Pit***

Marc Gascoigne's *Out of the Pit* was far better in my opinion when I finally purchased it. This was my kind of bestiary! It had the excellent artwork from the *Fighting Fantasy* books, and the default fantasy beasts were spiced up by the inclusion of some very cool creatures drawn straight from the imagination of Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson: the Bloodbeast, the Gonchong, the Mucalytic, the Razorjaw, the Red-Eye and the Rhino-Man. More importantly, the text gave a sense of how the creatures fitted into the lands of Allansia and Kakhabad (which were all that existed of Titan at this point).

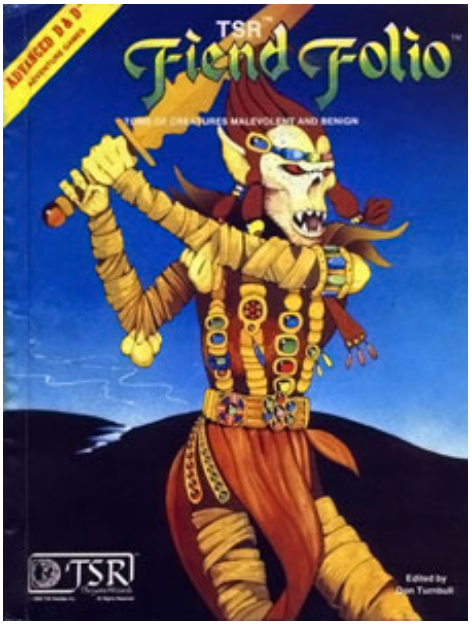
It wasn't the bloated descriptions of later *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Monstrous Compendiums*, but short and flavourful. Just reading the monster descriptions in *Out of the Pit* was enough to start plotting elaborate *Fighting Fantasy* adventures, sending a hapless party of adventurers wandering across the lonely dunes of the Desert of Skulls to face the Gretch, the Sand Devil, and, of course, the Caarth...

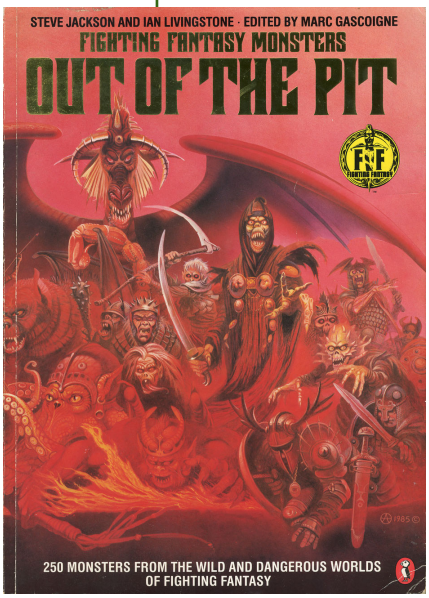
**Guidelines**

As I noted in the introduction to *Beyond the Pit*, many people had subsequently tried to write a sequel to *Out of the Pit* but no one had succeeded. There were just too many monsters in later *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks to make this project feasible – literally thousands of new creatures waiting to be documented. I had tried myself a few times before and failed. In fact, there are two real reasons why I finally managed to finish writing such a sequel.

Firstly, Graham Bottley of Arion Games gave me a clear writing brief to document around 250 new monsters that already had artwork we could use and reprint. This would lower the projected Kickstarter costs as we'd be paying for licensing old artwork instead of commissioning new pieces. It also set a very reasonable target of culling 250 creatures with their own illustrations from a list of thousands.

Secondly, with the help of the online Titannica wiki and the Titanorians at the Titan Rebuilding Yahoo! Group, I'd finished compiling a database of every creature mentioned in every *Fighting Fantasy*-related product. As a result, I could use the database to collate all the references from all the books for a new monster and then use that information to type up a new creature entry for *Beyond the Pit*. The only issue was that I had to do around 250 of them!

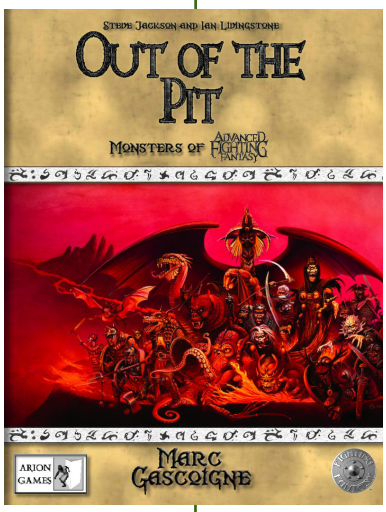


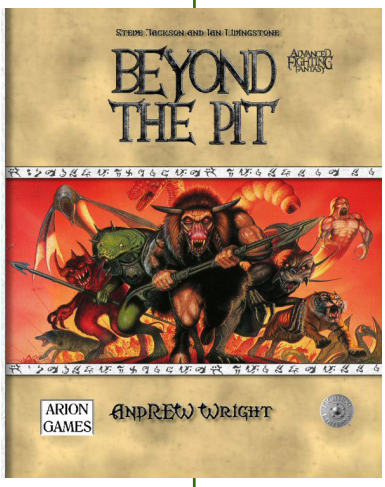



**The Nitty-gritty**

Actually, things weren't that easy. It took about two years of work to complete *Beyond the Pit* from start to finish, during which time I was studying for a Master's degree and moving myself and my family from a full-time job in Bangkok, Thailand to a new full-time job in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. There were a few times I thought I wouldn't be able to finish it, but then I would think: "Hang on, this is my dream job, writing a sequel to *Out of the Pit*! I love that book!"

Other problems also surfaced. Stephen Hand requested that any monsters from his books (*Dead of Night*, *Legend of the Shadow Warriors*, and *Moonrunner*) be removed. This was a shame as I felt Stephen had created some truly memorable foes in the Mandrakes, the Kauderwelsch Monster, the Fog-Walkers and the Xen-Viper, among others, but we had to respect his wishes (and dig up another twenty or so new adversaries to compensate for their loss). Licensing old artwork was also tricky. Most artists were fine with their evocative illustrations being reprinted in a new form; however, both Dave Carson and Ian Miller were not, and so Graham sourced new artwork for several creatures from the highly capable Jason Lenox.




There were good times too. I remember Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson once said in *Warlock* magazine that they felt like global game-masters for the *Fighting Fantasy* world and when you are working on a project like *Beyond the Pit*, there is certainly a sense you are creating a product that you hope will be appreciated worldwide by fans of the series. I found it undeniably cool to hunt through gamebooks for obscure references about hideous creatures, write them up as evocatively as possible with plenty of purple prose, sort out the monster statistics, source and scan good artwork from the gamebooks, devise appropriate encounter tables (including ones the original *Out of the Pit* missed out, such as Wilderness, Towns and Town (sewers)!), and pick a few favourite magical objects for the treasure charts.

There's also an element of taxonomy in any good bestiary, and with that go the associated pseudo-scientific dilemmas of 'lumping' versus 'splitting'. I gleefully engaged in both, splitting some creatures into different but distinct types (Griffons versus Tooki, Chameleonites against Chameleon Men, for example), while lumping other disparate obscurities into one loathsome constructed monstrosity (I'm looking at you, Krakens, Mottled Krakens, Reef Lurkers and miscellaneous random tentacles!) Finally, *Out of the Pit*, dependent as it was on a fairly slim amount of canon at that time, inexplicably missed out some staple monsters of fantasy worlds elsewhere. Hence I got to write up entries for drooling awesomeness such as Chaos Warriors, Death-Knights, Barbarians, and sundry foul Ghosts, Liches, Spectres and Wraiths. Like I said, I did have fun!

**Next Steps**

So what's next? Well, actually I've already finished writing a herbal guide for Arion Games' *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* role-playing game. I'm not sure when or in what format it will be published, but it is already done – 250 weird herbs and fungi taken from the *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks and statted up, along with rules on brewing potions, tables on what strange plants you may find in the wilds of Allansia and elsewhere, and even character sheets for new kinds of Heroes who spend their time out in the wilderness (and thus need to know which plants do what).

Having finished that and sent it on to Arion Games, I'm now looking at a third volume in the *Out of the Pit* series, though with no definite title as yet. Using lessons learned from writing *Beyond the Pit*, I've already created a master-list of another 250 or so terrifying monsters from subsequent *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks and am about to commence work on documenting them all. It truly is a dream job!

However, we're starting to run out of artwork. So we'll probably need to commission around 60 new illustrations to show how hideous these beasts really are. The good news is though, that if we finish this third volume there are still more than enough monsters to compile for a fourth book beyond that...

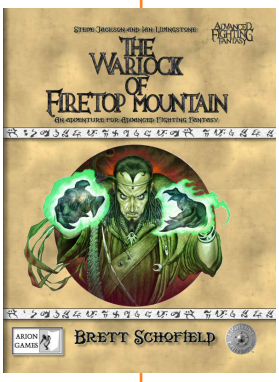
**"I found it undeniably cool to hunt through gamebooks for obscure references about hideous creatures, write them up as evocatively as possible with plenty of purple prose, sort out the monster statistics, source and scan good artwork from the gamebooks, devise appropriate encounter tables, and pick a few favourite magical objects for the treasure charts."**

# DIGGING INTO FIRETOP

by BRETT SCHOFIELD

It's hard to believe that there is an official *Fighting Fantasy*-related product out there with my name on the cover. Hard to believe for several reasons: First off, the *Fighting Fantasy* authors of old famously didn't get their name on the cover at all. In fact you had to flip through the first couple of pages before reaching their credit. Second, the adaption was initially intended for publication in the digital pages of this very fanzine, before a long and winding journey eventually saw it end up as a real-life book. And third, because I actually wrote very little of the book; it's really more of a greatest hits compilation.

The book in question is *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*… no, not the classic *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook, but an adaption of that gamebook for use with the *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* role-playing game by Arion Games. I felt that there was a lack of published *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* adventures out there (the *Crown of Kings* campaign being an exception), and figured the easiest one to start with would be *Warlock*.




Everyone has fond memories of trawling through Zagor's lair (okay, maybe not through the maze section) and I assumed many would want to revisit it with their friends. It was because of these fond memories that I refrained from adding too much new detail to the classic setting – if it ain't broke, don't fix it!

Besides, there had already been many additions and expansions to the dungeon already. The two-part adventure in *Warlock* magazine, the Steve Jackson boardgame, the Myriador D20 adaptions, and so on. What I sought to do was take every little scrap of *Firetop*-related goodness and compile it together into the ultimate version of the iconic setting. In this article I'll take you through the book and explain where some of the characters, locations and lore originally come from.

**Cover and Area Map**

The cover, of course, is by the amazing Martin McKenna and was originally used for the Wizard Books series 2 "shield" cover. At first we tried the classic Peter Andrew Jones cover from the original gamebook (the one with the white-bearded wizard and the dragon), but I think this version works great.

The map of the Pagan Plains on page 6 was digitally drawn using a Wacom tablet and stylus. I overlaid several different existing maps of the area and then drew a new version over the top that incorporated details from each one. The Iron Hills are from the Myriador D20 adaption of *Forest of Doom*. The river that comes out of them is the Iron Rapids and the little settlement where is joins the Red River is known as Quarry Path. The small forest to the right of Stonebridge is the Silent Wood.

The village of Anvil was first mentioned in the *Warlock* magazine (issue #1) version of the gamebook, but for some reason was never mentioned in the actual *Fighting Fantasy* book. Anvil is assumed to be the location that you set off from at the beginning of the adventure, but over the years two other possibilities have popped up. In the Myriador adaption of *Warlock* the adventurers set off from the village of Gilford, which lies to the north of

Firetop on the banks of the River Kok. The ironically-named settlement of Haven lies directly in the shadow of the mountain, and was introduced in the short-lived *Salamonis Gazette* by Dave Holt (then the official master of the official *Fighting Fantasy* website), along with the forest of Greendepths, Redweed Gorge and the ruins of Redweed.

**The Heroes**

The starting Heroes on pages 7-11 are drawn from a mixture of sources. Haldar Eriksson, Landov Lowan, Olfin Redhammer, Laertes Lapwing, Vignor Firestorm and Hewin Amisol are based on the six plastic miniatures that came with *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* board game. These characters were never given names, so I assigned three of them the names of the premade adventurers from the Wizard Books series 2 version of *Warlock*. Graham Bottley had the honour of naming the other three. Dekion Strom, Ellion G'Arrak, Rhana Quinn and Sarian Jax are the pre-generated characters from the Myriador adaption. I ran into a bit of trouble when I had a male character (the Elven Archer) with a female name (Ophelia Lapwing). I solved the problem by renaming him as Laertes Lapwing, Ophelia's twin brother that was separated from her at birth.

**Dungeon Map**

The dungeon map on page 12 was drawn in the same way as the overland map. Although it is difficult to see, each room is detailed to match its book description as closely as possible. Squint a little bit and you may be able to see the tables and straw mattresses in the guard rooms, the scattered bones in the Giant Rat lair or the intricate hand-and-star floor pattern from the classic trap room. High resolution images of the dungeon can be found on my deviantart page (jediboyy.deviantart.com).

**Side Panels**

The illustrations running down the sides of some of the pages feature monsters and characters from *Firetop Mountain*. Their designs are based on the Russ Nicholson-illustrated tokens from the *Warlock* board game. Can you spot Shylock the Moneylender, the Sage, the Hexmaster, the Iron Cyclops and the Cave Giant?

**Redweed Dwarfs**

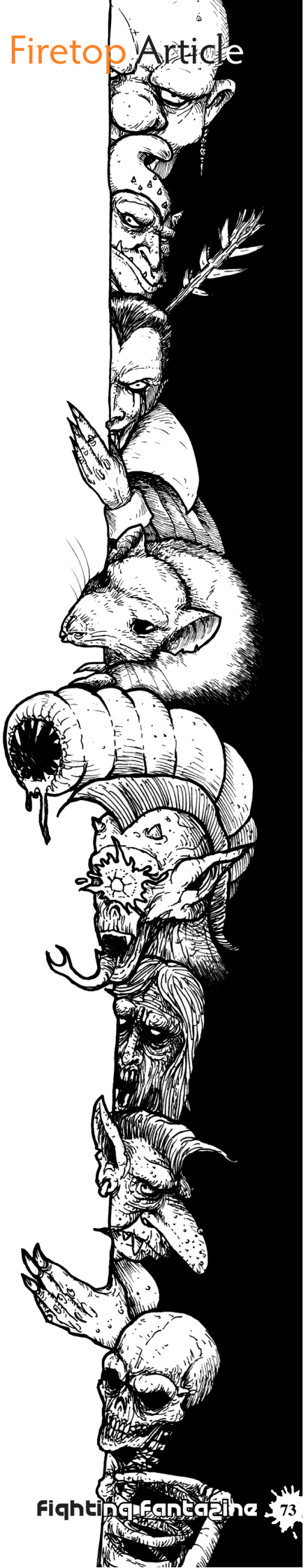
The Redweed Dwarfs mentioned on page 13 were introduced in the *Salamonis Gazette*. This clan was made up of refugees who fled the destruction of Haelsgarth and settled in and around Firetop Mountain. The War of the Wizards was unkind to the Redweed Dwarfs and now only the ruins of their town remain. The Battleaxe Dwarfs (first named in the Myriador adaption) moved into the mountain sometime later, but were kicked to the curb when Zagor arrived with an army of Chaotics.

**Rumours**

The Rumours Table on page 14 was my nod to the bits of gossip you are told by the villagers in the "Background" section of the original gamebook. Some rumours are true, some are false and others have an element of both to them.

**Character Backgrounds**

On page 20 anyone who plays a Wizard character can finally learn Farrigo Di Maggio's Dragonfire spell and never fear fire-breathing reptiles again! The background of poor old Farrigo comes from the Myriador adaption, as do those of Grishak the Orc Chieftain, Aaron D'Gar the imprisoned man, Corin the tortured Dwarf, Maracc the Librarian, Roark the Cave Giant, Arnor the trader, Burgess the Ferryman, Travis the Boatman and Ragan Battleaxe (leader of the gambling Dwarfs). Although some of the names may not seem



to suit the *Fighting Fantasy* setting that well (I mean Travis, really?) I decided to keep them as is rather than complicate things with new alternate names.

**What Lies Beyond**

Page 28 reveals just what lies beyond the pit trap that drops you into the Cave Troll's lair – it's the Gambling Hall! In the Myriador adaption the corridor came to a dead-end covered in cryptic writing (an attempt to lure the unwary into the pit trap), but I felt that this was a wasted opportunity to expand the dungeon. In the *Warlock* board game you can stop off in the Gambling Hall to play various games of chance, but this location is nowhere to be seen in the original gamebook. The mysterious passage beyond the pit became the perfect place to slot it in.

**Further Information**

The Barbarian on page 38 isn't named in the book, but if you were wondering his name is Sarisar (again from the Myriador adaption). Also from the Myriador book are the names of those depicted in the portraits in the art gallery: Calmar the Grand, Juradain the Wizard and Suzanian the Witch (and Zagor, of course).
The illustration of the Maze Master on

page 51 was not featured in the original gamebook but was in the *Warlock* magazine version, as was the alternate view of the Firetop Mountain entrance on page 62. All of these wonderful classic illustrations are from the one and only Russ Nicholson.

**The Dragon**

The Dragon on page 53 proved to be another problem, as there were two different names for the beast: Grithanix (which comes from the Myriador adaption) and Slythergach (which comes from the *Salamonis Gazette*). I decided the easiest solution was to make them two different dragons that have served Zagor at different times. Grithanix is the weaker of the two for inexperienced Heroes to face, whereas Slythergach is (literally) a real beast!

**Additional Resources**

The "Additional Resources" chapter (page 57 onward) gives more in-depth information on the three possible starting villages. The characters and locations of these villages are all made up by me, except for the two taverns in Anvil and all the information on Gilford (again from the Myriador book). The random encounters and random treasures are drawn from the board game – I bet you never realised how much foot traffic the dungeon actually gets!

**Summation**

As you can see I tried to draw from all the sources of information we have on Firetop Mountain, while at the same time remaining as faithful as possible to the original classic gamebook. I had a great time putting the book together and I hope you've enjoyed this little behind the scenes glimpse into the writing of it. *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain Advanced Fighting Fantasy* adaption can be purchased from the Arion Games website (arion-games.com). Now, where did I put my copy of *The Citadel of Chaos*...?

# THE TRIALS OF CHRONADA

A short *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* adventure

by GRAHAM BOTTLEY • Art by MARK ROBINSON • Map by PAUL BLADOWSKI

This adventure was written for, and run at, the first Fighting Fantasy Fest in the summer of 2014. It makes an excellent one-off or introductory adventure but could also (with just a little modification) be slotted into an existing campaign.

It is designed to be run in one hour of real time and it is strongly suggested that this is adhered to, especially for a one-off adventure. Of course, the introduction etc do not form part of this adventure, only the trials themselves. A good prop here would be a stopclock (or old-fashioned hourglass), so that the players can see the hour ticking down and their available time running out.

**Introduction**

Baron Sukumvit, the warped and twisted ruler of Fang and famed owner of Deathtrap Dungeon, has captured the player characters. The exact method of their capture is not especially important, but suffice to say that the characters have languished for a week or two in secure cells below Fang itself.

The baron has now offered the characters a choice: they can either rot in the cells forever or they can attempt the Trials of Chronada; on offer is their freedom and a large bag of gold coins!

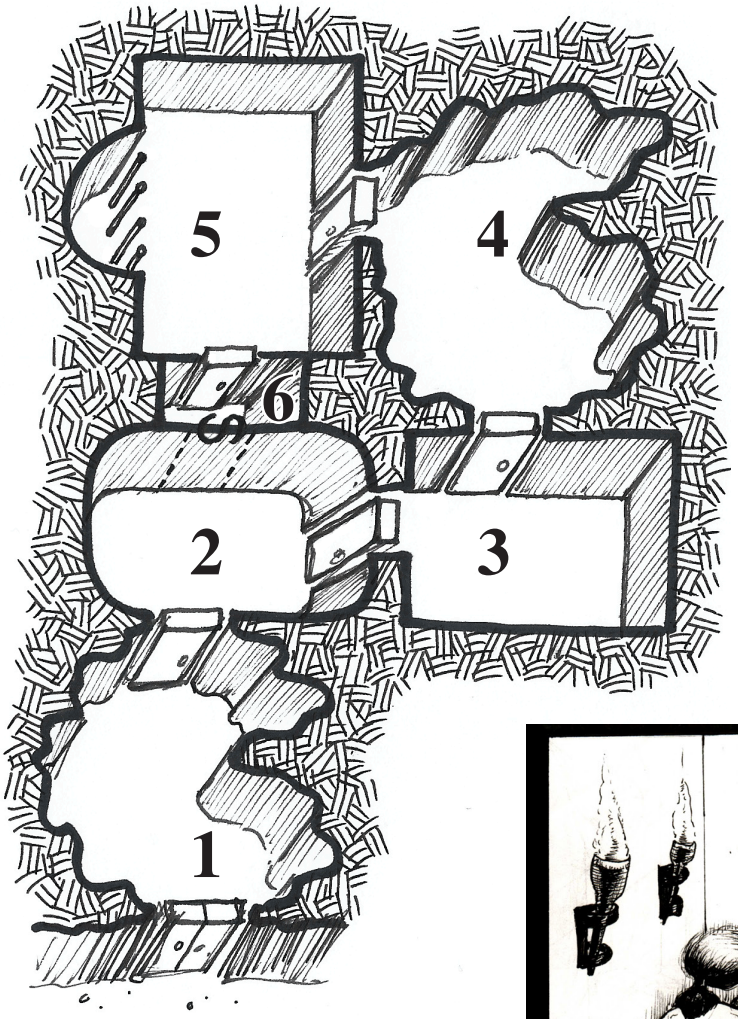
This, of course, is something that no self-respecting hero can ignore and the characters will leap at the chance to earn their freedom.

Three days after the offer, the characters are taken to an area outside the town itself, with a natural amphitheatre facing a low stone cliff. Spectators are ranged around the arena sides on chairs and benches, and in the centre is a raised platform for Baron Sukumvit himself.

The characters have been washed, fed and re-equipped, and are led towards the area between the platform and a large door set in the wall. The baron will explain that the heroes have exactly one hour to enter the Trial Cave, find the Medallion of Chronada (God of Time) and leave the cave. After one hour, any characters inside the cave will be hit with a Death spell and their remains exhibited from the town walls.

The characters will also be followed by a small sprite, who will relay information back to a 'town crier' who will inform the crowd about the progress the characters make. The sprite is too fast to be hit and is shielded from magical attack. She will, however, make it impossible for the whole party to use stealth to get through the dungeon.

The Director should start the clock/timer as the characters open the front door and not pause it at all. When the hour of real time runs out, the characters will perish!




**1: Entrance Cave**

This sizeable cave has one exit in the far wall, is lit with torches on the walls and contains a large bed, table and chair for furniture.

As the characters open the front door, a GARK will stand up from the chair and challenge them. This cross between a Giant and a Goblin is here as a guard and will refuse to allow the characters past without a fight. He is aggressive and will attack without warning, but will also argue with the characters for as long as possible before fighting. He is magically controlled by the baron and so will fight to the death.

GARK SKILL 7 STAMINA 11
*Weapon: Battle Axe (+1 to Damage Roll) (3,3,3,3,4,4,5)*
*Armour: Light Armour (0,0,0,1,1,1,2)*

The Gark has no treasure or items of any worth.

**2: The Trialmaster**

When the characters open the door to this room, they will see a mostly bare cave with one other door, but in the centre is a large table strewn with puzzles and games, and with a large candelabra. Seated behind the table is an old man with a long white beard and multi-coloured robes.

The Trialmaster motions the characters to enter and then says, in a slow and sonorous voice: "Welcome to the trial caves. Before you can progress further into these caves, you must pass whatever trials are appropriate for your ability and intelligence".

He will then proceed to waffle on for as long as the characters will let him! The Director should use this as an opportunity to waste as much time as possible, trying to get characters to complete pointless tasks, answer impossible riddles and memorize card sequences...

The secret door to passageway 6 cannot be detected or opened by any means from this room.

In truth, the correct way through this room is simply to attack the Trialmaster. If attacked he will try and strike back with his staff, squeaking all the time about how the characters are violating the sanctity of the trials!

TRIALMASTER SKILL 4 STAMINA 5
*Weapon: Staff (1,2,3,3,3,3,4)*
*Armour: No Armour (0,0,0 0,0,0,0)*

**3: Gambling Goblins**

This room is a staple of fantasy dungeon adventuring in general and *Fighting Fantasy* specifically. The room has one other door, is lit by torches and has some

stinking furs for beds. In the middle of the room is a large table surrounded by stools, with a number of GOBLINS playing at dice. There will be one Goblin per character. There are various half-chewed rats on the table, bones on the floor and other detritus strewn around.

GOBLIN SKILL 5 STAMINA 5
*Weapon: Shortsword (1,2,2,3,3,3,4)*
*Armour: Light Armour (0,0,0,1,1,1,2)*

There is nothing of any worth or value in the cave.

**4 : The Cave of Eyes**

When the last character passes through the door into this large cave, the door itself will slam shut and cannot be opened.

At this point, two Diadrones will float down from the ceiling and attack. These weird creatures are scaly and slimy floating balls. They have two slitted and glowing red eyes, a central mouth full of fangs and two long tentacles that have pincers on the end. They can fly very fast, although they have no obvious means of propulsion.

DIADRONES SKILL 8* STAMINA 12
**2 attacks*
*Weapon: Pincer (2,2,3,3,3,3,4)*
*Armour: Light Armour (0,0,0,1,1,1,2)*

**5: The Chapel of Chronada**

This rectangular room has an altar at the far end, a door that cannot be opened by any means and an alcove closed with a locked set of bars. Standing in front of the altar is a man in very ornate robes with an hourglass motif. He has a large iron key on a chain around his neck and is wielding a morning star!

This priest will threaten and harangue the characters when they enter, but if they attack him, he will fight back. He will use his *Haste* power on the first round, allowing him three separate actions for the next six rounds. He will use one action in rounds one and two to *Curse* one character and put *Ill-Luck* on another, and use his remaining two actions to attack two characters. The Priest has an effective *Devotion* score of 6.

PRIEST SKILL 10 STAMINA 14
*Weapon: Morning Star (1,2,2,3,4,4,5)*
*Armour: Light Armour (0,0,0,1,1,2,3)*

*Special Skills: (Effective Devotion of 6); Haste (x3) allows for 3 Separate actions per round and lasts 6 rounds; Curse; Ill Luck; Heal*

The Priest only has his morning star and the key to the barred area. Beyond the bars stands a tall crystal statue with a medallion around its neck. Its eyes will flare red when the characters reach for the medallion, but it will not animate! Once the characters have the medallion, the door into **passageway 6** will open automatically.

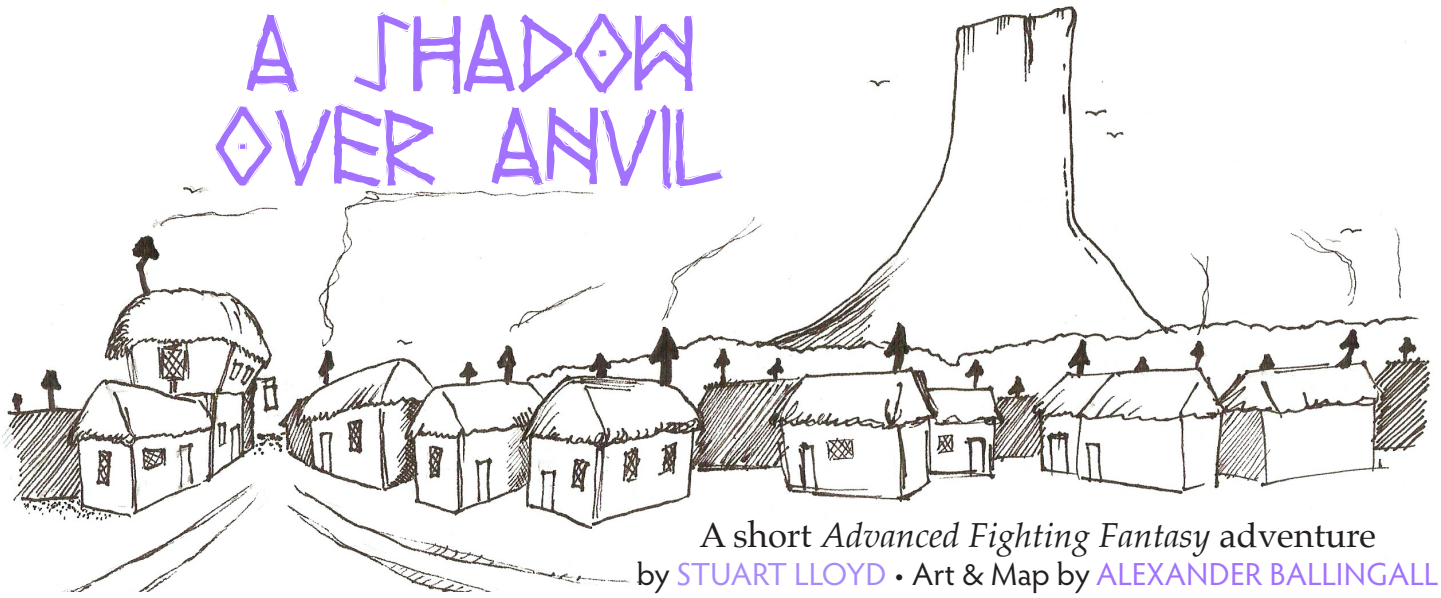
**6: Secret Passage**

This passageway cannot be entered from **room 2** until the characters have the medallion, and then the doors at both ends will open automatically.

**Aftermath**

If the characters escape to the outside with the medallion within one hour of real time, they are lauded by the crowd and given a large bag of gold by the baron. If they fail...

# A SHADOW OVER ANVIL



A short *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* adventure

by STUART LLOYD • Art & Map by ALEXANDER BALLINGALL

Greetings traveller! Here is a short module I prepared for *Fighting Fantasy* Fest 2014 to fit an hour's slot. I managed to fit this scenario into an hour, but my party did not do any shopping. Without time constraints and more opportunity for interaction, this could easily take up 2 hours.

The aim of the adventure is for the heroes to make some friends in Anvil (always useful when it's next door to Firetop Mountain), take part in an important ritual and get involved in a family matter. It also gives the heroes some novel opponents to fight. I have always enjoyed twisting the mundane and making it dangerous – especially when it comes to turning cute animals that people love into horrible demonic beasts.

I intended the module to be for 4-6 starting heroes as an introductory scene which could then lead onto bigger quests. However, if you have seasoned players, or if your heroes are more experienced, then it I have included some suggestions on how to make the scenario more challenging. If your group fancies a bit of roleplaying with combat and mayhem a secondary source of entertainment, they could attempt to fix the rift that has formed between the hapless Galan and his parents.

Ultimately, feel free to adapt this scenario into whatever will bring the greatest amount of fun to your group. May your STAMINA never fail!

### Location

The adventure takes place in the village of Anvil. Anvil is the nearest village to Firetop Mountain and has seen its fair share of troubles over the past few years. As well as having many adventurers and fortune hunters pass through the village, sometimes bringing trouble with them, it has also suffered through plague and attacks from Zagor. There are also many other creatures that occasionally wander down into the village from the hills ranging from wild animals to unnatural demons.

### Backgrounds and Reasons

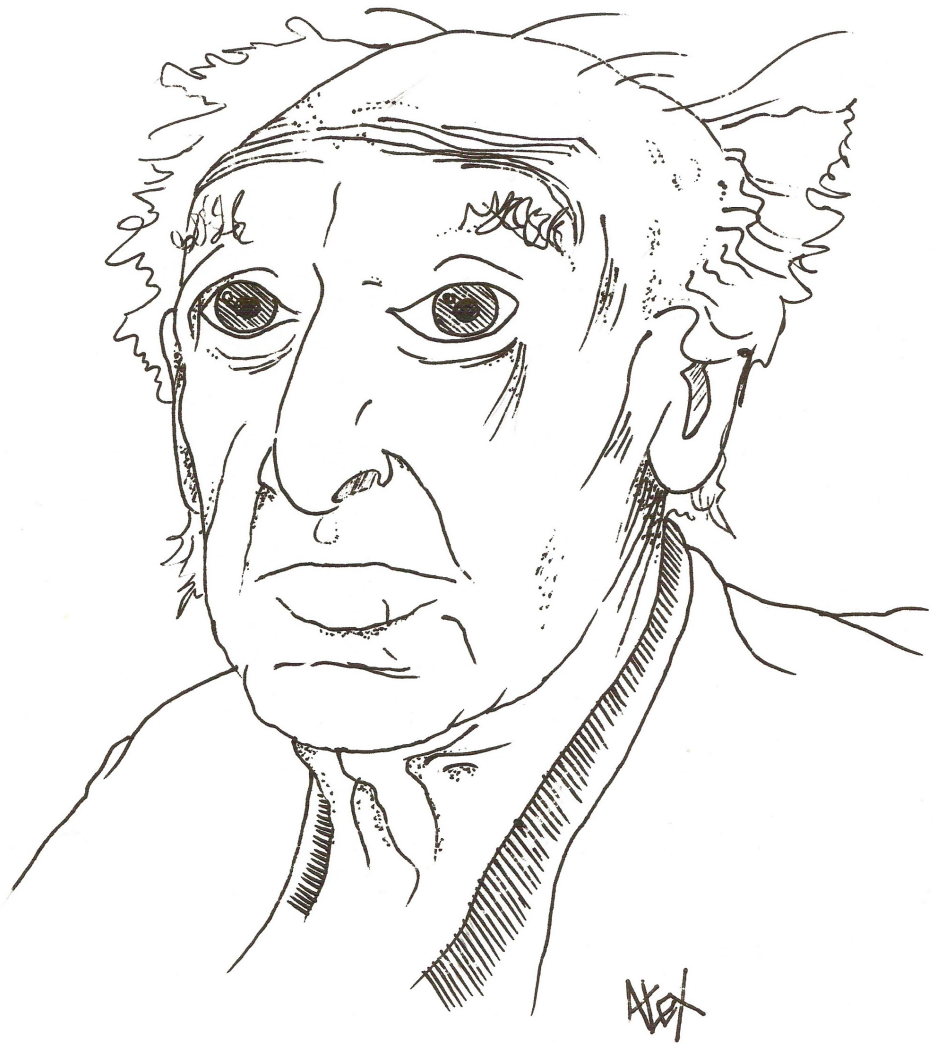
It might be good to come up with a reason for each hero as to why they are in Anvil. This might provide material for more encounters later on.

*Merchant Caravan*

The hero has just completed a guard duty in Anvil and so they are enjoying some down time. They have just received their payment (100GP) which will help them in this quest.

*Fleeing from Authorities*

The hero has done something larcenous or gotten themselves into trouble somehow. They need to lie low in Anvil for a while. However, someone may have sent people



to find them. What happened may become apparent later.

*Preparing to go into Firetop Mountain*
Like many many adventurers before them, the hero is planning to go into Firetop Mountain and kill the warlock. However, they may have to make a little diversion...

**Adventure Hooks**

*Friends of Hendrick*
Henrick is known to many people for his services to the villagers and to many others who have travelled to Anvil. There are many people who owe him a debt and even their life. One or more of the heroes may have a backstory where Henrick helped them in some way, or maybe they grew up in Anvil, in which case they definitely know him.

*In it for the Money*
The hero is an irredeemable mercenaries who will want money for their services. If they make it apparent, Henrick will give the impression that they will get more money than the village can actually afford.

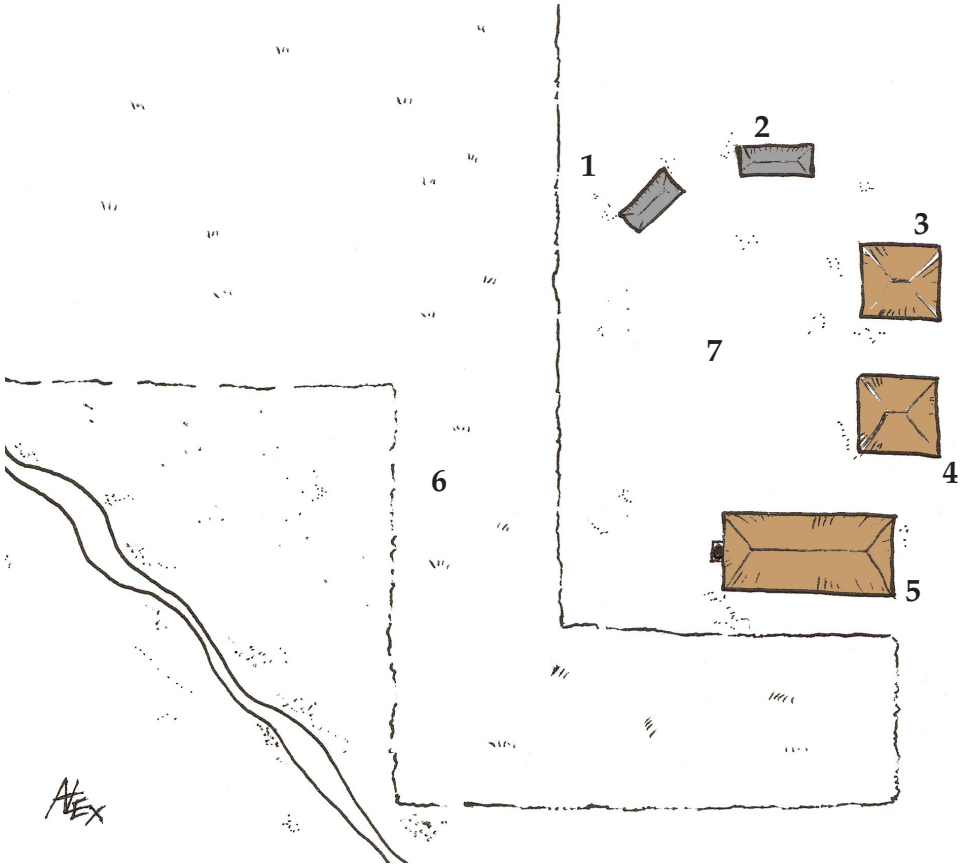
*Protect the Weak*
The hero has a desire to save the people of Anvil. If Sucellus cannot be summoned, then many will starve and endure a year of hardship and suffering. This might be enough to motivate some people.

*Destroy Evil*
If the heroes think that dark magic is afoot, they may leap at the chance to wipe it from the face of Titan. Maybe they are part of a religion or organisation that seeks to prevent demons from entering this plane, or maybe they just hate magic in general.

**Start**

*The heroes are in Anvil on a happy occasion, or at least the happiest occasion that they can possibly dream of given the circumstances. It is the day that Henrick the wiseman will cast the Ritual of Bounteous Harvest, a powerful spell that will ensure that the crops will grow large and that the animals will grow fat. This is one of the biggest events in the year for the villagers of Anvil, who have been celebrating it for three already with fairs, entertainment and a strange ritual known as the slaying of the Sorcerer, where the villagers vote for one person to be exiled from Anvil. That person is dressed up as Zagor and chased out of the village as the villages throw stones at them. This person is not allowed back into Anvil for 10 years. The ritual will counter Zagor's curse upon Anvil and ensure that the villagers are well fed.*

*The next day, the villagers all gather in a field of the largest farm around Anvil, owned by Jorund and his wife Alicia. Henrick has been setting up the ritual for hours, laying out runed stones, and dancing around with his staff. A lot of it is show, but the finale to the ritual is real. What should happen is that when Hencrick completes his final chant, there is a bright light and Galana appears. She blesses the village before singing a beautiful song to inspire the plants and animals grow. The atmosphere is palpable as Henrick finishes his chant. However, this time, nothing happens. Then there is a flash of red light in the sky and a cold feeling of dread creeps over the villagers. The red light fades, leaving the villagers feeling confused and fearful.*




Any hero with the Second Sight skill will see something out of the ordinary. A hero with 1 point in Second Sight will sense magic at work. A hero with 2 or more points will be able to momentarily sense an evil presence.

Any hero with 1 point in the Magic Lore skill will notice something magical. Anyone with 2 or more points in the Magic Lore skill will know that there is something demonic going on.

The rest of the events are quiet and barely attended. The heroes are able to talk to the villagers and Henrick, who has no idea what has happened.

*The next day, Henrick finds the heroes in Hullgrim's Alehouse during breakfast. There is no one in the inn besides Henrick, the heroes and the landlord.*

*"Something has happened to the farm! The milkmaids ran back to the village screaming of demons and dark magic and now no one will go near it for fear of their very souls. However, Jorund, Alicia and their son Galan are still in there. The militia have enough to do, keeping people calm and half of them won't face whatever's there anyway. We need brave heroes to rescue our farmers."*

The heroes might need a little nudging with promise of a reward or a guilt trip about innocents, but when they accept, they can explore the town and farm. They do not need to go there straight away. Instead, they can explore anvil in search of help and equipment.

*"Many thanks, my friends. We will reward you as richly as we can for your efforts. As you don't know what you will face, I advise you to buy some equipment, and maybe visit Granis, the militia captain. He might be able to help."*

**The Farm**

*1: Alicia and Jorund's Cottage*
This cottage is deserted and there is no sign of the farmers or anything out of place. Mercenary heroes who search the house for valuables will find 10GP and 147SP. If they go into the cellar, they will find the farmer and his wife cowering. They will beg the heroes to kill any animals left on the farm.

*2: Galan's Cottage*
This cottage seems deserted at first. It is apparent that it is made up a ground floor and a cellar door. Anyone who searches the ground floor will find 2GP and 16SP. There is a cellar door here. If they open, they will find Galan cowering in the cellar with his two books. He is very sorry for what he

did.

*3: Stables*

The stable doors have been smashed in from the inside and hoof prints are on the ground heading away from the farm. Something must have scared the horses. The stables are empty.

*4: Cow Barn*

The heroes hear cows as they approach. Anyone who makes a successful skill + awareness roll will notice a faint eerie glow. When they go through the doors, they will see chaos. The wood that separates the pens has been smashed or burnt. There are several corpses of cows and pieces of cows lying around. Three cows standing on their hind legs, eyes glowing red. The demon cows will attack immediately.

*5: Hay Barn*

There are no creatures here. If the heroes search the place and move the hay, they will find runes on the floor. Anyone with 1 point in Magic Lore or Language (Demon) will know that they are runes for summoning demons. If they search generally, they might find them with a SKILL + Awareness roll.

*6: The Fields*

This is normally where the cows graze. However, the corrupting influence of the book has transformed the grass into Tangleweed (*Out of the Pit*, p.112). This Tangleweed will attempt to suck the blood of its players. Each square of Tangleweed that the players cross (brown and green on the map) will suck 1 STAMINA point from them.

Players can identify the Tangleweed with a roll against MAGIC or SKILL with a 2 point penalty (+Wood Lore +Plains Lore +Plant Lore). If the heroes don't identify it, they will walk in and it will be too late (they all lose 1 STAMINA point before they know what is happening).

If they do, they will need to work out how to get across a large field of Tangleweed. Anyone who succeeded at the roll will know that fire will hold it at bay and if the heroes have a method to produce it, they can avoid it. Anyone who makes a successful run check (SKILL + strength + escaping modifiers) will take half the damage, round down. For every LUCK point the hero spends, they can reduce the damage by 1.

*7: The Farmyard*

A dozen chickens strut about the farmyard as normal. When they see the heroes, they will stop and make a formation. Then their eyes will start to glow red. They will then charge at the heroes. The heroes have 1 round to do something (make a ranged attack, cast a spell etc.). Otherwise, the chickens flap up into their faces and start pecking at them. The heroes can hit one chicken per round, killing it instantly (since each chicken has a STAMINA of 1 and no armour). Each chicken that survives will inflict 1 STAMINA point of damage on the hero (ignoring armour as it will find the chinks). If the heroes throw food at the chickens then their chicken nature will take over and they will not be able to resist trying to eat it. Each meal of provisions will distract 2 chickens for long enough that when the encounter is over, the heroes can kill them.

**Victory!**

*You return to the village with the evil book, go to the temple of Galana and hand it to Henrick. He flinches as he touches it and puts it down on a table straight away.*

*"I must thank you, my friends for ridding our village of its demonic threat and saving the farmers. I will lock this cursed book away and search for ways to destroy it. Merely tearing or burning them may release some horrible curse upon us all and so the necessary research must be done and items accumulated to destroy it safely. I also have to find the right components to perform another ritual or people may starve this winter. However, for now, we can celebrate. Many thanks."*

*Experience*

This is a short adventure and so the heroes can get 25XP for their victory, although maybe they can get up to 35XP for good roleplaying or playing an integral part to the game.

*Material Rewards*

The villagers of Anvil will be pleased to gather together a reward for the heroes. However, the villagers are not rich. Each hero can get 50GP for killing the cows and the cult. They can also stay free in Anvil for a month before the people get bored of them (as long as they don't do anything egregious during their stay). The heroes can restore their LUCK, STAMINA and MAGIC scores to their *Initial* levels.

**Possible Sequels**

*Fahrenheit 451*

The book that the heroes found is pure evil. The heroes need to find a way to destroy it, or at least keep it locked away from the forces of Chaos.

*Treasure Hunt*

Henrick would like to do the ritual again, but it requires some very hard to find components that usually take the hunters of Anvil months to find. He will be very grateful if the heroes could join in the hunt so that Anvil can get a bumper harvest this year...

*Kill the Boss*

If the heroes now want to take on Zagor, the villagers will help them in any way they can. If you use *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* module, they can get a +3 bonus to any rumours roll that they make.

**Adapting this Module**

The reason the whole plot was set in motion was that Galan wants to escape the life of a farmer and is willing to do literally anything to do it. His parents, who both come from families with long histories of farming can't comprehend this and think their son is either being immature or deliberately attacking their way of life. The heroes might be able to sit them down (maybe with Henrik) and come to some kind of arrangement that everyone can be happy with. Alicia and Jorund want their son to learn the craft of farming. Galana wants to see the world.

One possible solution is that the heroes could take Galan under their wing for some time to let him have his adventures. Having an unarmed and untrained NPC with them could open up all kinds of interesting possibilities, not least just trying to keep him alive long enough to train him to look after himself. In this scenario, Galan can be given some low stats (such as SKILL 5 STAMINA 10) and a few skills that might come in useful, but aren't commonly needed by adventurers (such as Plant Lore, Animal Lore, Craft – Farming). Maybe, after a few adventures, he could be given his chance to shine before returning home, satisfied with his travels. Or maybe he will find some other calling. Or maybe he will just be pressured to stay in Anvil and accept his fate as a farmer. If this scenario plays out, then there could be more experience rewards available (up to 10 experience).

*Adaptions for More/Higher Level Heroes*

<u>Location 2</u>

*The Book of The Pit* could have a negative effect on its owner through a curse. For example, it could reduce LUCK, reduce Attack Strength, damage rolls or armour rolls.

<u>Location 4</u>

You can adjust the number and/or stats of the cows to make them more challenging to the heroes. A recommended SKILL for the cows is 2 lower than the SKILL of the hero with the highest SKILL + weapon skill (remember that almost anyone fighting the cows gets a -1 penalty to their SKILL too).

The cow's fire breath could hit one opponent automatically, dealing 1 or 2 damage per round.

If the party is quite powerful and has magical weapons, you could rule that the demon cows can only be harmed by magic. Or you could do this with a party of starting heroes, so only spellcasters can harm the cows. That would definitely make this more interesting.

<u>Location 5</u>

Uncovering the runes, or even just being in their presence could bring a curse upon the

heroes which could reduce their luck score or temporarily reduce their attack strength, damage rolls or armour rolls, depending on how strong they are.

Location 6

The tangleweed in location 6 can deal 2 or 3 damage per square that the heroes walk on rather than 1 damage.

Location 7

You can have more chickens to inflict damage on the heroes. If you want to make combat harder and lengthen the adventure, you could give the chickens stats and have the heroes fight them. If this is the case, give 2-4 (or more?) chickens per hero to fight to make sure that they get skill bonuses high enough to be able to hit the hero.

DEMON CHICKEN SKILL 5 STAMINA 4
*Attacks: 1*
*Weapon: Small bite*

**Appendix 1: Creatures and NPCs**

*Henrik, the Wiseman*

Henrik is an old wiseman who has the Magic (Priestly) skill. He is a worshipper of Galana. He has lived in Anvil all of his life. He is known, respected and loved by everyone in the town and commands an authority as high as anyone who isn't royalty is able to. Henrick has helped everyone at some point with something, but his biggest moment of the year is when he casts the ritual of bounteous harvest, which makes the plants and animals grow fat and tasty over the year. During the year, many villagers and a few hired adventurers are sent out to find the components for the ritual, as the sale of the delicious food harvested is a big source of income for the village. Henrick has a social scale of 6.

*Granis, half-Dwarf guard captain*

Granis leads the militia in Anvil. His father was a dwarf from Fangthane and his mother has lived in Anvil all of her life. Granis used his natural toughness to fight his way to the top of the pile when he was a child, making sure that no one made fun of his height. He has become the captain of the militia in anvil and runs a tight ship. He is very grumpy about the ritual not going well and the subsequent disappearance of Jorund, Alicia and Galan. If you think the heroes might need some more muscle, Granis could tag along.

GRANIS SKILL 7 STAMINA 18
*Skills: Axes 2 , Armour 2*
*Talents: Dark Seeing, Strongarm*
*Weapon: Battle Axe*
*Armour: High quality Chain Hauberk (reduces damage by 2 on the roll of a 2)*
*Social scale: 5*

*Alicia and Jorund*

Alicia and Jorund are the owners of Anvil's biggest farm. They have both lived in Anvil all of their lives and live and breathe farming. Despite Zagor's influence, Alicia and Jorund have managed to produce more beef, chicken and grain in the last few years. This makes their son's antipathy to farming even more painful.

*Galan*

Galan is Jorund and Alicia's only son. He wanted to travel and live a life of adventure, but a combination of early failure (he put other adventurers in danger and almost got killed by a Man-orc because he exaggerated his combat skill) and years of grinding him down and guilt tripping for not being dedicated enough to the family business have destroyed those dreams and turned him into a resentful and angry young man. However, after he was sent home by the adventurers, he chanced upon a cave. Upon entering it, he found the butchered corpse of what was a man in robes at the centre of a large pentagram. He also found the two books he now owns and some magical components. Ignoring the warning signs, he took them with him and started dabbling in demon summoning.

*Demon Cow*

There are three demon cows.

DEMON COW SKILL 7 STAMINA 12
*Attacks: 2*
*Weapon: Large claw*
*Armour: Medium*
*Special:*

*Fire breath: A demon cow breathes fire. At the end of every round, roll a die. On the roll of a 1-3, the fire has caught the hero and they must lose 1 STAMINA point, ignoring armour. A hero may spend a LUCK point to ignore this damage.*

*Fire blast: In any round that a demon cow is not engaged in hand to hand combat, it can summon and fling a spray of flaming liquid at an opponent from its udders. It can be avoided*

*with a roll against SKILL (+ Dodge) or a Test for Luck. If it hits, it will do 1d6 damage to its target, ignoring armour. However, heroes immune to fire suffer no damage.*

*Noxious emissions: Demon cows produce sulphurous smoke (can you guess where from?) that distracts and stings anyone fighting it. Unless the hero has a breathe spell cast upon them, they fight with a -1 penalty to their Attack Strength.*

*Holy water: If holy water is poured or thrown onto the cow, it will lose 1d6 STAMINA points, ignoring armour.*

## Appendix 2:
## Special and Magical Items

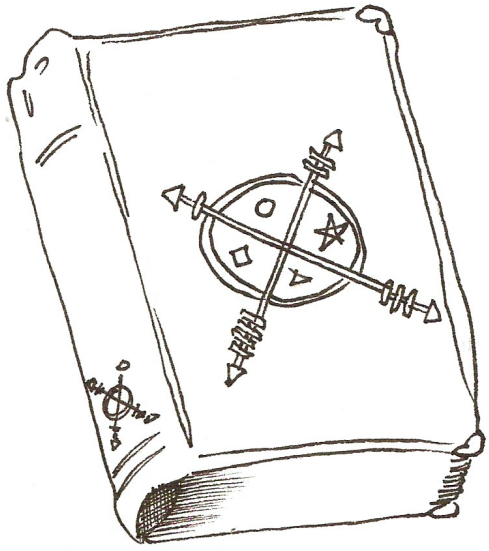
*Arax Stormbringer's Guide to Basic Demon*

The aim of the book is to help the reader learn the basics of the demonic language, using illustrations and different sections, such as 'How to order different weapons from the shop', 'How to pronounce the names of the Lords of the Pit' and 'How to beg for mercy when your magical protection fails'. Any character who is untrained in the Demonic language may study this book over a period of several weeks (1d6 +2) in order to gain 1 point in Language – Demon. Anyone who knows Demon already cannot improve it with this book as it simply has the basic phrases.

*The Book of The Pit*

This is a book of great magic to anyone who can read Demonic fluently. However, the book is also sentient and malevolent. It sends out telepathic messages to the general area, enticing people who can hear them to come and find it for great power. However, once it is in someone's possession, it will corrupt them and living creatures around them, making them larger and more aggressive. Its aim is to get its owner to learn and cast the spells that will summon demons to this plane.

The book can only be used by someone who has the Language – Demon skill of 4 or more. It allows its owner to cast several spells without having to make a magic roll or lose magic points. Any heroes who use it will eventually find themselves being taken over by some demonic entity (at some point, they will become an NPC if they keep the book) and start to get demonic features, such as horns or scaly skin.



## Appendix 3:
## Items and Services to Buy in Anvil

| Item | Cost | Stock | Effect |
|---|---|---|---|
| Potion of Stamina | 40 GP | 4 | Restores STAMINA to its *Initial* level |
| Potion of Luck | 40 GP | 2 | Restores LUCK to its *Initial* level |
| Potion of Magic | 60 GP | 2 | Restores MAGIC to its *Initial* level |
| Band of Strength | 50 GP | 3 | +1 SKILL (above *Initial*), +1 damage rolls, +2 strength for 30 minutes |
| Elvish Waybread | 10 GP | 6 | Counts as a meal (restores 4 STAMINA points) |
| Bless weapon | 10 GP | N/A | +1 damage rolls for the next 3 combats |
| Beeswax | 4 GP | 3 | Sorcery component |
| Fire Water | 35 GP | 2 | Sorcery component |
| Holy Water | 30 GP | 3 | Sorcery component |
| Medallion, Jewelled | 85 GP | 1 | Sorcery component |
| Mirror, Gold backed | 80 GP | 1 | Sorcery component |
| Yellow Powder | 40 GP | 2 | Sorcery component |
| Pebbles | Free | 3 | Sorcery component |
| Sand | Free | 2 | Sorcery component |
| Medicinal potion | 3 GP | 6 | Sorcery component/ restores 2 STAMINA points |
| Provisions, Meal | 14 SP | N/A | 1 provision |
| Tinderbox | 4 GP | N/A | Starts fires |
| Torch | 7 SP | N/A | Light source |
| Lucky Rabbit's Foot | 12 GP | 1 | Restores 1 LUCK point. |
| Four Leafed Clover | 12 GP | 1 | Restores 1 LUCK point. |
| Quartz prism | 18 GP | 1 | Restores 1 MAGIC point. |

| Item | Cost | Stock | Effect |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sword | Free | N/A | From militia |
| Spear | Free | N/A | From militia |
| Dagger | Free | N/A | From militia |
| Leather cuirass | Free | N/A | From militia |
| Leather hauberk | Free | N/A | From militia |
| Small shield | Free | N/A | From militia |
| Large shield | Free | N/A | From militia |
| Club | Free | N/A | |
| Quarterstaff | Free | N/A | |
| Battle Axe | 75 GP | 2 | |
| Long Bow | 25 GP | 4 | |
| Short Bow | 22 GP | 5 | |
| War Hammer | 75 GP | 2 | |
| Morning Star | 80 GP | 2 | |
| Handaxe | 40 GP | 5 | |
| Polearm | 90 GP | 1 | |
| Arrows (20) | 5 GP | 100 | |
| Bolts (20) | 15 GP | 20 | |
| Sling | 2 GP | 10 | |
| Javelin | 10 GP | 5 | |
| Mace | 70 GP | 2 | |

# Fighting Fantasy Collector

Fightingfantasycollector.co.uk

The Warlock of the official website, and well-known collector of *Fighting Fantasy* materials, looks over what has been and what might be...

by JAMIE FRY

It goes without saying that it has been a long time since you heard about my collecting antics and one could presume I have amassed a new pile of goodies to talk about. Whilst a lot has happened in that time, including growing a beard, I sadly haven't acquired any new material myself apart from a rare 38-book haul from a charity shop in which I bagged a better copy of *Allansia* for my collection and promptly sold all the spares at Dragonmeet.

Since the last article I have attended not just one, but two Dragonmeet events in London. Ian and Steve settled in as usual to sign books for the fans and it is always a pleasure to meet Jonathan Green and Tony Hough. If I could have got hold of and sold more of the rarer titles I would have made a small fortune, but at least fellow collector Steve Dean filled my cash tin with the proceeds of his purchases. Sadly, Icon/Wizard books no longer sponsor me to go to these events or even pay for the stand. They no longer have stock to give me so I'm not sure what future trading will look like unless something changes. Whilst I have stock it is limited and I have very little merchandise left to sell. I hardly make enough to pay for a table let alone the expenses, so will be looking to share a stand with Arion Games perhaps. Since Neil Rennison left the UK to go back to Australia and join Tin Man Games HQ, it is no longer a viable option to join him. Hopefully I will make an appearance at Games Fest in October as well.

Talking of Tin Man Games, the last *Fighting Fantasy* app to be released was *Bloodbones* and they have also slowly released some of the titles onto Steam for use on PC and Mac. This year we can look forward to their re-imagined and expanded version of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* that was funded by Kickstarter and so will not be on general release just yet. Inkle released *Sorcery!* 3 last year and fingers crossed we will see the final instalment this year.

On the subject of Kickstarter projects, we are still waiting for the funded *Trolltooth Wars* graphic novel to be finished. The Fighting Fantasy Quest Dungeon Crawl adaptation and the Pure Evil miniatures are also still yet to materialise, so they are something to look forward to. Unfortunately the Legend Quests 'live'-action role-play Kickstarter project supported by Ian Livingstone didn't finish, but the good news is that it has happened through other support. The other good news is we have a new fresh project to look forward to and that is a *Freeway Fighter* comic/graphic novel so new that I have no details other than Jonathan Green has something to do with it.

I've been slacking that much that I didn't release a new version of my guide last year so will get to that for this year as I have many updates to make, especially the valuations. There is a lot of opinion out there and it appears I need to reflect on pricing that recognises the different conditions. The earlier books in the series are even being swapped or given away on a Facebook group so that shows their worth. Even those selling books would rather see the books go to a collector for a fair price than have them pay some of the ridiculous prices eBay and Amazon sellers are asking. The foolhardy that do not realise the difference between covers could end up paying through the nose for a book like *Curse of the Mummy*, only to find it is the Wizard re-print. I am struggling with *Howl of the Werewolf* (2007) as this was never from the original 59 and is now hard to find, and can change hands for a damn sight more than the £5.99 if you were lucky enough to find it in a bookstore.

As you can imagine I get a lot of people approaching me through the official website www.fightingfantasy.com seeking a licence to produce a commercial venture they have created based on the books. However, many do not make it and whilst I think some ideas have potential, Ian and Steve do not agree. What I can say though is that, whilst no books are on the horizon (the most asked question) until the 40th anniversary, I can't wait to tell you about a few other exciting projects if they get approved.

I will end by sharing with you a find that will never be mine (despite trying) and that is a ticket from the Fighting Fantasy Day held in Manchester on 2nd November 1985, all for the princely sum of £1. I am amazed the owner still has it and don't blame them for not parting with it. I am even more amazed this has never come to my attention before and just means I will continue my quest in finding and cataloguing all the *Fighting Fantasy* artefacts there are to be had.

# Heroes and Villains of Titan

NPC Ideas for *Advanced Fighting Fantasy*

by GREGORY COOPER Art by JASON THOMPSON

## Zarramundi Blackheart – Master Magician

Somewhere in the Moonstone Hills stands a near-forgotten stronghold. It looms over a remote and lonely land, and the wandering beasts and sparse tribes of Wild Hill Men that are found in that country shun the place with fear and suspicion. Atop a rocky outcrop that juts sharply upwards from the craggy mountainside, a crumbling curtain wall surrounds a small courtyard and a cluster of ill-kept fortified buildings. With perilous drops on nearly all sides, the great fortress doors are accessed via a steep causeway. The whole place exudes an air of antiquity and abandonment – cracks riddle the walls and in places chunks of masonry and roof tiles are missing. But the walls are as strong as the rock they grow out of, and lights can be seen flickering in the windows in the cold, mountain night.

And from this jumble of buildings a single tower rises higher than the rest, tall and thin and tottering, dark against the empty sky. The tower of ZARRAMUNDI BLACKHEART.

**Zarramundi Blackheart**

*'Shh! You hear that...? The wind you say? Ha! No, no, it is him! The time draws near, yes it does, but Zarramundi will be ready. Oh yes, I'll be ready...'*

The great wizard Zarramundi is a hunched, spindly old man with a wispy white beard and bright, darting eyes. He appears sickly and wheezes as he breathes, often clutching at his chest amid a bout of coughing. He is seldom seen abroad, spending day after day shut away in the topmost room of his draughty tower. Dressed in his grubby bedclothes and rarely leaving his grand four poster bed, he obsessively pores over the many grimoires, scrolls and fragments of ancient writing he has amassed over the years.

Zarramundi is obsessively paranoid and suspicious of strangers, and does his utmost to dissuade unwelcome visitors, although they are rare in such a remote land. He has an insatiable hunger for acquiring all manner of rare tomes, magical formulae and artefacts, however, and relies (sometimes rather reluctantly) on a select number of outside contacts, agents and

adventurers to achieve his ends.

Although he is not necessarily an evil man, he is single-minded in the pursuit of his goals and suffers little guilt making decisions that would be considered positively merciless by most right-thinking folk.

On very rare occasions Zarramundi will rise from his bed and travel abroad on some important mission that he deems requires his personal attention. On such occasions he will don his magical robes of finest silk and exotically embroidered cloth, and will bedeck himself with talismans of potent magic, before venturing out with a well-equipped entourage of warriors and servants.

It is a poorly guarded secret, however, whispered by his soldiers and agents, that Zarramundi is a man living on borrowed time. Long, long ago, the young wizard made a pact that he regrets to this day. As an apprentice in the great city of Salamonis, he grew impatient with his studies and ran away with a band of adventurers. The band delved into an ancient crypt on a search for treasure and released something they could not control. The young Zarramundi pleaded with the wicked demon they had freed from its prison and a bargain was struck. A mark was placed on the wizard – a black, spidery, tattoo-like thing clutching at his heart – a brand where the demon had touched him with its agonising power. The details of the bargain are known only to Zarramundi himself and perhaps Kwaelor, his Dwarf servant. But one thing is certain: at some point the demon will return to claim the soul of Zarramundi Blackheart!

And this is what drives the old wizard to this day. This is what consumes his every waking and dreaming hour in an ever more desperate search for a way to break the bargain, to thwart the demon on the fateful day it should return. It is this that fuels Zarramundi's ceaseless magical research and his obsessive distrust, twisting the wizard into a single-minded, paranoid recluse. Zarramundi is convinced the day of reckoning draws near and each year the black, spidery brand tightens more and more around the old man's chest...

### Kwaelor

*'Zarramundi need not know about this. Leave the matter with me.'*

Kwaelor the Dwarf is Zarramundi's personal servant. He oversees the day-to-day running of the fortress so his master can devote his time to arcane study. He is a cold, inscrutable individual, rarely speaking but taking in everything with his calm, enigmatic stare and the unsettling hint of what might be a smirk. He is wiry and lightly built, with raven black hair and beard. Although he avoids violence personally, he is a dangerous, cut-throat fighter if cornered.

When Zarramundi first came to what is now Fortress Blackheart he found it deserted apart from Kwaelor living in the ruins. What he was doing there is known only to him and, presumably, his now master. More than one visitor to the fortress has observed that the Dwarf seems to have an agenda that seems to conflict with Zarramundi's, as if he is also following the orders of another master. The fact that Zarramundi pays no heed to Kwaelor's schemes is puzzling indeed. Wagging tongues have suggested that in reality, the Dwarf serves Zarramundi's demonic nemesis. If that is indeed the case, then the fact that the wizard seems unaware of this and appears to trust the sinister Dwarf seems especially out of character for the otherwise paranoid old man.

### Zarramundi's resources

Zarramundi employs a standing force of forty human men-at-arms and twenty Black Elves that guard Fortress Blackheart and undertake regular patrols of the surrounding land. He maintains a small kennel of vicious guard dogs. A bodyguard of five elite Rhino Men rarely leaves the fortress, guarding key places around the stronghold. In addition, the tribes of Wild Hill Men that dwell in the area (and hold the wizard in awe and fear) can easily be bribed or bullied into the great Zarramundi's service should the need arise. At any time, one of the wizard's many agents – thieves, adventurers, warriors, learned men – may be temporarily staying in one of the fortress's small guest rooms at Zarramundi's behest.

Over many years, Zarramundi has acquired a considerable collection of magical items and grimoires. Everything from a Potion of Stamina to a pair of Boots of Leaping can be found in his hoard, but also more unusual items such as ancient texts and rarer, more powerful, magical objects. All this he keeps in his secure treasure chamber along with his considerable stockpile of more mundane wealth, locked with a magic key and guarded by an eternally vigilant Crystal Warrior.

It is rumoured that the mountain underneath Fortress Blackheart is riddled with ancient passages and long-forgotten caverns that can be accessed from the lower reaches of the castle and stretch deep down into the earth. If this is indeed true, who knows what strange creatures and secrets lurk therein, and for what dark reasons Zarramundi keeps them hidden there?

### Adventure hooks

*Keep Your Friends Close...*
Zarramundi is a wily old thing, so how is it that he seemingly has a blind spot when it comes to the sinister Dwarf, Kwaelor? Perhaps it is more a case of 'keep your enemies closer…'! Kwaelor has been sent on a rare mission away from Fortress Blackheart to the city of Port Blacksand. Zarramundi hires the adventurers to follow him and spy on what he gets up to. Does the Dwarf meet with unsavoury allies, beyond the knowledge of Zarramundi? Perhaps, instead of following orders, he secretly works to actively undermine Zarramundi's plans?

*A Wolf at the Door*
A nomadic tribe of Orcs bearing wolfs-head sigils has moved into Zarramundi's lands. Through extensive arcane research (and more than a few paranoid assumptions), Zarramundi has become convinced that this event holds some deep significance in relation to the return of the demon. Zarramundi hires the adventurers to investigate this threat. What are the Orcs' motives and have they indeed been sent as the herald of Zarramundi's demise?

*Bring Back the Book*
Zarramundi would like to make an ally of Geier Moonwind, a Hamakei mystic from the Desert of Skulls, in an attempt to persuade him to part with a certain book that the old wizard would like to get his hands on. Zarramundi hires the adventurers to make contact with Geier – can the adventurers make a good impression and persuade Geier to part with the book and if so, what would they have to do in return? If a diplomatic mission fails, Zarramundi has instructed the adventurers to acquire the book by any means. Do they break into the Hamakei's tower and steal it?

*Rescue the Prisoners*
Priests of Hamaskis have had their temple raided and some of their number captured by Zarramundi's agents. The wizard believes they possess knowledge of great importance to him and has them imprisoned in his dungeons, and the priests hire the adventurers to free their comrades. It's difficult to gain access to Fortress Blackheart – perhaps the local Wild Hill Men know of a hidden way into the catacombs beneath the castle? And are the priests as innocent as they make out after all?

*Working for the Enemy*
Agents of Zarramundi are undertaking an important and perilous quest in the Lizard Man-infested swamps of southern Allansia. Kwaelor secretly hires the adventurers to follow the agents and thwart their goals any way they can. Perhaps the Dwarf convinces the adventurers that the agents are not what they seem and are really a threat to Zarramundi. If so, can the adventurers find out the truth and what will they do with it if they can?

**Potion Method**
This path can be completed with minimum stats. If you kill two of the lizards and you are running low on health, just escape and lose 2 STAMINA. The only other problem here is the man trap plant, but even a SKILL 7 player can dominate the fight (helmet +1, robot +2, Sonic Gun shots!). This solution grabs all the 'clues' as well, as they come at no extra risk/cost.

- Choose the flyer.
- Take Dragonfly D (ARMOUR 5, Speed Very Fast, Can escape from any opponent).
- Go to City of Industry.

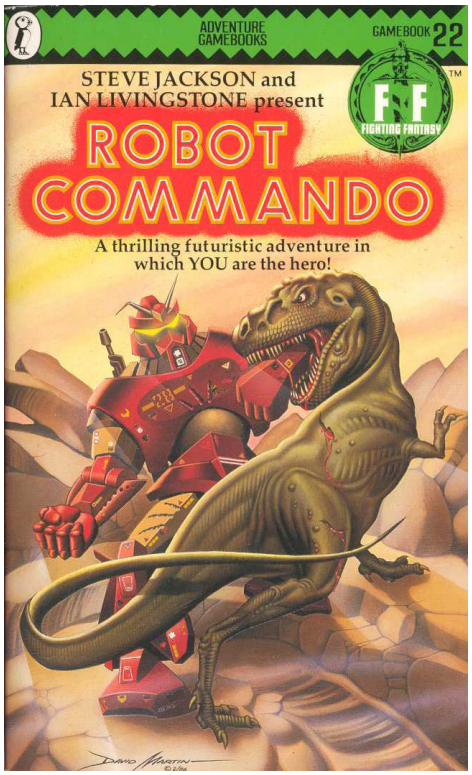
**City of Industry**
- You are in the Dragonfly Robot.
- Go to the Robot Experimental Centre.
- Go to Second Floor: Interface Mechanisms.
- Take Interface Transponder (+1 SKILL in robot combat if SKILL is less than 11).
- Leave the Centre and return to your robot outside.
- Go to a new city.
- Go to the City of Knowledge.

**City of Knowledge**
- Go to the College of Medicine.
- Seek treatment for your own injuries.
- Take Medikit.
- Look for information on sleeping sickness.
- Try to compound this medication.
- Remain in the laboratory and check your work one last time.
- Note: *You will need another Man Trap Flower.*
- Take Blue Potion.
- Choice: either *Test Luck* or Fight 3 opponents.
  - ◊ If *Test Luck*, a Fail means losing the Blue Potion (cannot complete this method without it).
  - ◊ If Fight, then
    - » Fight SKILL 7 STAMINA 4 Giant Lizard.
    - » Fight SKILL 6 STAMINA 6 Giant Lizard.
    - » Fight SKILL 7 STAMINA 5 Giant Lizard.
    - » Leave College of Medicine.
- Go to the Thalian Museum.
- Ask for information on the Karosseans.
- Go to Hall Epsilon to study Karossean history.
- Return to the front desk.
- Go down to investigate.
- Take Uniform.
- Leave the museum.
- You leave the building the way you entered.
- Go to the College of War.
- Try to pass as one of the invaders.
- You are wearing an enemy uniform.
- Choose 'The City of the Guardians'.
- Note: *Map reference is '22'.*
- Take Myrmidon (Human Form: ARMOUR 12, Speed Medium, -1 to SKILL rolls (see below). Can also turn into a plane).
- You have not read the manual on Karossean robots.
- Just leave.
- Stay in human (walker) mode.
- Go to another city.
- Go to the City of Storms.

# Solutions of the Abyss

by JAKE SUMMERS

# ROBOT COMMANDO




**City of Storms**
- Your robot is not a flying type.
- Go to the coast.
- You are not flying.
- Investigate the glittering object.
- Shove your way in among them.
- Take 2 Medikits.
- Go to the Weather Bureau.
- Go inside the Weather Bureau.
- You possess a flask of potion.
- Note: *You will need a flying robot and will have to get to the City of Worship for the storm.*
- Go to another city.
- Go to the City of the Guardians. Use map reference. Go to paragraph **122**.

**City of the Guardians**
- You read the military volume on the city. Use map reference. Go to paragraph **22**.
- Choose a slow, powerful tank robot.
- Take Robotank (ARMOUR 18, Speed Slow, Combat Bonus +2, 3x Sonic Gun. Sonic Gun: d6 to robots, 2d6 to Dinosaurs).
- Leave.
- Go to the City of Industry.

**City of Industry**
- Leave the City.
- Go to the City of the Jungle.

I love *Robot Commando*. In terms of design it is one of the best in the series, certainly one of the more successful science fiction adventures produced in the *Fighting Fantasy* range. It incorporates a non-linear structure throughout the book and offers multiple paths to victory, catering to a range of fans. If you use a SKILL 12 character, the book can still provide a challenge. Conversely, players who value discretion are rewarded for their actions. The rules are vague at times, but are also flexible enough to be bent, allowing for some interesting solutions to the book, including the 'Robot' method mentioned here.

In this issue, two solutions are offered. Both options rely on minimum stats but follow very different paths to victory. I hope that after reading these solutions, you will agree that the limited choices offered by a gamebook are not so limited to one with a creative mind!

Until next time,
Jake

**CHAMPSKEES RATING (OUT OF 10)**
**Gamebook Design:** 8.5 (very good, but rules are at times vague)
**Gameplay Difficulty:** 3 (very fair)

**recommended stats**

SKILL 7+
STAMINA 14+
LUCK 7+

• You are travelling on the ground.

**City of the Jungle**

• Explore the jungle.
• You have a non flying robot.
• Go left.
• Go left.
• Pick a flower.
• You possess a Blue Potion.
• Change Blue Potion to Lavender Potion.
• Fight SKILL 9 ARMOUR 8 Man-Trap Plant. No speed modifier for this combat. Just use the sonic gun.
• Lose 2 ARMOUR.
• Stay in your current robot to leave the city.
• Go to the City of Industry.

**City of Industry**

• Leave the city.
• Go to the City of the Guardians.

**City of the Guardians**

• You read the military volume on the city. Use map reference. Go to paragraph **22**.
• Choose a speedy shape changing robot.
• Take Trooper XI (Human Form: ARMOUR 12, Speed Medium, Combat bonus +2. Attack strength of 18+, all damage blocked. Plane Form: ARMOUR 10, Speed Very Fast, Combat bonus +2).
• Change into Plane (flying) mode.
• Leave.
• Go to the City of Storms.

**City of Storms**

• Go to another city.
• Go to the City of Worship.

**City of Worship**

• You have a Flying Robot. Fly out over the city.
• Use all your Medikits.
• Fly into the storm.
• *Test Skill*. Failure means -2 ARMOUR and -2 STAMINA. Repeat until successful.
• Take 1 Damage.
• You have a Lavender Potion (8+6 =14. 14x10 = 140). Go to paragraph **140**.
• You have saved your people.

**Robot Method**

This path can be completed quite easily due to the three Robotanks available from the City of the Guardians, and the Seeker Missile. A min stats character has a fair chance on winning with this method. Use luck as much as you want; you won't need to *Test your Luck* at all.

• Choose the flyer.
• Take Dragonfly D (ARMOUR 5, Speed Very Fast, Can escape from any opponent).
• Go to City of Industry.

**City of Industry**

• You are in the Dragonfly Robot.
• Go to the Robot Experimental Centre.
• Go to Second Floor: Interface Mechanisms.
• Take Interface Transponder (+1 SKILL in robot combat if SKILL is less than 11).
• Explore further.
• Go to Third Floor: Weapons Development.
• Attack the robot.
• Fight SKILL 8 STAMINA 10 Guard Robot.
• Take Seeker Missile (10 Damage to enemy in robot combat).
• Go to the City of Knowledge.

**City of Knowledge**

• Go to the Thalian Museum.
• Ask for information on the Karosseans.
• Go to Hall Epsilon to study Karossean history.
• Return to the front desk.
• Go down to investigate.
• Take Uniform.
• Leave the museum.
• You leave the building the way you entered.
• Go to the College of War.
• Try to pass as one of the invaders.
• You are wearing an enemy uniform.
• Choose 'The City of the Guardians'.
• Note: *Map reference is '22'*.
• Take Myrmidon (Human Form: ARMOUR 12, Speed Medium, -1 to SKILL rolls (see below). Can also turn into a plane).
• You have not read the manual on Karossean robots.
• Just leave.
• Stay in human (walker) mode.
• Go to another city.
• Go to the City of Storms.

**City of Storms**

• Your robot is not a flying type.
• Go to another city.
• Go to the City of the Guardians. Use map reference. Go to paragraph **122**.

**City of the Guardians**

• You read the military volume on the city. Use map reference. Go to paragraph **22**.
• Choose a slow, powerful tank robot.
• Take Robotank (ARMOUR 18, Speed Slow, Combat Bonus +2, 3x Sonic Gun. Sonic Gun: d6 to robots, 2d6 to Dinosaurs).
• Leave.
• Go to the City of Industry.

**City of Industry**

• Leave the City.
• Go to the City of the Jungle.
• You are travelling on the ground.

**City of the Jungle**

• Explore the jungle.
• You have a non flying robot.
• Go right.
• Attack the dinosaur.
• Fight SKILL 9 ARMOUR 12 Ankylosaurus. Speed slow. No special (Robotank has no legs, just tracks). Just blast it with Sonic Gun a couple of times.
• Investigate the glint of metal.
• Take Tangler Field.
• Go elsewhere.
• Leave the city.
• Go to the City of Industry.

**City of Industry**

• Leave the city.
• Go to the City of the Guardians. Use map reference. Go to paragraph **122**.

**City of the Guardians**

• You read the military volume on the city. Use map reference. Go to paragraph **22**.
• Choose a slow, powerful tank robot.
• Take Robotank (ARMOUR 18, Speed Slow, Combat Bonus +2, 3x Sonic Gun. Sonic Gun: d6 to robots, 2d6 to Dinosaurs).
• Leave.
• Go to the City of Industry.

**City of Industry**

• Leave the city.
• Go to the City of Knowledge.
• You have already been here.
• You do not know the password.
• You do not know the proper countersign.
• Note: *Password is 88*.
• Fight SKILL 9 ARMOUR 7 Air Fighter. Speed Fast. Just use Sonic Gun a couple of times (it's my answer to everything).
• Leave the city.
• Go to the City of Industry.

**City of Industry**

• Go to the Fuel-refining Plant.
• Try a ruse.
• Use password '88'. Go to paragraph **88**.
• Note: *Countersign is 7*.
• Challenged at the City of Industry (1 Damage).
• Leave the city.
• Go to the City of the Guardians. Use map reference. Go to paragraph **122**.

**City of the Guardians**

• You read the military volume on the city. Use map reference. Go to paragraph **22**.
• Choose a slow, powerful tank robot.
• Take Robotank (ARMOUR 18, Speed Slow, Combat Bonus +2, 3x Sonic Gun. Sonic Gun: d6 to robots, 2d6 to Dinosaurs). That was the last one available. Attach your Seeker Missile to the tank.
• Leave.
• Go to the City of Storms.

**City of Storms**

• Go to another city.
• Go to the city of Worship.

**City of Worship**

• Visit one of the temples.
• Visit the Temple of Peace.
• Pray for Freedom.
• Restore LUCK to *Initial* score.
• Go to another city.
• Go to Capital City.

**Capital City**

• Go to the enemy encampment.
• Approach in your robot.
• Travel on the ground.
• Use the countersign '7'. Go to paragraph **7**.
• You were challenged at Capital City.
• Continue in your robot.
• Attack immediately (auto win first round of combat).
• Fight SKILL 8 ARMOUR 14 Crusher. Speed slow. Inflicts double damage. Use Sonic Gun once.
• Use the Tangler Field.
• Fight SKILL 12 ARMOUR 16 Supertank. Speed slow. Inflicts additional 1 ARMOUR Damage every round.
  ◊ Use your Seeker Missile (10 Damage).
  ◊ Use your two remaining Sonic Gun shots (2d6 Damage).
• You have defeated Minos and his Supertank. You will be known as a hero.

# Everything I Need to Know I Learnt from Reading Fighting Fantasy Adventures Part Seven

**What may surprise you is that even though Wizard only brought out half a dozen *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks, Ed Jolley has still managed to come up with ten titles to waffle on about in the usual way.**

by ED JOLLEY

But should come as no great surprise that the new *Fighting Fantasy* adventures published by Wizard Books maintained the tradition of incorporating valuable lessons for everyday life – after all, they were written by *Fighting Fantasy* veterans.

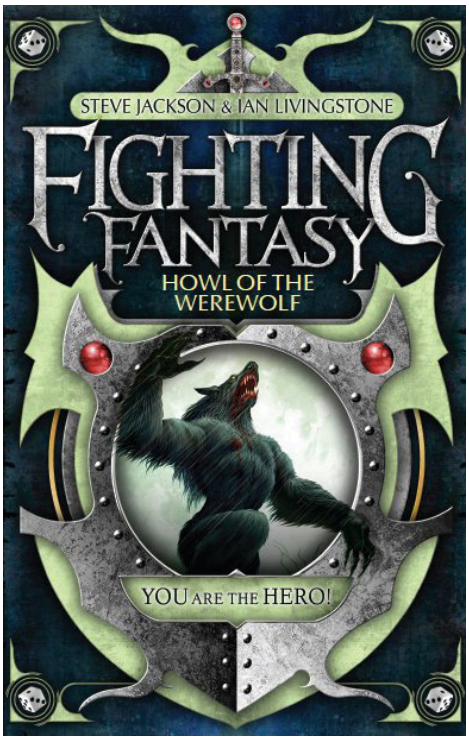
*Eye of the Dragon*
While you're not necessarily doomed if you encounter the merchant Thomas Cornpepper, he's definitely not on the optimal path. What he has to offer is rather arbitrary, much of it is stuff you'll have seen before, and it's of little or no use to you. And there's no good reason for him to be there in the first place. In view of the fact that art briefs tend to focus on straightforward description, it's unlikely that Martin McKenna chose to make Cornpepper look just like the book's author as a deliberate commentary on Ian Livingstone's new *Fighting Fantasy* book and what it could mean for the range. But that doesn't mean it doesn't work as one.
**Moral: Many a true word is spoken inadvertently.**

*Bloodbones*
It's almost eerie, the way reality echoes the plot of this book. You, the gamebook collector, wanted to get your hands on Bloodbones the book, just as you, the gamebook hero, desired to get hold of Bloodbones the pirate. However, after Conyn (or Puffin Books) killed off Bloodbones, there seemed little likelihood of your ever doing so. Until you discovered that a witch doctor (or Wizard) had plans to resurrect Bloodbones, meaning that you would be able to get him (or it) after all. Admittedly the parallels rather break down at this point, as a trip to WHSmiths to buy the book is unlikely to involve much risk of being sacrificed by voodoo cultists or having to contend with sea monsters, savages, madmen and oversized arachnids. Except maybe if you live in Plymouth.
**Moral: Try not to read too much into coincidences.**

*Howl of the Werewolf*
Many of the people you may encounter in the course of this adventure will, should they learn of your affliction, assume the worst – that you're a dangerous savage brute, liable to kill everyone in sight at the slightest provocation (a description that could be quite reasonably applied to the majority of non-lycanthropic *Fighting Fantasy* characters, now I come to think about it). Similarly, many *Fighting Fantasy* fans, upon learning that the next new gamebook would be by Jonathan Green, assumed the worst – that it would be a near-impossible one-true-path slog, liable to kill every character they might generate, no matter how good the initial dice rolls. But *Howl* isn't the monster that people expected it to be. I'd add, 'nor is your character in it', but when I think of how some *Fighting Fantasy* fans play the books, I have to admit that some are liable to be worse than even the most Werephobic of Lupravians could imagine.
**Moral: Preconceptions are often inaccurate, so be wary of judging by them.**

*Stormslayer*
Inside Mount Pyre you must find all of the Fire Crystals in order to avoid a difficult and potentially lethal fight and obtain the assistance of the Fire Elemental. And most *Fighting Fantasy* fans have tales to tell of the struggles and challenges they faced in the course of trying to complete their gamebook collections. But... obtaining the services of all four kinds of Elemental is not actually essential for defeating Sturm. And as you don't need all the Elementals, getting all the Fire Crystals isn't necessary after all. So if you're about to invest vast amounts of effort and cash into an effort to acquire that elusive second Wizard series edition of *The Forest of Doom*, maybe you should ask yourself whether or not you could get by with just the half-dozen copies of *Forest* that you doubtless already own.
**Moral: A hobby can be a good thing, but not if you get too fanatical about it.**

*Night of the Necromancer*
The death of your character usually constitutes an unsuccessful ending in a gamebook. Outside of gamebooks there are many situations other than death that people can regard as 'the end' – redundancy, the break-up of a relationship, finding that someone wrote on the *Adventure Sheet* of the second-hand gamebook you bought online... But in this book, it's not all over as soon as you get killed. Indeed, the author missed a trick by not having the introductory section conclude with your character's murder and the line, 'Your adventure starts here'. And, while fatal incidents do tend to have



a certain finality to them in the real world, those other things that seem like the end often turn out not to be so catastrophic after all. Except if the writing in that gamebook is in pen.
**Moral: Things aren't always as bad as they seem.**

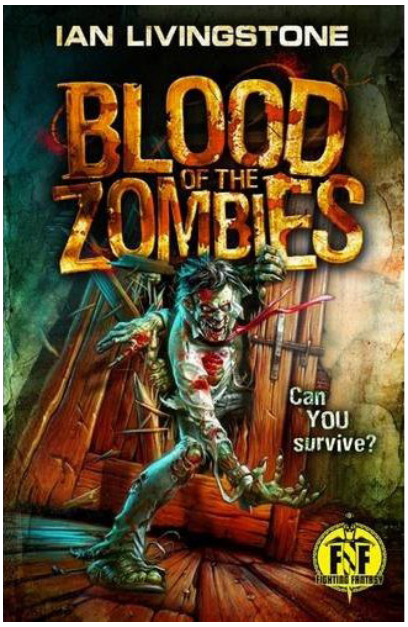
*Blood of the Zombies*
It would be easy compare the hero of this book with the *Fighting Fantasy* fans who bought it, and make a point about it not always being a good thing to get what you want: the hero wanted to find genuine paranormal goings-on, the fans wanted a new *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook, and the fulfilment of the desire led to a pretty miserable, painful and unpleasant experience in both instances. I wanted to come up with something less obvious, though, and then I remembered the fight with Otto at the start of the book, which illustrates the principle that it's safer to go for the big, obvious target than to pick something trickier and risk achieving nothing. But that means I should go with the big, obvious gag that I came up with originally, right? Which would mean making my point by not making my point, and that's a paradox. A paradox that only exists because I got what I wanted – an idea for an alternative to the obvious joke – and proves that getting what you want can be a bad thing. So because the moral of the book isn't what it is, that shows that it actually is what it is. Oh dear, it's gone all quantum...
**Moral: It's not always a good thing to get what you want, or, Sometimes it's better to go for the easiest target rather than to try something more impressive that may go wrong. Or a superposition of both. Who would have thought *Blood* to have had so much depth in it?**

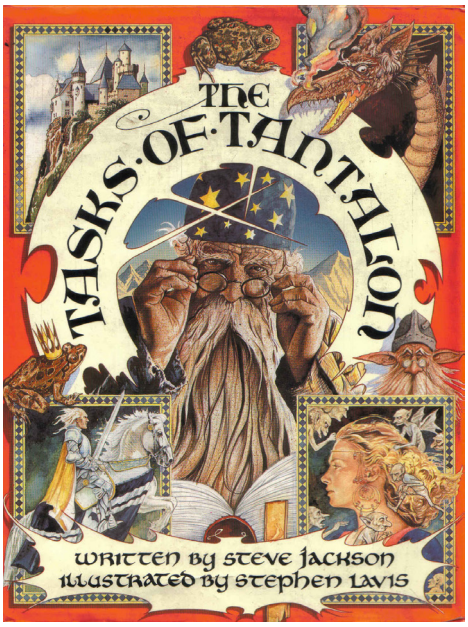
*The Tasks of Tantalon*
To prove yourself a worthy successor to Tantalon, you must succeed at a variety of challenges that help demonstrate your worthiness to rule – saving lives, righting wrongs, rescuing captives, improving conditions for the populace – and then pass a test of your mathematical, observational and riddle-solving skills. It's a bizarre way to conclude the quest – a bit like a firm of accountants having a recruitment process that goes: application form, competency tests, interview, reference-check, marmoset-juggling contest.
**Moral: In today's highly competitive job market, having the necessary skills and experience may not be enough to get you the job.**

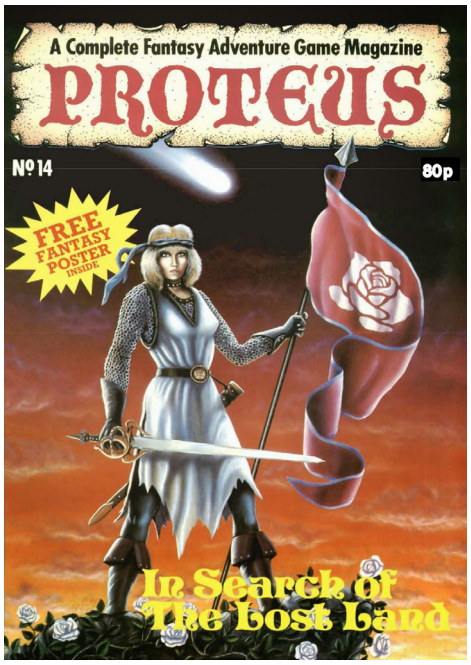
*Casket of Souls*
The council of grand wizards created the Casket of Souls to trap the Demon whose arrival they anticipated. Doing this killed all of them bar Sallazar, who spent the next two centuries waiting for the opportune moment to use the Casket. Then, right at the last minute, he had the idea of creating a back-up plan in case things didn't work out as intended, and while he was busy setting that up, he missed the Demon's arrival. Shouldn't have waited so long before coming up with that contingency plan. But even his abysmal time management skills need not have doomed him if he'd had the sense not to put the Casket down somewhere he couldn't reach in less time than it takes a Bone Demon to atomise a wizard who clearly didn't survive the Casket-creating process on any kind of meritocratic basis.
**Moral: If you know you're going to need something, keep it handy at all times.**

*The House of Hell*
[aka the teaser in *Warlock* magazine issue #3 (which is sufficiently different from the full-length version to count as a separate adventure)]
In hindsight, the creepiest element of this adventure is the message that mysteriously appears on the paper in the study. It's a warning that, if understood and heeded, enables you to avoid a trap. A trap that inflicts a rather pathetic 2 STAMINA points' worth of damage. And the only way to get to the endgame without springing the trap involves an encounter with George the Vampire, which will increase your FEAR score even if it doesn't get you killed, and ends in a fall that costs you 4 STAMINA points! You may be wondering what's so scary about that message, but just think. An unseen entity arbitrarily dispensing advice which, while not strictly untrue, is liable to do far more harm than good... Steve Jackson predicted Yahoo Answers!
**Moral: Not everyone who advises you on what to do has your best interests at heart.**

*In Search of the Lost Land*
[the follow-up to *The Floating City* and *The Land of Changes*, published in *Proteus* magazine after *Warlock* magazine went the way of all by-the-rules characters in *Crypt of the Sorcerer*]
Towards the end of your previous adventure, you swore to seek the secret of the Universe which lies beyond the impassable mountains around the edge of the world, or die in the attempt. And yet, since then you have busied yourself with the acquisition of wealth and power, and only wind up undertaking the quest you're supposed to have been on in the intervening time because you're fed up of having all this stuff and authority. Is this an adventure, or a mid-life crisis? (Well, actually, it can't be a mid-life crisis because acquiring Wisdom plays such a big part in it, but still...)
**Moral: There are few forces so effective at motivating people as sheer boredom.**



# chronicle of heroes

## THIS ISSUE DEATHTRAP DUNGEON (Myriador d20 Module)

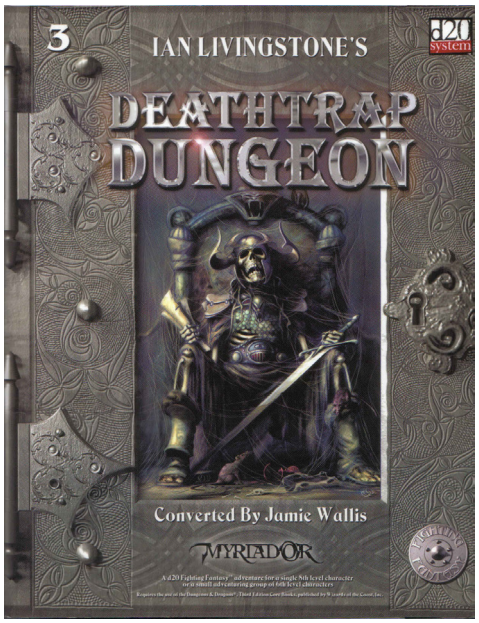
an account of a Fighting Fantasy RPG campaign played over 6 four-and-a-half-hour sessions, by ADRIAN YOUNG
Art by ALEX SIDDY

# DUNGEON BLUES

The heroic party known as Six-Pack – Sir Marcellos (Human Fighter), Silverarm (Dwarven Cleric), El Ravager (Human Fighter), McShifty Fingers (Dwarven Rogue) and Garry Greensleeves (Elven Ranger), together with the barbarian Throm – continued their ordeal inside Baron Sukumvit's Deathtrap Dungeon

Exhaustion from hunger and fatigue were setting in. The heroes had spent perhaps 12 or 18 hours inside the dungeon and they hoped the end was in sight. But just what end? Victory or death? They stopped and rested outside the room with the draped cage. A pathetic hissing emanated from the room as they all ate their assorted provisions. Suddenly, McShifty yelled "What in Throff's name!?" as an invisible force pulled open her backpack, spilling its contents onto the cold dungeon floor. "My pearl!" yelled the Dwarven rogue, as the fighters in the party sprang into action. They moved back into the Leprechauns' corridor and there sniggered two black-hatted Leprechauns boasting about the pearl they had just stolen. Marcellos threatened them and the Leprechauns retaliated by blinding him. Ravager charged, resisting their magical incantations, only to have the Leprechauns vanish through a secret door in the corridor. Rav was fired up and pursued. Zan checked out a slippery chute and Silverarm revealed that the chute was actually coated in a magical Oil of Slipperiness.

Throm guided Marcellos to the water pool while the others tried to retrieve the pearl. Rav found the pesky Leprechauns huddled in the secret passage and, after overcoming some petrification dust, he surprised the magical creatures by grappling one of them. After pounding the hapless Leprechaun against the wall a few times and poking his fingers in its eye (charming!), the Leprechaun's companions agreed to give the Amulet of Fortune back - but not the pearl. They also warned Ravager that the chute led




to the most horrible of creatures – the powerful BLOODBEAST – and also that the pearl they stole from McShifty was not needed to escape the dungeon. With that information, Rav exited and promptly discarded his captive down the chute! (Heartless). McShifty was a little pissed that Rav didn't get the pearl back, but Rav reminded her of the 25,000 Gold Pieces that awaited them should they survive the dungeon. Unfortunately, the Leprechaun's buddies weren't impressed with Rav's treatment of their kind and they sought retribution. Enter Silverarm, who promptly cast a magical aura and convinced the Leprechauns that he wasn't worth it.

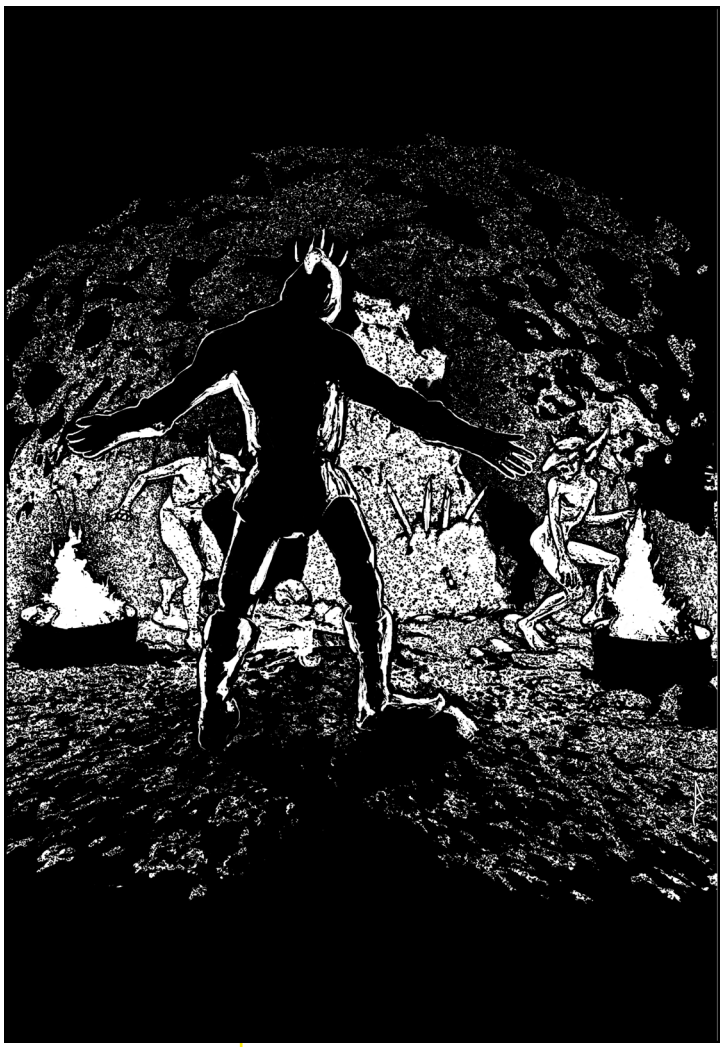
Marcellos eventually got his vision back and the adventure continued. Fingers led the way and used her agility to traverse a 20-foot chasm to retrieve a winged helmet. She then sold it to Zan for 7 Gold Pieces. Rav and Marcellos then used the 'ol' lasso trick' to try and drag a warrior and another diamond out from a polished marble chamber. But the body and precious gem were only illusions – a trap that triggered the ceiling to descend onto anyone in the chamber! Luckily, they were outside the doorway and it cost them only a couple of feet of rope. The team then had to decide where to head next. Throm wanted to swim through the water-filled underground tunnel, but McShifty suggested they break the glass that held the giant insect swarm to get to the diamond in the crown. To cover both bases, the party split. Rav, Throm and Zan swam into another part of the dungeon. Garry Greensleevs, Marcellos, McShifty and Silverarm approached the glass. Garry used his morning star to tap on the glass – the plan was to make a small hole and smoke out the insects – but unfortunately the morning star smashed the glass pane. The swarm attacked and the hapless four found themselves jumping into the underwater tunnel. McShifty was struggling. She was a poor swimmer and she gulped in the murky water and relied on Marcellos to swim back, grab her, and emerge safely on the other side. McShifty coughed and spluttered "Ye saved my life", to which Marcellos winked and said "You can repay me later".

Regrouped, the heroes continued. Another room revealed a female Elf in the grip of a huge boa constrictor. The heroes surrounded it and turned it into chop suey, but the Elf was already breathing her last. Garry pleaded for anyone to spare some healing potion to rejuvenate his Elven kindred, to which Rav obliged. The Elf was Herley, a rival who was also competing in Deathtrap Dungeon. In between her thankless boasting about the Elven race and their superiority over all other beings, the party found out that Herley had found the correct diamond, but lost it to a NINJA. She also had a note that suggested three gems were required to exit the dungeon. The party had an emerald and an amethyst, so the equation was clear: find the ninja = find the diamond = their ticket out of here! Herley also had a monkey bone charm, which came with a note: 'use to combat the creature in the pit' – the Bloodbeast perhaps? In spite of Herley's

preference to travel alone, she agreed to move through the dungeon with Six-Pack and could be heard remarking to Garry as they moved out: "That McShifty chick is one ugly Dwarf!!!"

Fingers rummaged beneath a muddy grille in the floor that Rav had already cleared and then used her thief's tools to disarm a treasure chest that was booby-trapped. Footsteps leading to and from the chest suggested someone had already been there! The chest was empty, but McShifty commented that it looked like a valuable item was removed from inside...hmmmm. Then the passage opened wide into a large cavern, where a dozen TROGLODYTES danced and sung around an effigy made from mud and bone. Mistaking the Troglodytes for Goblins, Sir Marcellos adjusted his Goblin crown and pranced forward. "Excuse me, my little friends... my name is Sir Marcellos... Goblin King... perhaps you've heard of me...". Throm quipped to the others: "Nothing good can come of this..." The Troglodytes squealed a war-cry of "Attack!" Immediately, Marcellos was backed up by his compatriots and a formidable line was formed. Three Fighters, two Rangers,one cleric,one rogue and one barbarian. The battle – and victory – was swift. The little axe-wielding Troglodytes were no match for the heroes. Rav and Marcellos took on three each. Herley was also particularly devastating, culling her opponent with her two daggers. But instead of staying with the others, she bolted past the effigy and out of sight!

Garry followed his Elven sister but the sight ahead made him turn back in retreat. A 20-foot bridge spanned a fast-moving river. A dozen Troglodyte archers had fanned out and Herley's body, riddled with Troglodyte arrows, lay still in a pool of blood. The party hid behind the effigy as insults were traded between them and the Troglodyte leader, Titan. Marcellos was particulary nasty, cutting off the head of a baby Troglodyte and waving it in the air. Titan was infuriated and gave them an ultimatum: surrender, drop their weapons and agree to undertake a task called the Run of the Arrow. If they passed, they would be permitted to continue through the dungeon. Silverarm walked forward, casting another aura charm as she did so. Titan was pacified, allowing Silverarm to pass without taking the Trial, but not the others! The Troglodyte archers began their advance and the heroes did what they do best – CHARGE!!!! A volley of Troglodyte arrows struck truly, but within a round, the melee was into close quarters. Zan was delighted to discover that his winged helmet gave him a bonus in combat. Soon, the Troglodyte leader had been killed by Marcellos and Troglodytes were being felled left, right and centre. Some began to flee. One jumped in the river, drowning, while two fled towards an ornate door.



Marcellos used his Boots of Speed to run them down. He promptly slew one and as Rav shouted "Keep one alive!", Sir Marcellos sliced the kneecaps of the last, sending the Troglodyte archer falling to the floor, wincing in pain. McShifty picked up all of Herley's possessions before Garry did all he could for the Elven Ranger, rolling her body into the river. Zan healed himself as Garry gathered up a quiver full of the Troglodyte arrows. Rav then began the interrogation of the last remaining Troglodyte – but the poor soul knew little. Rav then pronounced that should this Troglodyte survive the Run of the Arrow, it would be allowed to live. But before it could hobble one step, Greensleeves had loosed an arrow, lethally piercing its throat! The party noticed three slots in the ornate door before them and they briefly contemplated returning to the insect swarm to retrieve the diamond, but McShifty's keen eye detected that the slots were actually part of an intricate locking mechanism. Out came the thief's tools and after a minute of concentration, the ornate door was unlocked!

The passage twisted deeper and deeper and Rav's mapping linked up to his utter delight. Before them crouched an elderly man calling himself Thomas, who suggested the contestants travel inside his basket to the upper level. Marcellos asked the question: "Perhaps you've heard of me?" to which Thomas replied "Oh yes, yes. Yes, indeed." Thomas knew of the Heroes of Kallamehr – Rav, Marcellos and Silverarm – but looked disinterested in the others, especially the deformed Dwarf! McShifty cut to the chase and paid the old geezer all of her 7 Gold Coins and Thomas agreed to transport them to the upper level. "Ivy!" he shouted, and suddenly the basket jerked and began to rise. A large HILL TROLL named Ivy pulled the basket through a hole in the 30-foot-high ceiling and into another room. Armed with a great axe, Ivy also demanded payment: 10 Gold Pieces or a gem each. Rav said how about they give her nothing and in return spare her life? Rav then began to ask Ivy if the big brute had any friends around Stonebridge (hinting at a time when Rav had single-handedly defeated a hill-troll war party that had killed his friends – Stubb the Dwarf and the heroic warrior Tetra – see "The Spell of Death!" in issue #12). Garry Greensleeves told Rav to be quiet as Ivy lifted her giant axe in anger. The fight was on! Throm, Marcellos and Rav combined and after a short battle, they had carved their names right into her!!!

Bloody and tired, yet determined, the party of seven stood together. A door in the room was their only option forwards. McShifty again checked and deemed it safe to proceed. They moved into yet another passage that wound round a corner to the left. At this point, two mangy GUARD DOGS barked and attacked. McShifty was bitten twice before Marcellos and Throm hacked their way past the canine aggressors. Fingers received some medical attention from her colleagues as Marcellos checked the carcasses. Before long, the team had come upon a 40-foot-high wall that blocked their way. Ravager noticed a five-foot gap at its top and Marcellos

hurled his rope and grapple in one fluid movement into the gap. But something stirred up there. A terrifying roar and several loud thuds made the hair on our heroes' necks stand on end. Ravager was unperturbed and scaled the rope upwards. What he saw was a huge dinosaur known as a PIT FIEND.

Marcellos also made his way up and got Throm and Zan to bring up the two dog carcasses. Marcellos then threw the bloodied dog bodies into the cavernous arena as a distraction while he, Rav and Throm made a run for the double doors on the other side. The monstrous fiend took the bait, but only for a moment and quickly bounded to attack the trio. Garry Greensleeves had in the meantime climbed the rope and found a vantage point from which to fire his Troglodyte arrows with precision. A ferocious battle ensued! After the dust and sand had settled, Rav and Marcellos stood victorious, the fresh blood from the dinosaur still dripping from their blades. But Throm lay crushed in the sand – his last breath to Marcellos carried his final words: "Bury me with my axe". Garry said an Elven prayer as the rest of the party climbed into the pit. While preparing a burial for Throm, Marcellos found a trapdoor containing some valuable items. Zan bagged a large fiend shield, Silverarm a potion of mana and McShifty grabbed the potion of healing.

Six-Pack was now once again true to its name and the heroes entered a corridor that opened into a pillared room. Rav ignored a sign that warned "No weapons past this point" and the rest of the pack followed him, fanning out in the chamber to sweep through it. Suddenly, Garry Greensleeves was ambushed by a ninja and was hit by a poisoned shuriken – but not before the Elf loosed an arrow that hit the ninja. Two more shurikens hurled through the air, hitting Zan and Silverarm and forcing them to retreat. This was the signal for the mighty Marcellos and the rampaging Ravager to act. The ninja's skill with his sword was impressive, but against the combined fury of hese wo formidable fighters, the ninja was no match. In desperation, the ninja performed a powerful leap and somersaulted over his two assailants. He charged towards Zan and Silverarm, who were blocking the exit. Zan deflected the ninja's attack with his fiend shield and Silverarm moved aside as the ninja dashed for the exit. But Marcellos had his Boots of Speed and ran the ninja down – and was then joined by Rav and a well-placed arrow from Garry, to end the ninja's life. Their prize was sweet – a 500-Gold-Coin-value diamond!

The only way on was downward. One of those narrow chutes, coated with some magical oil of slipperiness, was the only option. After much debate, Rav was lowered down with rope and grapple, yet the chute twisted much deeper. Fearing a stalemate, Rav released his grip and slid down the chute and into a misty chamber. Before him, in a wide pit of steamy slime, was the BLOODBEAST, a bulbous, spiny, fearsome monster with hundreds of blisters popping into eyes. Silverarm had warned them of this beast, yet nothing could have prepared Rav for this encounter. Rav dared not move as the beast gazed upon its intended meal. Rav jingled a bell he had found in the hope that it could somehow magically tame the monster, but it only spurred the Bloodbeast into action. It unleashed its powerful spiny tongue attack.

The tongue smashed into Rav and the battle was on. Rav flailed his newfound ninja sword into the creature, but for little effect, as the beast spat out its barbed tongue, entrapping Rav and smashing its razor-sharp jaws around him.

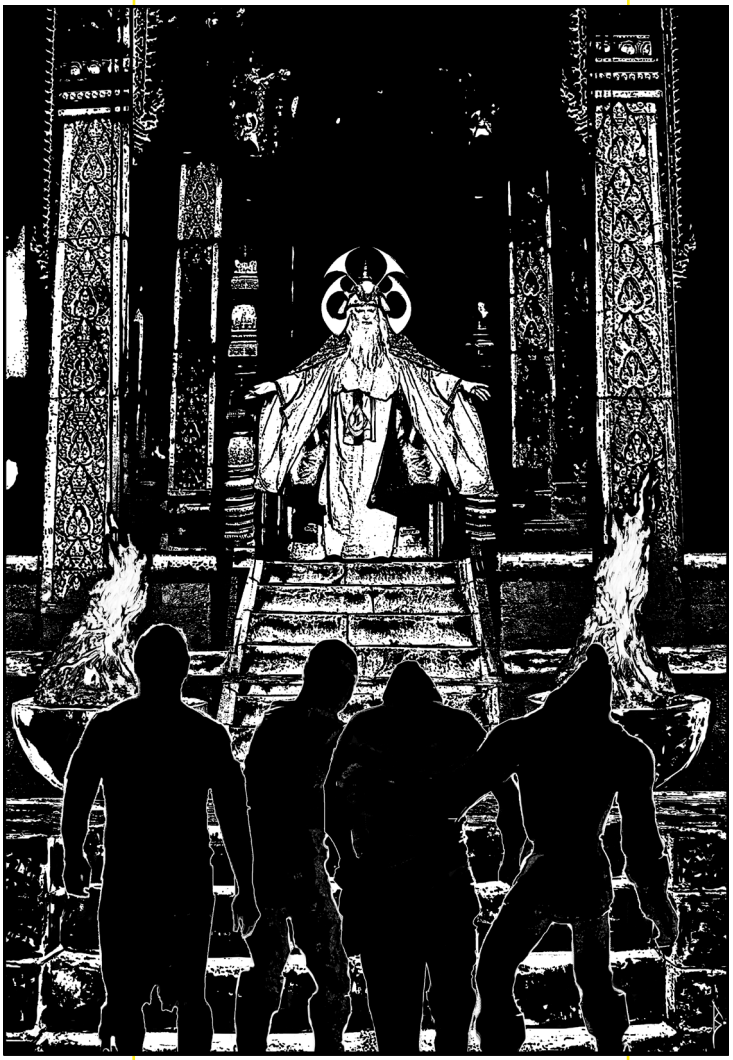
Silverarm slid down into the pit and immediately cast her Force Wall attack. Normally this would end the melee, but the Bloodbeast appeared unfazed. Silverarm then called upon her elemental powers and caused the ceiling to collapse on top of the beast. But the Bloodbeast was a fabled creature with awesome powers of defence and recuperation. It shrugged off the cleric's normally formidable attempts and lashed its tongue into the Dwarven magic user with piercing effect. Rav could barely breathe given his proximity to the noxious fumes from the slimy pit and yelled to Silverarm to cast a Light spell into its mass of eyes. This the Dwarf did, exhausting the last of her mana! The beast was surprised and its eyes shut in unison – Rav took the initiative and cut through more than half a dozen of them. At the same time, the rest of Six-Pack entered the clouded chamber. With the Bloodbeast seemingly preoccupied with Rav and Silverarm, Zan, Garry and Marcellos made a mad dash for a narrow tunnel exit on the opposite side of the room.

But the Bloodbeast was far from defeated. The blisters that covered the monster's massive body opened into eyes on the side that Zan and company ran to, and a long, tentacled spike whipped out of the slime in their direction. The razor-sharp appendage smashed into Zan and the poisonous fumes caused the young fighter to collapse. Garry and Marcellos were running past with their Boots of Speed and each grabbed an arm as they edged closer to the exit. Meanwhile, McShifty slunk into the muck that surrounded the pit and moved stealthily along the edge towards safety. While all of this went on, Rav watched in horror as the beast's eyes re-opened and its massive jaws widened to engulf him. Silverarm was already moving away as Marcellos called out "Run for your lives!" But Rav refused to yield. Again the battle-hardened warrior hacked into the beast's fetid exterior, but the heavy fumes were to take their toll. Rav's knees buckled. His hand release the ninja sword and his vision blurred. Silverarm and McShifty watched in disbelief as their menacing, brazen hero-in-arms fell to the floor. With one snap, the Bloodbeast swallowed Rav whole and thrust him into its acidic stomach!

Time stood still. The unimaginable had happened. (It is said that Rav was still throwing punches as the acid peeled his skin from his bones, and that while his

weapons and equipment dissolved to nothing, Rav's skeleton remains inside the Bloodbeast! Another tale would tell of a white dove, uncommon in Salamonian parts, landing on the Statue of Tetra, apparently around the same moment in time as Rav's death. And a priestess of Salamon claims that she saw a tear fall from the marble statue at the same time that a newborn baby wailed – a baby born with no hair and a strange black birthmark around one eye...)

The Bloodbeast submerged to savour its most valiant prey, giving the remaining heroes a vital few moments to get closer to the exit. However, its poisonous fumes also knocked out McShifty and its clawed tail lashed once more at Garry. The Elf saw it coming and deflected the tentacle away skilfully, but his joy was shortlived as the fumes also knocked him unconscious. Marcellos had successfully carried Zan to safety and then, with quick thinking, he activated his Rings of Breathing and Invisibility. Silverarm was immune to the poisonous gases (thanks to her Tattoo of Immunity, see "The Riddling Reaver" in issue #2) and she dashed to Garry's aid and then to the passageway, just as the Bloodbeast's horrid body re-emerged from the slimy pit. Its enormous maw opened wide – and it fired its deadly barbed tongue at Fingers. But the tongue was parried away at the last second by Marcellos' blade! The golden-caped fighter had made his way to the Dwarf's side just in time. He grabbed her deformed but still breathing body and dived into the passageway – to safety!



The remaining five heroes took some time to come to terms with Rav's demise – well, for a few minutes until McShifty and Greensleeves regained consciousness at least. There was little time for commiserations in Deathtrap Dungeon, however. Fingers led the team to yet another door and peered in. A MANTICORE lurked within (just as Silverarm's parchment had forewarned). Marcellos had fought these creatures in past adventures (see "A Darkness over Kaad" in issue #7) and he knew strength in numbers was the key. They charged in, spurred on by surviving the last encounter. But the manticore had a formidable ranged weapon in the form of its barbed projectiles. Garry loosed an arrow into the strange lion/bat/scorpion hybrid, but also was hit by the poisonous barb. McShifty shuffled forward in the narrow corridor but in a moment of confusion, Garry decided to stay at the front of the party and was promptly struck by another barb! Marcellos yelled "Charge!" as he joined Garry at the front. Together they charged forward! But the manticore continued to shoot its deadly barbs from its tail! Both Marcellos and Greensleeves were hit. Marcellos defended the projectile with his shield, but Garry was not so lucky. With no armour and no shield, and with poison already coursing through his veins, the third projectile smashed into his forehead, paralyzing and killing the brave Elf from the Silent Wood instantly.

Marcellos attacked with every ounce of his strength, his Sword of Timakron buzzing with evil's presence and giving the fighter valuable bonuses. Silverarm and Zan joined Marcellos in a frenzy of steel against claws and teeth. With one last lunge, Zan plunged his Sword of the Bat – the sword handed to him by Rav – through the manticore's neck. At that moment, the spirit of Rav flowed in him – and the boy became a man! As the remaining four heroes healed and composed themselves, a GNOME Trialmaster calling himself Igbut materialized, seemingly from thin air, in front of an ornate, heavy-set door. "This is the final test", he boasted. "Pass this and you may move through the door to freedom!" The gnome called for the party to reveal three gems. McShifty emerged from the shadows and produced a sapphire and emerald. Then Marcellos revealed the diamond! Igbut yelped with delight - no contestant in the Trial's 30-year history had made it this far with all three gems. Marcellos volunteered to insert the gems into the door's magical locks. Using a clue from a note Zan found earlier, he knew he could unlock the door in 1 or 2 turns.

After inserting the gems for the first time, a thumping energy bolt streamed from the lock and into Marcellos, blasting him backwards. But Marcellos would not be denied. He stood, smoke coming from his garb, and brushed himself off. The unflappable fighter looked at the door – then at Igbut – and inserted the gems in a different order. "Perhaps you've heard of me," he began, as the heavy iron door made three loud clicks and swung open! Igbut screamed with delight and dashed through the door towards the light at the end of the tunnel. But Marcellos and Silverarm did not trust the gnome and ran forward first - only to fall foul of the final trap! A dart filled with a fatal dose of poison fired from a concealed hole and lodged into Silverarm's arm. But the Dwarven cleric scoffed at the feeble dart, licking the poison and smiling with black teeth at Igbut. "Mmmmm, tastes like mamma's Dwarven stew...".

The four remaining heroes at last emerged from Deathtrap Dungeon. Bloodied. Bruised. Battered. But victorious. Igbut danced around (and Zan joined in with his Kallamehr jig) as a massive crowd cheered and shouted. Baron Sukumvit greeted them at the colourful rostrum. He looked astonished, his cold eyes staring in disbelief. Yet even the all-powerful ruler had to bow at their awesome accomplishment. And to the deafening noise of the people of Fang, Sukumvit proclaimed Sir Marcellos, Silverarm, Fingers McShifty and Zan as the "Champions of Deathtrap Dungeon". Laurels were placed on their heads and freedom of the city was granted. Last, but not least, a large chest was opened before them - containing their prize of 25,000 Gold Pieces!

# FIGHTING DANTASY

# TALISMAN OF DEATH

Dan works his way through the *Fighting Fantasy* series, book by book, and records his efforts as he goes. We don't fancy his chances...

adapted from Fightingdantasy.blogspot.com

by DAN SATHERLEY

If you're the kind of person who wants value for money from your gamebooks, *Talisman of Death* is the way to go. Not because it takes a million attempts to finish (in fact, I completed this one) but because it is long. *Loooong*. Just when I thought I'd be nearing the end, or dead – bam, there I was, right back in it.

You're an ordinary Earth guy, at least I think you're ordinary as there's no background at all really, except that you seem to have some psychedelic dream and suddenly you're the chosen one in the world of Orb – chosen to save the world that is. As all chosen ones are these days.

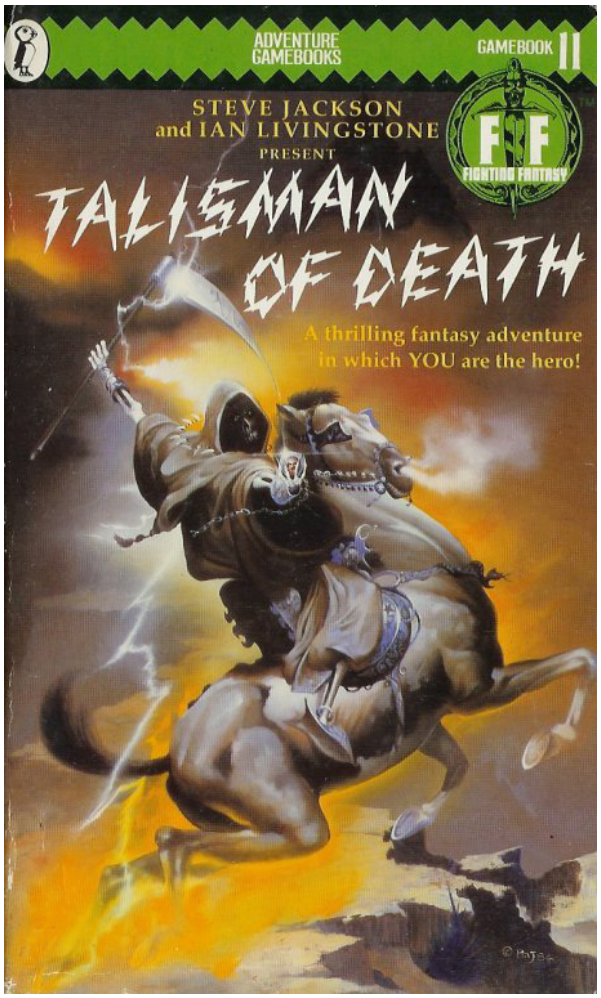
You have to take the Talisman of Death (what kind of craftsman would even create a 'Talisman of Death', let alone allow it to fall into the wrong hands?) back to 'your' world, ie. Earth, to save the world of Orb. No mention is made what might happen to Earth once it contains this evil thing, but hey...

One of the differences I noted in this book is that by this point, book 11, Jackson and Livingstone had finally worked out a combat system for fighting more than one opponent at a time, and it shows – almost every fight that isn't against some ridiculously formidable foe (more on that later) is against two average/weak guys. They obviously weren't too sure if this new system was fair though, often letting fights end well before either party was near death, or having one of the double-team pull out. They wouldn't be so kind in later books, from memory, knowing that most people end up cheating the dice anyway.

I rolled average stats with good luck and set out on my quest, which in some ways reminded me of an old Commodore 64 text adventure I used to play called *Quest for the Golden Eggcup*.

Anyway, I quickly came across a bunch of travellers and told them I was on a quest against evil, which they told me was a lie. I told them I was from another planet, which they knew was the truth. Was this not a quest against evil? Whose side was I on? They gave me a ride to the local town, where they made me hand over my gear and stole the Talisman.

Phew! I was sick of running from evil spectres and whatnot who were after that thing. At one point, I was given the option of running towards some dark elves (who were probably out to get me) or running for the hills, Iron Maiden-style. I chose the latter, obviously.




Relieved of my sacred duties and in a medieval-esque world I'd no care for, I hit the bars on the Hamburg-esque 'Street of Seven Sins'. I fought some guys, got a holy sword and slept on a bale of hay in an inn, all without paying, and hooked up with a bunch of thieves who, going by the artwork, were also transported from Earth, specifically 1940s Russia.

We discussed plans for a heist (to get the Talisman back – damnit), and when I told them where it was, they killed me.

But... my spirit was re-combined with my body and my quest began anew( I told you this book was long). All this re-combining happened in the Valley of Death, by the way, which I thought was a totally cool Coolio reference. Just 10 years before Coolio even was a thing.

Anyway, I rushed through all the earlier scenarios, re-lost the Millstone of Death, and came across some thieves looking to rob a jeweller. I helped them out, just to fit in and all, and one of them killed the jeweller in cold blood – and I wasn't given the option of bailing out! Talk about *Grand Theft Auto* all you want, but this was pretty cold...

So, fast-forwarding a little, I re-met the thieves, and this time kept the important info to myself, for now. We regained the talisman, defeating their leader Hawkana with heavy use of luck. I didn't used to use so much luck in battles when I was younger, but maybe I cheated then, unlike now...

And fast-forwarding a little again (I told you this book was long), I made it to the end... only to be killed by a dragon. Well, killed and re-incarnated again. Goddamnit! By this point I was kind of just wishing the book had some balls. This time I didn't have to go too far back and it was simply a matter of not doing what I did last time that killed me, some lucky rolls, and suddenly I'd defeated the dragon in battle (wasn't even a real dragon, even if it could really kill) and saved the other world, the one that gave me nothing but grief and death.

Despite the length and illogical plot, *Talisman of Death* was actually quite enjoyable. The sense of freedom that came with losing responsibility of looking after the talisman in the town was great – it's not often in *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks you get to just wander around a town, checking out the stores.

A good, if frustrating entry in the catalogue.

**STATS COUNTER**

| | |
|---|---|
| GAMEBOOKS ATTEMPTED | 15 |
| GAMEBOOKS WON | 4 |
| DEATHS BY BLACK HOLE | 1 |

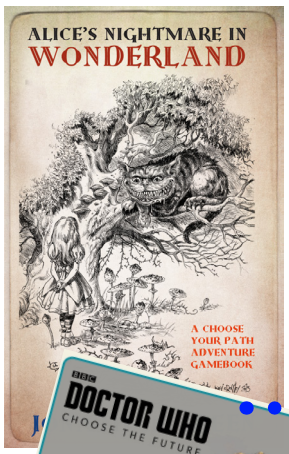
# The Arcane Archive

The latest gamebooks and gamebook-related materials are reviewed by the Fighting Fantazine team...

**96 APPS**
The *Fighting Fantasy* title *Bloodbones* is pressganged into an app by Tin Man Games and *Sorcery!* steps up to book 3.

**98 RPGS**
The *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* campaign *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* gets a look in.

**98 BOOKS**
Jonathan Green titles *Alice's Nightmare in Wonderland* and *Night of the Kraken* are among the new reads.



SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOILERS!

# Bloodbones

**PIRATES! TREASURE!** We go to sea in search of revenge and blood - but will we be digging one grave or two?

**Author** Jonathan Green **Publisher** Tin Man Games **Price** US$5.99
**Web** tinmangames.com.au **Published** December 24th, 2014

*Bloodbones* effectively marks the end of *Fighting Fantasy* apps with the old Tin Man Games *Gamebook Adventures* game engine. From the next title, *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, the company is taking their adaptations in a completely new direction. So this leaves us with one last look at this style of gamebook app, which we'll get to in a moment.

*Bloodbones* the gamebook, meanwhile, has a reputation as being a very hard gamebook to complete. This reputation was given some credence the first time I fired up the app for this review. The opening fight with three pirates left me reeling with only 4 STAMINA left, points I promptly lost only a couple of decisions later, leaving me dead. Which probably makes that attempt the shortest time I have ever spent alive in one of these app adaptations. As a result of this and other playthroughs, *Bloodbones* does have the feeling that even the slightest mistake will be punished with a horrible, horrible death.

Finding the undead Cinnabar isn't that difficult, but there are a number of fights to get through where the odds are somewhat stacked against the player (it felt like every time I went somewhere new the first thing that would happen was that I got into a fight) and the time constraint factor means many a player will have run out of time before they have acquired the necessary items needed to win.

But beyond my inability to make rolls that will get me anywhere, there is the bulk of the gamebook itself. Jonathan Green writes a deft tale about revenge, the sea, and the things that lurk within both. This is only a slight change-up from the usual adventurer hunting for treasure, and it still results in a finale facing off against the 'big bad' of the tale. Despite that, the revenge plot did, to my mind, regardless of the actual TIME stat, give the adventure some sense of urgency and focus when it might have otherwise been somewhat flat and generic.

Speaking of generic, Jonathan Green serves up a veritable banquet of hoary old pirate adventure clichés as part of the adventure, but if he hadn't readers would probably be baying for blood at missed opportunities. We've wreckers on the coast, parrots on shoulders, and more pirate-accented dialogue then you can shake a stick at. Even the app achievements get in on the act with references to the likes of *Pirates of the Carribean* with "We Called the Monkey Jack". That said, the clichés are used well and occasionally, with some interesting twists to them.

It is a colourful tale, with some interesting detail spread about here and there, but there are occasions where things feel just a little on the thin side and that the adventure would have been better served with fewer, but more detailed locations to investigate. *Bloodbones* then as an adventure is a mixed bag with much good to recommend it, but with a few moments here and there that make it feel more than a little unfair. This is especially frustrating in an app that doesn't allow peeking ahead or fingers in pages, although Tin Man Games have clearly recognised that thanks to the available Free Play mode that allows the player to effectively cheat their way through.

What about the actual app adapation then? Some small bugs are present in the current version, such as occasionally the stats information in fights being spread out across the screen instead of in the assigned spaces, but otherwise it is a sturdy build from Tin Man Games. Much of the app will be familiar to those who've played previous adaptations with intro sequence as a basic splash screen menu, plus an Art Gallery of the art in black and white or colour, and the list of obtainable Achievements that are dotted throughout the game.

Tony Hough's art is well served by the app and his colouring of his own art means that it has scrubbed up nicely, some of the art coming across as quite compelling on the iPad Pro I played the app on. Vivid greens and reds vie for attention and are suitably complemented by the green backgrounds and chain art that make up the basic background of the app 'pages'. All this imagery is wrapped around with the usual atmospheric sounds and music that Tin Man Games have carefully brought to their apps.

As a fan of gamebooks I feel that the app is worth getting and it makes a worthy companion to the original book version, but one can clearly feel Tin Man Games' frustration at the chains that keep the app firmly tied to its gamebook origins (for example, the dice rolling for the many, many fights in the adventure was something that left me wearied and wishing things would hurry up). In light of this chafing at the bit, it will be interesting to see what an unleashed Tin Man Games can bring to the table with their ambitious adaptation of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*.

**ALEXANDER BALLINGALL**

# Sorcery! 3

**Author** Steve Jackson **Publisher** inkle Studios
**Price** US$4.99 **Web** www.inklestudios.com **Published** April 23rd, 2015

With the fourth and final instalment of the *Sorcery!* series now on the horizon, it is time to take a moment to look back at the previous release. The third *Sorcery!* title is inkle Studios' adaptation of Steve Jackson's *The Seven Serpents* and follows much the same path as their two previous adaptations in execution. But let's look at the source material first before turning our eye to the app in question.

*The Seven Serpents* is seemingly nobody's favourite out of the *Sorcery!* tetralogy, always ranked lower than *Kharé – Cityport of Traps* or *The Crown of Kings*, the two most highly thought of in the series, and even placed after *The Shamutanti Hills* and treated much like an afterthought. I feel that this is down to it feeling like something of a retread of *The Shamutanti Hills*, putting the player in a slog across a few varied terrains with a fixed goal in sight (Kharé in the first, Mampang in the latter), and the fact that it feels the most linear of the four books.

Clearly Steve Jackson was aware of this, hence the inclusion of the titular Seven Serpents to provide the adventure with a 'race against time' feature. The Serpents of the title are fairly formidable foes in the dead tree format of the book, making life difficult for the player as they attempt to slay as many of them as possible in order to improve their chances of victory in *The Crown of Kings*. The *Sorcery!* app takes this a step further, allowing the Serpents to move about the map and stalk the player. This means a player can't rely on their memories of the book to always help them and increases the chances of coming into combat with the Serpents when the player isn't quite so ready to receive them. In addition, inkle have revised the player's means of dealing with the Serpents so that their defeats feel more in tune with the events of the adventure.

The basic game engine of the previous two releases is clearly in play, with all the familiar features that this brings with it, from stitched-together tracts of text, to dragging your player figurine across maps. To be brutally honest here, I personally find both of these quirks of implementation somewhat frustrating.

To the first, the need to continually tap to add further chunks of text to the adventure is annoying because more often than not, you aren't being asked to make choices between these bites of text. I can understand using the stitching if the moment stretched beyond the bottom of the screen, making it an interesting way to transition to a new 'page' of text, or moving between choices. Otherwise it seems like a lot of unnecessary tapping. I can only surmise the regular tapping is a way of making sure the player is still awake and actually reading what is in front of them.

The second of these adaptation tweaks, the moveable figure, would be more enjoyable if you could drag it anywhere. It feels strange that you can drag it all over the map, but unless you drag it to a flag nothing happens. It would have been more interesting if just dragging it to various unflagged points on the map would generate random encounters, although given the 'race against time' part of the narrative it could lead to many a player wasting what time they have in meaningless small events. In the grand scheme of things this quibble is probably more down to me than the app and doesn't on the whole distract from the more enjoyable parts of using the app.

Despite this, inkle have made some changes that broaden the story of *The Seven Serpents* considerably. Scattered throughout the game are several beacons that allow the player to experience the Baklands as they were in times past, which provides a rash of differing encounters or paths across the region. The linear path of the original book is gone, with instead a multitude of paths opening up before the player.

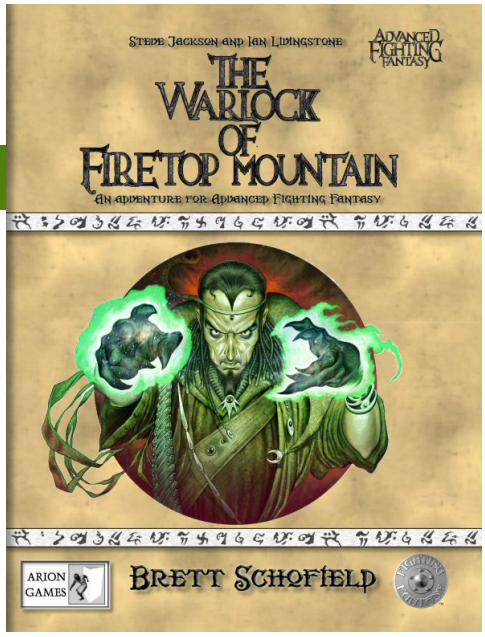
The cumulative result of all this tinkering is the pushing of the gamebook format to new limits, ones that make the adventure more immersive, more expansive, and with a grander scope of options to pick from than in the past. *Sorcery!* 3 shows that in adapting a gamebook one can preserve the main selling point of the genre – the ability to make choices that dictate the flow of the narrative – while at the same time digging deep to find new and better ways to deal with everything that surrounds you at that point. After a few minutes of gameplay in this gorgeous-looking app you won't have even noticed that you haven't needed to roll any dice.

Roll on *The Crown of Kings*!

**ALEXANDER BALLINGALL**

# The Warlock of Firetop Mountain

**Author** Brett Schofield **Publisher** Arion Games **Price** US$19.99
**Web** arion-games.com **Published** May 30th, 2014




*The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* has been many things since 1982, including a role-playing adaptation from Myriador back in 2003, so it is interesting to get yet another take on the same classic material, especially since this is another role-playing system with a different writer. As a result, I will make a few comparisons between this and the 2003 adaptation.

Brett Schofield's version of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* immediately comes across as less wordy than the 2003 version, which isn't a mark against this version as Schofield as it lets him get to the guts of each scene more quickly and probably to the appreciation of the players. This is probably also a reflection of the compactness of the *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* game system, which isn't as heavily mechanics involved as the d20 system used by Myriador seems to be.

Both versions provide prebuilt characters for players to use (especially important for those just starting out with *Advanced Fighting Fantasy*), allowing Schofield to show how reaching his grasp on and understanding of the source materials are by adapting the characters of the d20 module, all four of which appear here in a suitably *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* modified form alongside those from the boardgame version.

Despite this borrowing from non-book sources, Schofield's version feels like it has greater fidelity to and respect for the source material, which scores it bonus points with me.

In addition to this borrowing, Schofield has taken some time in the Additional Resources section at the back of the book to give some greater depth to the area surrounding Firetop Mountain as well as the more random encounters that might take place within. Some of this makes for interesting reading and hopefully helps lift players' enjoyment of the adventure and gives things a more colourful feel than otherwise would be the case.

The adventure is carved up into four Acts, points of transition marked by clear divisions in the interior of Firetop Mountain (such as the porcullis and the river) and allows Schofield to give each section a slightly different feel or emphasis for the Director to lean on. Each Act is accompanied by a map that lays out the interior dimesions of Firetop Mountain clearly.

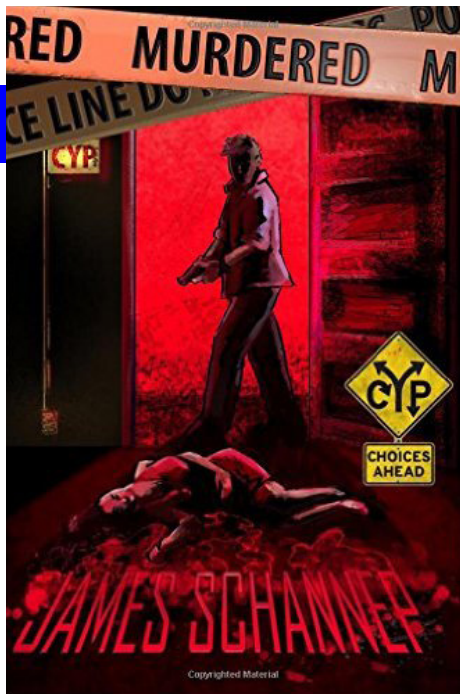
In every respect this is a fairly straightforward adaptation of the book (which might make some things a little too easy for players if they've played the original gamebook and have fairly good recall of the contents within), but it does what it says on the tin and does it well.

This adaptation is a great addition to the *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* series, a much needed adventure for beginners and experts alike to get their teeth into. I can only hope that Arion Games plan further adventures of this nature to help broaden the appeal and immediate playability of the range.

**ALEXANDER BALLINGALL**

# Murdered

**Author** James Schannep **Price** US$12.71 **Web** jamesschannep.com
**Published** December 18th, 2013




I'm always pleased to discover new gamebooks and came across those of James Schannep, a writer who has a fourth gamebook set to be published this year and a range of striking T-shirts based on his books! *Murdered* is James Schannep's second effort in his *Click Your Poison* series and I approached this book with some caution. What worried me is that there are no rules, no inventory or combat, no dice rolling and so on.

In fact, I needn't have worried.

The idea of the book appealed, as it's a thriller set in present-day Brazil. You have come to Rio with some friends just in time to enjoy the yearly carnival atmosphere. It is supposed to be a fun, frivolous vacation. Instead, events turn extremely sinister when you stumble across a dead body in a dark alley. Furthermore, there is a revolver with a note that says, 'PICK ME UP'!

From here on in, the story has a dark noir feel. This is backed up by the sense of paranoia, as nobody is who they seem to be, and all are operating with complex motivations.

Despite the apparent *Choose Your Own Adventure* structure, this is a long and complex thriller, if you work at it. There are nearly 280 sections and while that may not sound like a lot, this is as detailed as a normal novel. You get as much out of this gamebook as you are prepared to put into it. The more you try different things, the more you will begin to see the whole picture.

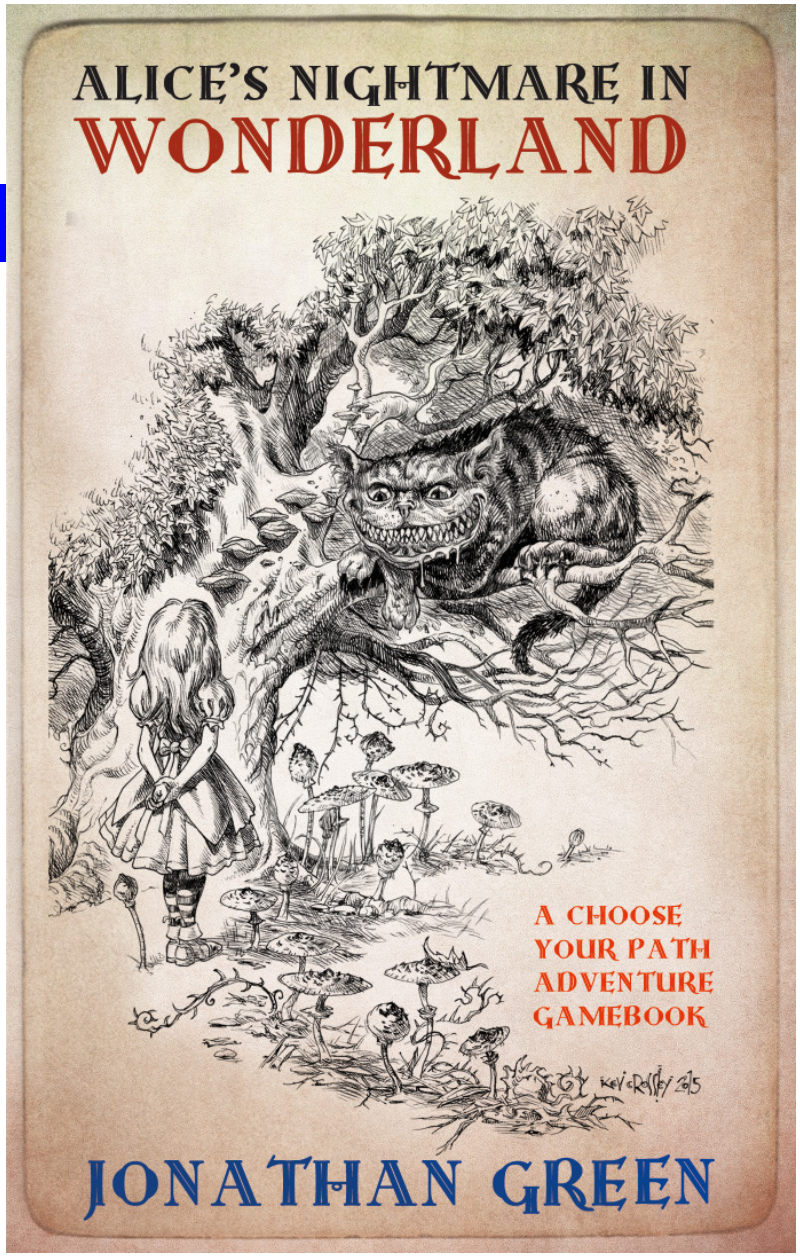
And at the same time, you will be sucked into the seedy world of an underground community. This is no black-and-white experience as the author clearly has sympathy for the choices people make, and the reasons why people end up doing bad things. For example, during your investigation you can end up working with two US Diplomatic Security agents, both with widely differing personalities. Strange, random incidents can occur, such as a cryptic note put on their car's window. Only through extensive playing will you discover why these events occurred, and what the motivation was. In fact, only by replaying it again and again will you get to the ultimate good ending, but it's worth it!

Altogether I was extremely impressed with this gamebook. The level of detail describing a city about to be welcoming the entire world with the upcoming Olympics while struggling with corruption and poverty stayed with me for a long time. I can't wait to read more!

**JAMES SPEARING**

# Alice's Nightmare in Wonderland

**Author** Jonathan Green **Publisher** Snow Books **Price** £9.99
**Web** snowbooks.com **Published** November 25th, 2015




Jonathan Green is no stranger to gamebooks, having written no less than seven *Fighting Fantasy* titles (and a handful of titles for other series). This time he turns his experienced hand to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the classic tale by Lewis Carroll, but darkly reimagined as *Alice's Nightmare in Wonderland*. The book was funded via Kickstarter and is a testament to the online gamebook community that is keeping this format alive.

The rules of the gamebook will be very familiar to readers of the *Fighting Fantasy* series, as the procedures for testing Alice's attributes (Agility, Logic, Insanity, Combat and Endurance) and resolving her combats are very similar. This didn't bother me one bit, as my familiarity with the rules meant I was able to jump into the action almost straight away. One interesting rule is Initiative, where the combatant who won the last Combat Round gains a +1 bonus to their Combat Rating. In my first three combats this rule didn't have much of an effect at all. In the next two battles, however, the dice rolls turned against me, and my opponent's Initiative bonus was often the deciding factor in who won each Combat Round.

Fortunately, combat isn't the only way to overcome Alice's enemies. There are often opportunities to use Alice's other attributes to avoid combat altogether. There are also two limited-use special abilities that Alice can call upon to get herself out of trouble. This adds some welcome variety to how you can solve encounters in the game: you can fight your way out, dodge your way out or think your way out. Playing the game requires the standard two dice, a pencil and an eraser to play, but there are also alternate rules for playing with a standard deck of cards, which is a nice, theme-appropriate inclusion.

The story itself details Alice's return down the rabbit hole into the magical world of Wonderland. At first the narrative is very similar to that of the original book, but it quickly becomes apparent that this version of Wonderland isn't quite right. In fact, things are very, very wrong. Many of the classic Wonderland characters are featured in the story (the White Rabbit, the Queen of Hearts, etc.), but with the horrific, steampunk-infused twist that Green injects into many of his stories. The book even features a hedge maze that gives the Maze of Zagor a run for its money! And is it just me, or is there a callout to Firetop Mountain at the lair of Tweedledee and Tweedledum?

The text emulates the style of Lewis Carroll's original quite well, and is told from a third-person point of view, rather than the second-person narrative that is common to most gamebooks ('Alice drags herself through the loamy dark', rather than 'You drag yourself through the loamy dark'). This gives the feeling that you are reading an actual storybook of Alice's adventure, where you just happen to be able to make the narrative choices yourself.

One thing that bugged me at first was the lack of paragraph numbers in the top corners of each page. Instead they are included in the bottom corners. I had become so used to their position at the top in other gamebooks that it took me a little while to notice they were there at all!

The book is ably illustrated by Kev Crossley, who also illustrated Ian Livingstone's *Blood of the Zombies*. His artwork is excellent, combining the whimsical fairy tale elements of Lewis Carroll's original book with the creepy and gory elements of Jonathan Green's text. My only criticism (and it is a very minor one) is that some of the illustrations, mainly those that depict savage-looking monsters, look as if they were pulled straight out of a *Fighting Fantasy* title. This usually wouldn't be an issue at all, but I feel they lack the more peculiar 'Wonderland' feel that some of the other illustrations bear. What every illustration does have, however, is an incredible amount of detail and a suitably menacing atmosphere.

In my play-through I came very close to completing the book on my first try, but my failure to find and solve an earlier puzzle meant that I wound up with an instant-death ending. Thankfully this is the only one I have found so far, and my second play-through ended in success. Even though I have beaten the book, I am tempted to give it another read just to see what imaginative encounters I had missed the first two times.

All in all this was a very enjoyable read and a worthy addition to Jonathan Green's ever-growing list of gamebooks. I can only hope that the next one he writes is set in the equally wonderful world of Titan!

**BRETT SCHOFIELD**

# The Big Adventure of the Little Gremlin

**Author** Nikola Raykov **Price** Free
**Web** www.gametale.eu/

When Bulgarian gamebook fan Nikola Raykov became a parent, he decided, like many enthusiasts of many things, to share his enthusiasm with his child as soon as he could. He did this by writing a gamebook designed to be read aloud to toddlers, in which a cute little Gremlin (known as Gremmy, because Gremlins don't have names) goes on an adventure in search of food and fun. If he had stopped there I would not be writing this review, but instead he decided to share the book with everyone by releasing it for free under a Creative Commons license. Many people have released free gamebooks on the Internet before, but not many of them look as nice as this one, filled as it is with cute and colourful illustrations that, if stylistically inconsistent at times, are nonetheless up to the standards of many commercially produced children's picture books. Before long, Gremmy was getting attention beyond just gamebook circles and the book gained national attention in Bulgaria, winning (or was nominated for) several awards. Again, if things had stopped there I would still not be able to write this review. Fortunately, the Gremlin has taken one more step into international prominence with a new (yet still free) English translation.

While this is not the first gamebook to be published with toddlers as its intended audience, it does seem to take the task of entertaining very young children more seriously than some of its predecessors. Where the most prominent precursor, the *Your First Adventure* series (spun off from *Choose Your Own Adventure*), simplistically described everyday situations punctuated by only one choice in the middle, *The Big Adventure of the Little Gremlin* offers a detailed fantasy world with many choices and quite a bit of text – a full page in a relatively small font – in-between decision points. This is not to say that children will be bored – the detailed illustrations offer a lot to study while the text unfolds and the length of the text simply shows that the author has more confidence in youthful attention spans than most contemporary commercial publishers. To further engage the book's audience, an afterword is included, which offers advice to parents on how to personalize the story for their children, adding excitement and educational value in the process.

The prose is probably the weakest link in the book, tending to come off more cutesie than cute with its frequent references to Gremmy's 'pawsies' and 'nuzzle-muzzle'. Fortunately, this overly saccharine flavour, which may have read better in the original Bulgarian, can be easily toned down by the adult reader if necessary. What remains is a somewhat meandering story, driven by childish logic and whimsy, with light touches of humour and the occasional moral. This probably won't provide a great deal of satisfaction to the lone adult reader, but as a starting-off point for interaction between a parent and a child, it serves its purpose by offering a variety of settings and scenarios with plenty of opportunities for silliness and improvisation.

As the ultimate test, I played through the book with my four-year-old. Sure enough, it held his attention from start to finish, though when he reached his first ending he was not immediately compelled to go back and try another path – perhaps because there weren't enough superheroes and/or Lego bricks for his very specific tastes. Nonetheless, I suspect that I'll be able to pull this out again from time to time when he's in the mood for something different. And I would consider that a success.

**DEMIAN KATZ**

# Choose a Way: Bangkok

**Author** Chris Backe **Publisher** Choose a Way **Price** US$6.99
**Published** September 12th, 2014

The premise behind the *Choose a Way* series is to use the gamebook format to provide an interactive travel guide experience. Each title in the series is available in both Kindle and hyperlinked PDF formats, allowing access on a variety of devices. It should be emphasized that this is intended purely as an electronic title, at least at the time of this writing – no print versions are available and the PDF is not print-friendly since the internal links are not numbered. The debut title guides its readers through its author's current hometown of Bangkok, Thailand.

The book contains information on thirty-five attractions and is structured in such a way that it should provide sufficient entertainment for up to five days of exploration. Each day, the book asks you the time of day that you plan on starting your adventures. It then gives you choices about where to begin, and from there it guides you from site to site based on your preferences. The links between the locations account for available transportation and help the reader enjoy a well-planned itinerary without the need for very much pre-planning. A helpful introduction containing general advice helps with what preparation is necessary. While I was unable to travel to Thailand for the sake of confirming the reliability of the book, I was given a favourable impression based on my initial reading.

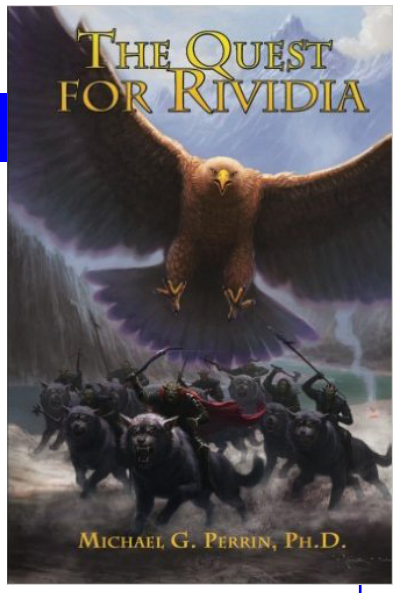
Gamebook fans may be wondering whether the book offers any gameplay in addition to its travel advice. Sadly for the gamers, it does not – this title uses basic gamebook mechanics to provide a unique travel guide experience, but it does not have any sort of embedded game of its own. However, there are still some pleasant surprises for gamebook readers, such as an opportunity to travel along the street whose name was borrowed by the villain of Deathtrap Dungeon and a chance to visit a site dedicated to the history behind the *Choose Your Own Adventure* title *The Case of the Silk King*. I'm assured that the presence of these locations in the book is purely coincidental, so don't buy it expecting to find a lot of conscious gamebook references in the text; nonetheless, as gamebook tourist destinations go, Bangkok turns out to be a surprisingly good one.

For those who are intrigued by the concept but don't plan on traveling to Bangkok, keep an eye on the series' website, as more destinations will be added. Philadelphia is already covered, as is a more specialized book on Bangkok food.

**DEMIAN KATZ**

# The Quest for Rividia

**Author** Michael G. Perrin **Price** US$15
**Published** July 10th, 2014




Book 2 of Michael G Perrin's martial arts-inspired *Shinté Warrior* series follows on from the dramatic events of *Trials of the First Moon* (the first book in this new series) and now requires that you scale the snow-covered Cadcliff Mountains in search of the legendary Rividia plant: a sacred medicinal herb with unique restorative powers. Forming a team of warriors, your mission is to find this rare species and return to your monastery, where the miracle plant can be used to counter the Bloodbane disease; a plague currently afflicting all those wounded during the massive battle from the first book.

Your adventure will see you facing encounters with goblins, mongreloid fighters with their war hounds, a massive mountain troll, and a giant roc eagle. As with the previous book, the adventure features various options based on your chosen animal fighting styles, and due to the group dynamic of this story, there are important and influential decisions to be made regarding leadership, trust and friendship.

As this second book is a direct sequel to events of *Trials of the First Moon*, it is highly advisable (although not strictly necessary) to read the first volume before playing this book to better understand the ongoing conflict at the heart of this story. Returning players who have successfully completed the first book also gain benefit from additional animal and weapon proficiencies, as well as being gifted with more gear, a special item and an extra weapon.

Engagingly written and offering an enjoyable fantasy adventure through an imaginative world, *The Quest for Rividia* is an entertaining gamebook of traditional fantasy structure and content, with the key difference that you do not adventure alone and must make decisions based on who you trust and respect, and how you wish to proceed on your trek. The world of Shanoong and the welfare of your community is an interesting and original setting for an adventure and is suitably detailed within the story, aiding immersion and providing a sense of purpose to your travels.

As with the first book, the beginning part of the story (set within your monastery) is relatively slow. However, it does link to the important events from the previous adventure and provides purpose for what is to follow, nicely building expectation for the action and decision making that you will soon face. This is very much a story-driven gamebook and in this regard you will find that the tale being told is worthy of time and attention. So put on your black belt and get ready to fight the foul invaders that have decimated the Shinté people!

**MICHAEL REILLY**

# Night of the Kraken

**Author** Jonathan Green **Publisher** Puffin **Price** £6.99
**Web** global.penguinrandomhouse.com **Published** April 26th, 2016

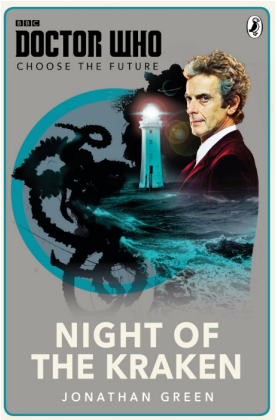
It's great to see Puffin delving back into gamebook territory and getting gamebooks back onto bookshop shelves. This title is the first in a new series of *Choose the Future* gamebooks based on the television series *Doctor Who*, and is by one of the masters of the genre: Jonathan Green. On top of this pleasing fact, Puffin obviously has some confidence in this new series as a second book is already scheduled for release in September.

You find the Doctor in 18th century England, near a small coastal Cornish village. You will meet a mysterious traveller whose strange motives you will need to untangle. You will have to race against time, with terrifying creatures stalking both land and sea. And you will have to decide who needs to survive the most, the villagers or the unworldly aliens?

At first things can seem a little pared down for those familiar with gamebooks. There are only 150 paragraphs and no combat system, character sheet, or dice rolls etc. There are no interior illustrations either, surprisingly. However, Jonathan Green has worked wonders with what could have been a rather restrictive format.

Everything feels exactly as you would expect from a *Doctor Who* adventure. The plot involves a mixture of suspense, humour and interesting characters. It helps that Jonathan Green knows his Twelfth Doctor well, as his sharp character is evoked with comments regarding his human-interaction cue cards and his 'attack eyebrows'!

A great example with this is his relationship with Bess, a local barmaid. Not only does she provide important background to the Doctor about recent events, but she is also a perfect foil for him. Bess describing her own reasons for wanting to help the Doctor contrasts nicely with his ambivalent attitude towards her, which rings true. And he is right, as Bess can either be a great help or bring about catastrophic consequences. As the Doctor says to Bess when she begs him to let her travel with him in his TARDIS, "No, that wouldn't be right... I'm already ruthless enough. I need a companion who keeps me on the level, keeps me grounded. With you by my side, who knows what kind of Hell we might unleash."




The author wisely decides not to overstretch his story. He has created a taut, eerie tale set over just a few locations. This enables him to give the reader the opportunity to make meaningful decisions, and opportunities for several different perspectives that make replaying essential. The few characters that the Doctor does come across only come into their own gradually over different playthroughs, which is to the book's credit. The climax is suitably exciting and varies considerably depending on the choices previously made.

Although not hard, getting to paragraph 150 will still take several attempts and I've still not worked out how to use an item I've found. While there are no major puzzles, this is more than made up for by its replayability.

While a little too short, this is well worth playing. It catches the essence of the latest Doctor, particularly his sense of adventure and his humour. Aimed at around 9-year-olds, let's hope it creates more demand for further gamebook series from Puffin and Penguin.

**JAMES SPEARING**

Next issue in...

# Fighting Fantazine

THE FIGHTING FANTASY & GAMEBOOK FAN MAGAZINE

**The quest begins...**
More from "The Fact of Fiction" as it looks at *The Shamutanti Hills*.

**Fantastic Art**
We talk *Fighting Fantasy* and futuristic art with Gary Mayes.

**Sister Angela's Veil**
A *Fighting Fantasy* adventure by Mark Lain.

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