

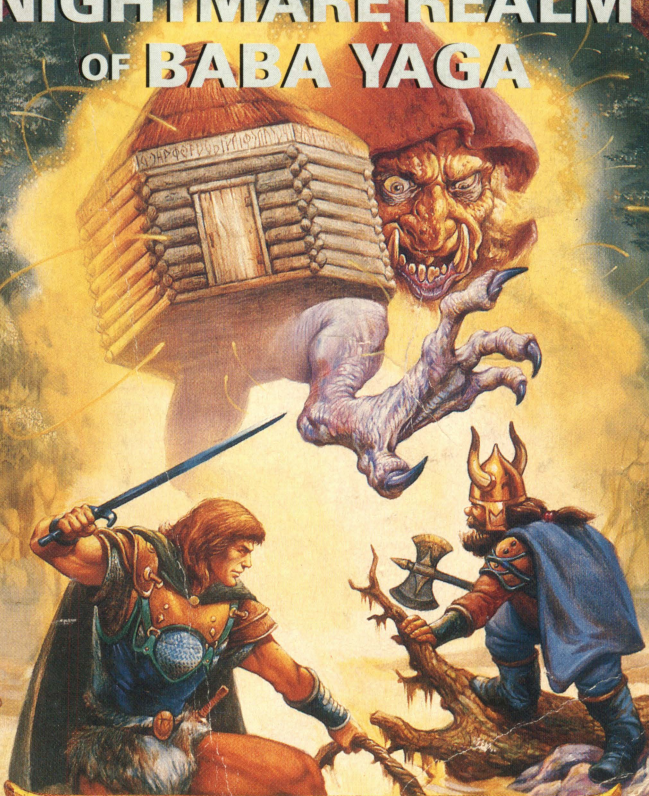
\$2.95



Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

ADVENTURE 8 GAMEBOOK

NIGHTMARE REALM OF BABA YAGA



By Roger E. Moore

394-74556-6

Seasley

CHARACTER STATS CARD

NIGHTMARE REALM OF BABA YAGA



NAME: Jerrak Kimbal

CHAR. CLASS: Fighter

AGE: 27

SKILL POINTS (18 total):

JERRAK

Strength: _____

Observation: _____

Fighting: _____

STARLIGHT

Antimagical Power: _____

MJOLNIR

Stealth: _____

EXPERIENCE POINTS:

3 + _____ = _____

JUDGMENT POINTS: 6

HIT POINTS: 36 + _____ = _____

CHALLENGED BY A LIVING SKULL!

You and your faithful dwarven companion, Mjolnir, have journeyed deep into the swamp forest on a dangerous night mission. Before you, through the swirling mists, you can just make out the outline of the innocent-looking cabin that is your destination. Though it appears much like any honest woodsman's simple hut, you know that it is actually the lair of the most dangerous witch known to mankind—the fiendish Baba Yaga. It's no comfort to realize that, if you fail your mission on this grim night, you and your friend will probably be Baba Yaga's next meal. . . .

As you creep stealthily toward the cabin, an eerie voice suddenly echoes through the night air in challenge. You whirl to see a fleshless human skull, stuck atop a post, its eyesockets gleaming with magical fire and staring straight at you!

You don't know what magical powers the skull possesses, but your instincts warn you that it's about to attack you. Quickly you raise your sword, Starlight, and point its star-flecked blade straight at the grinning skull, activating its antimagical powers.

Will you survive the skull's magical attack?

Roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagical power score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 153. If it is 6 or less, turn to 214.

Whatever the outcome, only your decisions, and the luck of the dice roll, can help you survive in the

NIGHTMARE REALM OF BABA YAGA

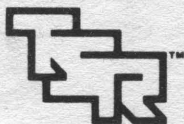


An ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®
Adventure Gamebook #8

NIGHTMARE REALM of BABA YAGA

BY ROGER E. MOORE

Cover Art by Jeff Easley
Interior Art by Mark Nelson



TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™

**For Keith, Mary, and Nicholas Parkinson,
and six impossible things
before breakfast**

NIGHTMARE REALM OF BABA YAGA

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First printing: May, 1986

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 86-50358

ISBN: 0-88038-286-4

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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AN EXCITING NEW EXPERIENCE IN BOOKS!

Welcome, you who are about to enter the NIGHTMARE REALM OF BABA YAGA, to an exciting, totally new concept in role-playing gamebooks.

Based on the popular ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game, Adventure Gamebooks require only two standard six-sided dice, an ample supply of luck—and, most of all, your skill in making decisions as you play the game. If dice are unavailable, a simple alternative, requiring only pencil and paper, may be used instead.

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Adventure Gamebooks read easily, without complicated rules to slow down the story. Once you have read through the simple rules that follow, you should seldom find it necessary to refer back to them. Your options are repeated clearly in the text at each choice point, with occasional reminders about additional options you may wish to consider to improve your chances. Your adventure reads like a book, plays like a game, and offers a thrill a minute—with YOU as the hero!

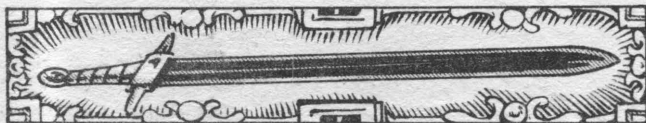
YOUR CHARACTER

In this book, you are Jerrak Kimbal, an experienced warrior and adventurer. When you were young, your grandfather owned a wondrous gem called the Sage Beryl, a magical green stone that contained the friendly spirit of an ancient magic-user named Nicodamus.

Then one day a witch entered your grandfather's mansion and stole the Sage Beryl. In the process, the witch destroyed the mansion and apparently slew all its occupants—by eating them alive. Your quest in this book is to recover the stolen Sage Beryl.

But there's one problem. The witch who stole the gem was none other than the legendary Baba Yaga, an immortal sorceress who eats human beings as humans eat cattle. Her incredible powers defy description. Even the hut where she lives possesses fantastic magical powers. No one who has entered it has ever escaped.

Two special allies assist you on your quest. You carry a powerful sword, Starlight, forged by dwarves and wizards in bygone ages. Made from an antimagical black metal, Starlight can dispel sorcerous spells and nullify magical devices at your command.



An old adventuring companion, Mjolnir, has also promised to accompany you—for a share of any profits. "Jole" is a bald, gray-bearded dwarven fighter and thief with a crusty temper, a sharp eye for valuables, and an even sharper ax. You trust him like a brother, despite his light-fingered behavior.

Both you and Mjolnir are eager for excitement and adventure. Soon you'll have more adventure than either of you ever dreamed of . . . in the strange, nightmare realm inside the Dancing Hut of Baba Yaga!



PLAYING THE GAME

ESTABLISHING YOUR CHARACTER

YOUR Jerrak Kimbal will be different from someone else's because YOU help to create him.

Carefully tear out the removable **Character Stats Card** you will find at the beginning of this book. This card is your record of Jerrak's character makeup, as well as that of his dwarven companion, Mjolnir. It also doubles as a bookmark.

Since we hope you will be playing this adventure many times, it is suggested that you write on the card in pencil only, so that the character stats can be erased easily when you are ready to play again. If you have access to a photocopier, you may wish to make several photocopies of the Character Stats Card before you fill it in. Permission is hereby granted by the publisher to make photocopies of the Character Stats Card *only*. You may also reproduce the card by writing on a 3" x 5" card or a slip of paper.

You are now ready to round out Jerrak Kimbal's individual identity by establishing his strengths and weaknesses. Your character's **name**, **character class**, and **age** have already been entered for you. Before you fill out the rest of the card, it is necessary to understand the game's scoring system.

SCORING

Playing the game requires you to keep track of four things—**hit points**, **skill points**, **experience points**, and **judgment points**—on the tear-out **Character Stats Card** located at the front of the book. An explanation of each of these follows.



HIT POINTS

You, as Jerrak Kimbal, have a specific life strength, represented by **hit points**. Once your hit points are reduced to zero, Jerrak ceases to exist, and you have come to the end of the adventure, whether the text has come to an end or not.

Jerrak loses hit points each time he fails to hit his enemy through the roll of the dice, because his opponent will usually succeed in hitting him back. As a result, you must deduct a stated number of hit points from his hit point total.

Jerrak may also lose hit points through sneak attacks, traps, or through carelessness when he has no chance to fight back. In such instances, you will be instructed to roll one or more dice for **damage**. The result of the roll is deducted from his hit point total.

Jerrak, as an experienced fighter, starts out the adventure with 36 hit points, plus a random chance to improve his score. Roll two six-sided dice twice (creating a number between 4 and 24) and add the result to 36 for his total hit points. Jerrak should now have between 40 and 60 hit points. Record this number in the blank space labeled "hit points."

Guard Jerrak's hit points carefully. Don't be afraid to spend them when the goal seems worthwhile, but note that Jerrak has **no** chance to recover lost hit points at any point during this adventure. Be wary of combat and danger. Jerrak is a formidable fighter, but his luck and hit points won't last forever.

SKILL POINTS

You are now ready to determine the **skills** of your two adventurers.

Skill points allow you to increase your chances of success by adding the score for a specific skill to the dice roll. In this book, you will be asked to divide 18 skill points between Jerrak's three skills, his sword's antimagical power score, and Mjolnir's single skill in any way you want, provided that you give *at least* one point in each of the five categories. In addition, there is a maximum limit of 6 to the number of points that you may add to each skill. Though fighting is the skill used most often in this book, it is not the only score needed for survival. In many situations, the others are critical, too.

Jerrak's skills are **fighting, strength, and observation**. His sword has an **antimagical power** score, and Mjolnir, the dwarf, has one skill: **stealth**.

Fighting

Jerrak's **fighting** skill score increases his chance of success in combat.

When Jerrak fights an opponent in this book, roll two dice and add the sum of the dice to his fighting skill score. If the result is equal to, or greater than, the number required to hit the opponent (given in the text), Jerrak has successfully struck his opponent.



Strength

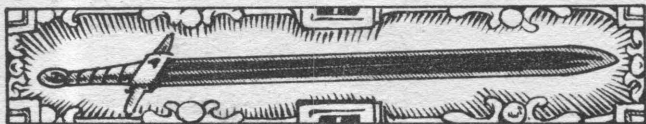
The **strength** score increases Jerrak's chances of success in feats involving physical strength or speed, such as in trying to break down a door, wrestling an opponent, lifting great weights, or fleeing from a pursuing enemy.

To use Jerrak's strength skill, roll one die and add the result to his strength skill score. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, he is successful.

Observation

Jerrak's **observation** skill score increases his ability to notice things, such as finding traps or detecting a hidden enemy. A high observation score also helps guard against surprise attacks.

To use Jerrak's observation skill, roll one die and add the result to his observation skill score. If the total is equal to or greater than the number given in the text, he has succeeded.



Starlight's Antimagical Power

Jerrak's sword, Starlight, has the power to dispel, or negate the effects of, magical spells and objects. Its **anti-magical power** score increases Jerrak's chances of surviving magical attacks.

When Jerrak uses his sword to try to stop a magical spell or object from affecting him, roll one die and add the result to the sword's antimagical power score. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, then Starlight nullifies the spell or deactivates the magical object.



Stealth

As a dwarven thief, Mjолnir's skills at thieving are represented by his **stealth** score. The stealth skill does all Jer-rak's observation skill does and more. It increases Mjолnir's chances of success in feats involving scouting and spying, detecting traps and secret doors, picking locks, and detecting and surprising opponents.

To use Mjолnir's stealth skill, roll one die and add the result to his stealth skill score. If the result equals or exceeds the number given in the text, then Mjолnir is successful.

Unlike hit points, which may decrease or increase during the adventure, skill points remain constant throughout the game. However, as you play and replay the adventure, you will want to experiment with different combinations of skill points to determine what works best in Baba Yaga's nightmare realm.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

In real life, experience increases your chances of success in a given situation, because you'll have encountered a similar situation before and will understand the various possibilities that may occur. As an experienced adventurer, Jerrak begins this adventure with between 4 and 9 **experience points**, depending on the luck of your roll of the dice.

You may spend these points to increase Jerrak's chances on certain dice rolls in the book—those involving his strength, observation, and fighting skills only—but once experience points are used up, they are gone and must be deducted from the total. Note that experience points *may not* be added to die rolls involving Mjolnir's stealth score or Starlight's antimagical power score.

To use experience points, you must decide how many points you will spend *before* you roll the dice, then add that score to the result of your dice roll. Whether the roll of the dice is successful or not, the experience points are gone and must be deducted from the total.

To determine Jerrak's **experience points**, roll one six-sided die, add 3 points to the result, and record the number in the blank space marked "experience points." You *must* accept the roll, regardless of the number rolled. Remember, experience points can be used to improve your chances on any dice roll involving strength, fighting, or observation scores—but once spent, they are used up and must be subtracted from the experience point total.

Use experience points wisely, saving them for what you consider to be crucial situations. At several story endings, you may be rewarded with extra experience points for playing the adventure well. You may also gain these points if you must escape the adventure to save Mjolnir's life. These bonus points may be added to Jerrak's experience points the next time you play the adventure.



JUDGMENT POINTS

Jerrak begins each game with 6 judgment points, which represent a measure of his good judgment and wisdom in approaching this adventure. If Jerrak takes a course of action that proves to be unwise and excessively dangerous, then a certain number of judgment points must be deducted from his score. Judgment points have an important effect on how Baba Yaga reacts to Jerrak—the witch doesn't like fools!



COMBAT

Combat occurs when Jerrak chooses, or is forced, to fight an enemy—a goblin, a witch, a demon. To engage in combat, roll two dice, add them together, and add Jerrak's fighting skill score to the result of the dice roll. The text will tell you how many points Jerrak needs to hit or kill the enemy. The tougher the enemy, the more points required to kill it. If the total is sufficient to kill the monster, turn to the "win" section. (Note that the numbered sections you are directed to turn to are *section* numbers, *not* page numbers.) If Jerrak misses, the enemy automatically hits Jerrak back, and you will be told how many hit points of damage to deduct from his hit point total. If the instructions allow you to, you may sometimes have Jerrak flee, surrender, bargain, or strike his enemy again, provided he hasn't died by having his hit point total reduced to zero.

This combat sequence may be repeated as many times as you wish, until either Jerrak wins, he decides to flee, or he

is killed by having his hit points reduced to zero. Note that Jerrak will never abandon Mjolnir if the dwarf is in serious trouble.

In some combat segments, however, Jerrak must have a certain number of hit points in order to be strong enough to flee. Thus, though he may be strong enough to flee at the start of combat, after one or more unsuccessful rounds, Jerrak may be too weak to flee and may not exercise this option.

PLAYING WITHOUT DICE

Should you ever wish to play the adventure when dice are unavailable, there is a simple substitute that requires only pencil and paper. Simply write the numbers 1 through 6 on separate slips of paper and mix them up in a container. Then draw one of the slips, note the number, and place it back in the container. Mix the numbers up before you draw again. Each draw represents one roll of a die.

Your characters—Jerrak and his dwarven ally, Mjolnir—are now complete, and you are ready to begin the adventure. Turn to page 15—and good luck!

"Oops!" Mjolnir mumbles, coming to a sudden stop ahead of you in the thick undergrowth of the swamp forest. You pause, raising Starlight's gleaming black blade in anticipation of an attack. Because of the encircling mists and gray-slimed tree trunks, you can't see what has brought him to a halt.

"What's the matter?" you whisper. "Is something coming?" Your grip on Starlight's hilt tightens. The flecks of light in its ebon blade gleam with weird intensity, charging the weapon with magic-destroying power.

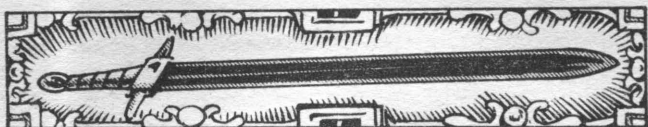
Your dwarf companion shakes his grizzled head slowly, his beard matted with sweat. Then he wipes his mouth with the back of one thick hand. "No, there's nothin' comin'," he says, "but it looks like we done found th' witch's hut—right over there." He points through the mist with his wide-bladed battle-ax.

You step forward, pushing aside a moss-laden overhanging branch. An icy chill runs down your spine as you peer through the tangled vines. The last thing any sane person would do would be to build a dwelling in the depths of this snake-infested swamp, but in the dim reaches ahead, you make out the outline of a small log hut with a single, smoking chimney. You catch a whiff of burning wood from a stove—a welcome odor after days of smelling nothing but rotting wood, stagnant water, and dead things.

Your dwarven companion halfheartedly slaps at a mosquito on his neck. Like you, he has been bitten too often to care much anymore. "Only a witch'd build her home right in a stinkin' place like this." He looks at you with golden eyes, their keenness undimmed by the last three days of difficult travel, and hefts his battle-ax. "It's gotta be Baba Yaga's hut. I know it in my bones!"

You sense it, too. Your mouth feels unnaturally dry, and your breath is coming in fast spurts. Alert for any

sign of attack, you scan the dripping woods and recall the quest that led you here. Turn to 186.



2

"I think we can manage by ourselves without help," you tell Ulimnashton. The strange creature seems a little too glib to you, and you'd rather avoid it.

The criosphinx blinks and wrinkles its goatlike nose in anger. "Is that so?" it sneers. "Well, suit yourself. You'll regret your decision when the hut's curse gets you in its grip, but that's too bad for you."

You turn to leave, motioning Mjolnir to follow. "Let's try our luck alone, Jole," you say confidently. "We've nothing to lose, and the Sage Beryl's just waiting for—"

"Jerrak! Watch out behind you!" Jole shouts.

You spin around, at the same time whipping Starlight in a wide arc. The criosphinx is attacking! It must have lied about the hut's curse to catch you off guard!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to 133. If it's 11 or less, subtract 8 hit points of damage as the creature uses its horns and clawed forepaws to rake your flesh. Then roll again as before, taking 8 more hit points of damage each time you fail to hit the beast, until one or the other of you wins—and one dies.

3

With a whispered last word to Mjolnir, you swim down through the air toward the red frog-man, or slaad, as it called itself. The slaad grins wickedly as you and Mjolnir approach, its razor-sharp claws extended and its sharklike teeth gleaming with sticky drool.

As soon as you touch the edge of the red mushroom, the slaad leaps toward you, its claws outstretched to slash at you. A mad light gleams in its eyes as it wades into the attack, as if it lived only for this one fight.

You need to strike the red slaad once in order to slay it. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **142**. If it is 11 or less, turn to **63**.

4

"Look, but don't touch. Touch, but don't look," the giant cat said. If the first warning applied to the statue, then the second must mean . . . Instantly you lower your eyes and charge the woman. For some reason you do not understand, you know you must not look at her.

You hear a violent, reptilian hissing from the woman's head. From the corner of your eye, just before you start to grapple with her, you see that her hair is writhing in an unnatural, almost snakelike, manner.

She's a medusa! you realize suddenly. You catch her around the waist and whirl her to the floor, knowing that if you look at her eyes, you'll turn to stone!

You feel the medusa kick your legs out from under you. As you fall, the creature rolls on top of you, slashing at your face and hair with razor-sharp fingernails. You instantly close your eyes and push her as hard as possible to keep her snaky locks away from you, remembering stories that the snakes atop a medusa's head are poisonous!

Roll one die and add the number to your strength skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **75**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **222**.

5

The moment the black aura makes contact with the hut's dancing legs, sparks burst through the aura. You

half expected that this wouldn't work, but it looks like it's going to!

Instantly the weird legs bend, folding up beneath the hut as it crumples to the ground. Within moments, the hut is still, and the black aura fades from Starlight's blade. The only door leading inside the hut faces you.

"Not bad, Jerrak," says Mjolnir after a moment's silence. "That were pretty good, makin' the hut sit down like that, but I've seen you do better before. I 'member last year, when you fought that ghost—"

"Forget the story, Jole. Let's get the Sage Beryl," you interrupt. You rub Starlight thankfully on the flat side of the blade, then step resolutely toward the hut's door. As you reach out to grab the door handle, you pray the witch isn't home. Maybe she's out for lunch. . . .

Turn to **161**.

6

Though you are in the middle of combat, you turn and run from the advancing elemental as fast as you can, hoping to make it to the door leading out before the creature catches you.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **160**. If it is 9 or less, turn to **209**.

7

You push the door to the treasure room open, eager to see what lies beyond. Mjolnir enters the room with you—and both of you stop dead in shock.

The chamber beyond the door is huge, perhaps five stories high, and well lighted. It is also filled with the most precious treasures imaginable, carelessly piled against the walls and across the floor. Platinum and silver coins mingle with gleaming gems and jewels; bejeweled crowns and scepters lie next to rune-carved

swords and armor; cups made from jade and obsidian are filled with adamantite chains, gold dust, and engraved rings of power.

The wealth of the mighty chamber is overpowering, almost beyond imagination. You feel weak and lean against a wall, overcome by the spectacle, scarcely even able to breathe.

It strikes you as odd, however, that the chamber also has a number of bones scattered among its wealth. Eyeless human skulls, long thighbones, and bony fingers that seem to be reaching toward you lie everywhere, but they do not frighten you. You are too preoccupied with the treasure.

With howls of delight, you and Mjolnir run amok, kicking jeweled orbs as if they were toy balls, swimming in seas of gold coins, lying on your backs to admire the beautiful workmanship of precious statuettes and arm-bands. You completely forget about the Sage Beryl and Baba Yaga. You care nothing for sunlight and friends—or food and drink.

For hours, you do nothing but cavort among the fabulous valuables in the room. Eventually you tire and fall asleep . . . and awaken to toy with the gold and gems around you all over again. Soon you fall asleep once more, then awaken again to run your hands through stacks of coins. The days rush on past, each more wonderful than the previous one.

Though in the back of your mind, you realize that you are growing weak from thirst and hunger, you play on among the treasures of the room, heedless of your onrushing doom. In the last moments of your life, as you weakly clutch a silver and gold crown to your bony chest with skeletal fingers, as the gleaming gems darken and disappear in your vision, you know that the treasure was cursed. The bones all about you are those of other fortune-seekers like you, whose lust for treasure sur-

passed their lust for life itself. Even though you realize Baba Yaga has won, you are strangely content as your eyes close—forever. ☒



8

The dining hall is interesting, but you've got other things to see. Finding an unlocked door at the back of the room, you motion Mjolnir to come away from the table and follow you. Opening the door a crack, you see a haze-filled room beyond. Arming yourself against possible attack, you step through the door, with Mjolnir right behind you. Turn to 117.

9

The fight with the greenhag is savage and deadly. The hag's long claws slash at you and Mjolnir, several times nearly ripping you open like a gutted deer. You dodge blow after blow in near panic, fighting just to stay alive.

Suddenly the greenhag steps back, makes an arcane gesture . . . and vanishes!

You blink, unsure of what you really saw. You carefully wave your sword in the direction where you last saw the hag, but nothing's there.

Mjolnir looks around uncertainly, frozen in the act of swinging his ax back over his shoulders to deliver a slashing blow. "Uh, Jerrak, do you think that ol' green lady is gone, or what?" he asks, wide-eyed.

As if in answer to his question, you feel something sharp rake the length of your back. Subtract 6 points of

damage from your hit point total.

You spin around and order Mjolnir to stand with his back against yours. "The greenhag's made herself invisible!" you tell your friend, gritting your teeth and fighting back the pain. "Keep circling your ax out in front of you to keep it away!"

You wave Starlight's black blade through the air before you in hopes of striking the monster by chance.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **164**. If it is less, you must deduct 6 hit points of damage caused by the greenhag's invisible attacks and roll again to hit. You cannot escape from this fight and must continue until either you or the greenhag is killed.

10

As you stand in the milky fog, trying vainly to wave it away with your free hand, you hear a sharp, shrill cry, followed by a tremendous thud. The fog quickly disperses as suddenly as it appeared.

There before you lies the twisted body of the annis. Standing over her, cleaning his ax off, is Mjolnir, whistling merrily.

"Wha—what happened?" you ask in astonishment.

"Th' cook done forgot 'bout me," he says, idly finishing polishing his ax, then shouldering it proudly. "I could see 'er a bit in the fog, 'cause dwarves like me got good eyes, an' I just walked up and finished th' ol' biddy off."

You shake your head and slap Mjolnir on the back. Searching the kitchen, you discover a doorway, which Mjolnir investigates for traps, and when he finds nothing, you open the door and walk on through. Turn to **126**.

11

You smile as Mjolnir walks over to the dwarven statue. Turning to investigate one of the paintings in

the hall, you hope to find some clue to the location of the Sage Beryl.

"Help!" Mjolnir yells suddenly. "It's got me!"

You spin around, pulling Starlight free of its scabbard. Your dwarven friend has been grabbed by the statue he was examining!

Without hesitation, you leap into the fray. The stony statue punches Mjolnir in the jaw, and he falls, unconscious, to the floor. Then the statue turns to meet your charge with unwavering calm as you swing Starlight at its head.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 7 or less, turn to 177. If it is 8 or more, roll one die and add the result to Starlight's anti-magical power score. If this second total is 8 or more, turn to 57; if it is 7 or less, you receive 5 hit points of damage as the dwarven statue strikes you. Then repeat the initial roll to try to hit the statue and proceed as before. You cannot run away from this fight. Continue until you are slain or instructed to turn to 177 or 57.

12

You struggle as hard as you can to kick free of the unrelenting grip on your ankle, but nothing seems to help. The need for a breath grows stronger and stronger, but the cold black water is all around you. In the last second before you open your mouth to scream, you wonder if Mjolnir will somehow be able to escape from the hut on his own. . . . ✚

13

You quickly discover that the animated broom fights better than some opponents you've fought—certainly better than any broom has a right to fight! You weave quickly, trying to dodge the broom's blows. You can scarcely believe this is really happening.



Finally you strike out with a sudden blow. Starlight clangs against the broom handle, and the sword begins to give off a dull, black radiance like a burst of oily smoke. Robbed of its magical powers, the broom clatters to the closet floor.

Mjolnir sets his ax on the ground and claps his hands together in applause. "Not bad, not bad!" he says gruffly. "A li'l slow, mebbe, but not bad."

"Why didn't you help fight it?" you sputter in exasperation.

"Don't need to now," the dwarf replies, picking up his ax. "I done got all my en'tertainment for th' day."

You start to form a cutting reply, but at that exact moment, a door opens on the opposite wall. Instantly a wind of hurricane force blasts through the closet, sending dust, utensils, mops, brooms, and buckets spinning through the air in a whirlwind.

Taken completely off guard, you and Mjolnir are swept up in the titanic force of the blast, and the wind hurls you and your dwarven friend through the open door like two leaves in a storm. Turn to 123.

14

You slam into the door, involuntarily crying out in pain as your body smashes into it. With a loud splintering of timber, the door pops open, almost sending you stumbling down the hall beyond it into the cascading waters.

A few minutes later, having reached higher ground farther up the hall, Mjolnir takes a deep breath and screws up his face.

"Jerrak," he says seriously, "it's against my better nature t' forgive you for knocking me down, but since you broke th' door down and we ain't drowned, I may as well forgive you this time. Just don't be rude t' me like that no more!"

You make the promise, feeling both ashamed of yourself and glad at the same time. Then, starting off once more, you and Mjolnir proceed up the hall toward a door you see at the far end. The door proves to be safe, and the two of you pass through it into an area of great brightness. Turn to **149**.



15

You run as hard as you can, but you know it isn't fast enough. Suddenly something enormous slams into your back, flattening you painfully against the filthy swamp ground.

Roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total.

Through waves of sheer agony, you hear Mjolnir curse and the gargoyle laugh in response.

"Right on target!" cries the gargoyle from far overhead. "Perhaps that will teach you to cool your temper!"

With an evil laugh, the gargoyle flies off over the mistenshrouded treetops. Mjolnir rushes over to pull the tree limb off your back, then checks you for broken bones. Discovering none, he mutters, "You're just gonna be one big bruise, Jerrak—one big, ugly, hurtful, awful bruise. Sure glad I ain't in your boots!"

You resist the urge to hit your friend as you sit up to rest before getting to your feet. Once you do, you glance at the hut and see that it's sitting on the ground again! The chicken legs are gone!

"At least now we won't have to worry about how to get inside anymore," you mutter, gritting your teeth against the pain. Hefting your sword, you limp forward

until you reach the hut's lone door, which stands ajar. Mjolnir is right behind you as you reach for the door-knob. Turn to 161.

16

You stretch your legs for a moment, anticipating the mad dash to the staircase. Then you grin at Mjolnir. "Feel like having a race?" you ask.

The dwarf looks doubtfully at the hungry flowers. "I ain't much good as a runner," he says dubiously, "but if you wanna try it, let's go!"

Readying yourself, you shout to Mjolnir and leap out of the alcove over the tops of the nearest flowers. When your feet hit the ground, you're at a dead run. Almost immediately, you feel dozens of fanged plants attack your boots, tearing at the leather in their ferocity.

Roll two dice and subtract that many hit points of damage.

You hear Mjolnir's cries of pain from behind you as he stumbles through the monstrous garden. "Jerrak!" he roars. "I—I ain't gonna make it! Them vines have got me by th'—"

The dwarf's voice cuts off abruptly, and you hear him fall. You instantly turn and head back in the direction you came, finally finding Mjolnir about halfway back, struggling on his knees against a horde of the deadly flowers, unable even to raise his ax to cut them away. You grab Mjolnir's arm to drag him away from the flowers and head for the stairs.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 192. If it is 6 or less, turn to 122.

17

Slowly you walk toward the center of the room to examine the large red X painted on the floor. "What do

you make of this, Jole?" you ask as you kneel beside it. "Do you see any traps?"

The dwarf bends down to examine the strange mark. Suddenly he freezes. "Oops!" he says softly.

Mjolnir never says that unless . . . You leap to your feet and try to get away from the center of the floor, but it's too late! The floor opens up beneath your feet, and both you and Mjolnir drop, screaming, down a tremendously long, black tunnel. Turn to 67.

18

You grab the Sage Beryl in your hand—and suddenly find yourself completely unable to move. You can't even blink or call out for help, yet your mind seems to be working normally and you feel no other distress.

"Well, well, well," whispers a ghastly voice inside your mind. "Someone has tried to get the Sage Beryl, but he hasn't used good manners to do it, and he's been entirely too eager to steal things and slay my lovely pets along the way. Perhaps he might do better if he had to do it all over again. . . ."

Suddenly you feel very peculiar, as if time itself were reversing. You and Mjolnir race backward at a frightening speed through your entire adventure, all the way back to the point where you first saw Baba Yaga's hut.

Reduce your experience points to 0; Baba Yaga has stolen all of your memories in order to make your fight more interesting. However, you may start out with 6 judgment points. Keep the same ability scores for your strength, observation, and fighting skills that you now have. Starlight's antimagic score and Mjolnir's stealth score also remain the same. Then turn to 1.

19

Seeing no signs of life near the cave, you continue through the muck and slime-covered vegetation until

you reach the entrance. Water drips from the moss over the entry, and the splashes echo through the cavern.

"Everythin' all right, Jerrak?" Mjolnir's voice calls in the distance.

"Fine so far," you call back in relief.

Suddenly a violent hiss off to your left shatters your confidence. You turn in time to see a snaky black neck, covered with glistening wet scales, rise from the undergrowth some thirty feet away. A flat, black reptilian head with two cold, white eyes opens its fanged mouth wide and stares in your direction.

"A black dragon!" you shout in fear. You dodge to one side with all your speed as the dragon exhales with a sound like a geyser. A blast of smoking fluid gushes from its mouth. The dragon's breathing acid at you!

Roll one die and add the number to your strength skill score. If the total is 7 or more, deduct 8 hit points of damage from your total because of the acid jet the dragon breathed at you. If the total is 6 or less, subtract 16 hit points of damage because you could not dodge the acid quickly enough. Then turn to **62**.

20

Mjolnir swings his ax mightily at the goblin's smiling head—and the goblin explodes!

It was a dummy goblin! The thought whirls through your mind as the force of the powdery blast hurls Mjolnir back against you. You try to brace yourself as he slams into you, afraid he will knock you both back down the stairs.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **60**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **32**.

21

With a loud crash and splintering of wood, the door breaks under the combined force of your blow. Shoving

the splinters of wood aside, you both stagger out into a long corridor on the other side and look back, fearful of seeing the elemental following you through the ruined door.

To your astonishment, the elemental has vanished! The room you just left is now completely empty!

"I done give up tryin' t' figger this dang place out!" Mjolnir grunts, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his sleeve. "Let's jus' pretend this was all a bad dream."

"I'm wondering if it is a dream," you reply. You know what just occurred had to be real—particularly since your shoulder hurts as much as it does—but wandering around in this hut has been very confusing!

Shaking your head to clear away the cobwebs, you and Mjolnir proceed up the hall toward a door at the far end. The door proves to be safe, and the two of you pass through it into an area of great brightness.

Turn to 149.



22

It looks silly to step on the tapestry, but you put out your foot and step down. Before you even have time to think about it, the scene in the tapestry seems to rise up toward you, and then—

—you find yourself at the edge of a stagnant, scum-choked lake. A dim, twilight sky, devoid of sun and cloud, stretches above you. Around you is a dark willow forest, its tangled branches blocking your view of the shore nearby after only a few dozen yards.

You feel a movement at your feet and look down. A tapestry showing a scene of a darkened attic lies on the ground at your feet. As you watch, the woven figure of a dwarf holding an ax steps toward you and emerges out of the tapestry. A moment later, Mjolnir is at your side. Immediately the tapestry vanishes!

The dwarf seems shaken, but he still seems to have his courage. He looks around and grips his ax tightly with both hands until his knuckles turn white.

"Let's explore around the edge of the lake," you manage to say, feeling rather shaky yourself. You have difficulty believing the incredible magic that you've seen in this madhouse of a witch's hut.

Mjolnir says nothing, but he follows you as you approach the lake. Nothing seems to be moving anywhere, though somehow you begin to feel that you are being watched.

Roll one die and add the result to your observation skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **150**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **34**.

23

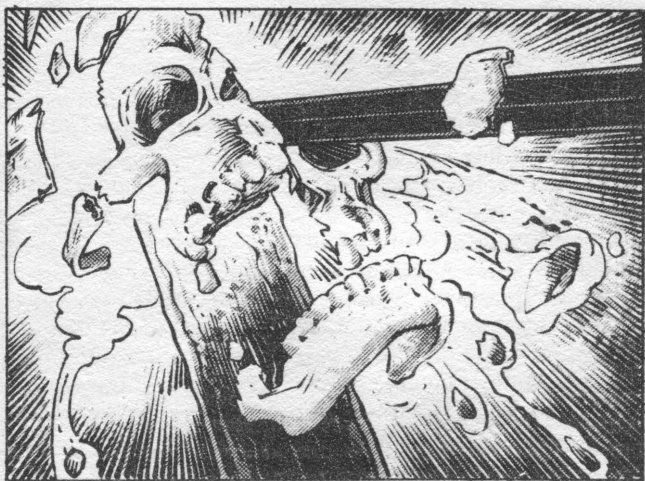
You sigh and smile at the balding dwarf. "All right, Jole, go ahead and keep the goblet. If we get out of here alive, maybe you can show it to your grandchildren." You turn away to examine the rest of the room.

Finding an unlocked door at the back of the room, you motion Mjolnir to follow you through it. Opening the door a crack, you see a haze-filled room beyond. Arming yourselves against possible attack, you step through the door, with Mjolnir right behind you. Turn to **117**.

24

You turn and run from the advancing elemental as fast as you can, hoping to make it to the door leading out before the creature catches you.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **160**. If it is 7 or less, you fail to escape, and you must fight the elemental for at least one round of combat. Turn to **104**.



25

With the second blow of your black-bladed sword, the fiery skull shatters into dozens of bone fragments and splinters, the pieces hissing as they strike the swampy waters around the post.

You stare at the remains of the skull, then you feel a tug at your sleeve. You jerk back nervously with Starlight raised to strike, but it's only Mjolnir.

"Jerrak," the dwarf says solemnly, "that were a mighty fine piece o' fightin', but we got ourselves toasted good for it. You look worse off than me, though."

You snort, carefully putting your sword aside to dress your burns. "That's because I'm taller and make a better target," you tell him, grinning weakly.

Mjolnir smiles and goes about tending to his own inju-

ries. "I always knew there was somethin' 'bout being short that I liked," he says in a low voice. "It kinda keeps me out o' th' line o' fire, so t' speak."

The comment brings a smile to your face. "Now that we've disposed of the guardian," you say to him, "let's go find that gem!"

"I just hope we ain't got no more s'prises in store for us," the dwarven thief mutters as he shoulders his ax. "My heart couldn't take too many like that fire-spittin' skull in one day." Turn to 103.

26

Your descent has brought you into a new area. At first the huge, well-lighted chamber appears to be a store-room. It's filled with suits of armor on racks and weapons mounted on walls and floorstands. Large, strange machines stand on a low, raised area in the middle of the floor. You suddenly realize that this is a museum.

"A museum?" Mjolnir mutters after you tell him. "What's a witch need a museum for?"

"Maybe these are trophies of her conquests," you suggest, examining a particularly interesting suit of plate armor. Any one of these remarkable suits should have been enough to protect the wearer from almost any monster—but not Baba Yaga's magic.

"What's this dang thing, Jerrak?" Mjolnir calls. You look away from the suit of armor you are examining and see your companion standing next to an enormous armored figure that towers at least twelve feet tall.

Roll one die and add the result to your observation skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 218. If it is 6 or less, turn to 207.

27

You stare at the door, then look down once more at the frightened gnome you are holding. Carefully setting the

gnome back down on the floor, you take a deep breath and count to ten.

"If you're lying, I'll find you sooner or later and make you pay for it!" you tell him sternly. "Now, get out of here before I change my mind!"

"Y-Y-Yessir!" cries the gnome, bowing hastily before it flees through the door through which you entered the room in such a peculiar manner. You suspect that you must have actually walked into the room under the illusion's effects, and you shake your head.

"We shoulda bashed that varmint!" Mjolnir grumbles unhappily. "Woulda done me a world o' good, squashin' the little runt."

"We didn't come here to beat up on gnomes," you say shortly. "We came here to get the Sage Beryl, and that's what we're going to do right now. Let's just hope he was telling the truth."

The two of you head for the door on the other side of the room. Despite his tough talk, Mjolnir appears relieved that the gnome wasn't harmed. Dwarves and gnomes are traditionally friends—regardless of problems like this one.

Keeping a tight grip on your sword, you open the door and step through into the lighted chamber beyond.

Turn to 149.

28

Mjolnir reaches out toward a glass case filled with sparkling rings. Quickly you catch his arm.

"After all we've been through here," you say evenly, "do you think that Baba Yaga would leave all these riches undefended? Use your head, Jole!"

Mjolnir hesitates, then bites his lower lip. "You don't s'pose the ole witch'd miss just one bitty ring, do you?"

"What do you think?" you say in exasperation. "The ring would probably rot your arm off or turn you into a

radish or something. Forget it! Let's go!"

Mjolnir sighs and nods in grudging agreement, and once more you set off in search of the Sage Beryl. Turn to 127.

29

"There's no reason to fight. I don't have any quarrel with you," you tell the silver-striped cat. "We'll take the—" you glance up at the ceiling and spot a trapdoor—"the attic."

"It really doesn't matter which way you go," says Murmur telepathically. "All places can be reached from anywhere in Baba Yaga's hut. The attic will be just fine. Get the ladder behind the stove. Enjoy yourselves!"

You look carefully behind the stove and discover a rickety ladder, partially buried under a pile of bones that look disturbingly like human ones. You and Mjolnir prop the ladder up as Murmur drifts back to sleep.

Turn to 135.

30

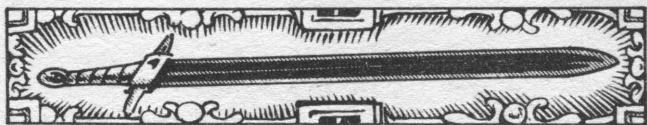
Mjolnir continues to search frantically for a way out as you probe the steps ahead of you with the tip of your sword, searching for the slithering horror that seems to be coming closer with each passing second. The echo of its movements sends a deathly chill through you. Whatever fate the creature brings, it won't be pleasant.

"I found it, Jerrak!" Mjolnir shouts out from behind you. "I found a secret door! Let's get—"

Something makes a slurping, scraping noise in the darkness right in front of you. You seize Starlight in both hands and slash down at the unseen monster.

Your blow cuts into something soft as it oozes down the stairs. It's right before you—and you have but one chance to kill it! You draw back with all your strength and stab at the unseen monster.

Roll two dice and add the number to your fighting skill score. If the total is 11 or more, turn to **115**. If it is 10 or less, turn to **159**. Remember, you may add experience points to your roll if you wish.



31

"It looks safe to me," you tell Mjolnir in relief. "Let's go."

You set off across the colorful flower beds confidently—a confidence that instantly vanishes. Seconds later, the innocent-looking flowers around you are suddenly transformed into deadly creatures with fanged jaws! Dozens of them sway about your feet, biting through the leather of your boots in moments.

You cry in pain, kicking out at the horrifying little creatures in abject panic. The pain is almost overwhelming, but somehow you and Mjolnir manage to make your way back to the alcove.

Roll two dice and subtract the result from your hit point total.

You and your dwarven companion collapse in the safety of the alcove, gasping for breath and aching from the many cuts and bites that you suffered in the attack. Finally Mjolnir pushes himself up to a sitting position and looks back at the seemingly tranquil sea of blossoms in astonishment.

"Ya know, Jerrak," he says. "I knowed that Baba Yaga was bad, but I ain't never seen a witch what was so bad that even her *flowers* would try t' bite my face off! This hut is just plain wicked!"

"We've got to get to that staircase somehow, Jole," you

mutter as you get up. "Maybe we could just make a run for the staircase and hope we can make it before they can drag us down."

"Hmph!" the dwarven thief snorts. "I'm all for whackin' 'em into daisy juice with my ax. I ain't much good at runnin'."

If you decide to try to run through the flower bed for the stairwell, turn to **16**. If you prefer to attack the flowers with your weapons, turn to **59**.

32

Unable to stop yourself, you tumble backward down the stairs, dropping Starlight and trying in vain to halt your crazy descent. Mjolnir crashes down with you.

Roll two dice and subtract the result from your hit point total.

To make things worse, you suddenly feel part of the staircase give way beneath you! Mjolnir has enough time to gasp, "Trap!" before you both find yourselves falling through the stairs into a seemingly endless black shaft!

If you have the escape device that you got from the giant mouse and choose to use it now, turn to **148**. Otherwise, turn to **67**.

33

The door holds, despite your best attempts to break it down. Now you discover that you are up to your waist in rushing water, and more is pouring in by the second!

"Mjolnir!" you scream over the roar of the water. "Mjolnir, get us out of here!"

"I can't, Jerrak! I can barely keep my head 'bove water!" Mjolnir shouts, near panic, straining to keep from drowning. "Besides, you mangy mongrel, you knocked my tools outta my hand, an' I can't find 'em!"

You turn and try to throw yourself against the locked

door again, but the water is too deep now for you to get any power behind your efforts. The evidence is staring you right in the face. You've come to the end of your adventure—and the Sage Beryl is still in Baba Yaga's possession. ✕

34

You still can't shake the feeling of being watched, but nothing dangerous appears. Stepping close to the edge of the algae-choked lake, you kick a small pebble into the water. It vanishes with a small *plop*.

"I have no idea how Baba Yaga got an entire lake into her hut," you mutter nervously, "but it looks harmless enough. Let's look around for some way to get out of this place—I don't think we'll ever find the Sage Beryl here."

Mjolnir nods silently and turns to leave. You start after him.

A splash sounds behind you. As you turn, something enormously strong grabs your ankle, whipping your feet out from under you and sending Starlight flying from your grasp. You feel yourself being pulled into the lake before you think to cry out. The shock of the cold water stuns you as the frigid waters close over your head, and you are dragged down into endless darkness, out of reach of air. You fight against the strong grip on your ankle with all your might, knowing you must escape soon or drown!

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **220**. If it is less, turn to **12**.

35

You stare at the room that you and Mjolnir find yourselves in. The room is only about six feet square and is filled with mops, brooms, and buckets. You're in a cleaning closet!

"Danged craziest place I've ever seen!" Mjolnir says. "We go from one wild thing to another—now it's a closet."

"It could have been something much worse," you say, reaching out for a broom to inspect it. "At least Baba Yaga keeps a clean hut. She's got . . . What the—!"

The broom begins to vibrate as soon as you touch it, coming to life right in your hand. Jerking free from your grasp, the broom lifts from the floor and hovers for a moment in midair right before you!

"What's it up to, Jerrak?" whispers Mjolnir, nervously hefting his battle-ax.

You draw Starlight from its scabbard, unsure of what to do next. The broom suddenly begins to vibrate violently once more, then swings at you, missing your head by a hair!

You can either elect to attack the broom with your sword or try to grapple with it with your hands. If you decide to use your sword, turn to **219**. If you choose to grapple with it, turn to **132**.

36

You recall Murmur's words: "What you see is wrong. Look, but don't touch."

"Jole, wait!" you call out. The dwarf stops and looks at you curiously as you remind him of Murmur's warning.

"You think that cat was tryin' t' warn us about these here statues?" he asks at last. "I never thought you was one t' take advice from a pussycat, Jerrak. What're these dang statues s'posed t' do—bite us?"

At that moment, a pleasant feminine voice drifts down the hallway. "The statues belong to me."

You and Mjolnir turn to see a door opening at the far end of the corridor. In the darkness beyond stands a woman, her face and shoulders in shadow. "I carved those statues myself," the woman continues. "It was

very time-consuming. Don't touch them, please."

"Madam," you call out, "we are adventurers seeking a stolen green gemstone called the Sage Beryl. Have you seen it?"

"It sounds vaguely familiar," the woman replies. "It may be in the museum, which lies some distance beyond my own chamber here. You may pass and look for it if you like, but you must travel in darkness through my room, and you must never look directly at me."

You don't trust the woman, but you agree nevertheless. With Mjolnir at your side, you approach the door at the end of the hall. The woman retreats into the darkness of the room ahead of you, never showing herself fully.

"I don't trust nobody in this crazy hut," Mjolnir grumbles. "I don't unnerstan' 'em, either. Was she afraid I was gonna mess up her statues?"

"Just do as she says, Mjolnir," you whisper. "We have to find the Sage Beryl as soon as possible to free my grandfather."

When you reach the door and look beyond, you can make out the faint outline of the woman inside. As you approach her, she offers you her hand. Mjolnir follows behind you.

The second you touch the woman's hand, you almost jerk your hand away. Her hand feels deathly cold, like a corpse's, but you say nothing. Instead you force yourself to accept it. She leads you down a twisting path through the darkness of her room. Finally she comes to a stop. "We're at the doorway now," she says. "The museum lies on the other side. You may go."

You reach forward and locate a doorknob. As you pull it open, bright light floods the room from the chamber beyond.

If you leave the room at once, turn to **126**. If you turn to see who the woman is, turn to **45**.

37

You rush the monster with your sword drawn, hoping to strike it before it finishes casting its spell.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 11 or less, turn to **65**. If it is 12 or more, turn to **61**.

38

Starlight flickers darkly for a moment in the corner of your vision, but its power is not enough. You feel your control slipping away from you, slipping into those orange, flaming—

—*friendly* eyes. Suddenly you feel good about being so close to your friend. Although he looks a bit unusual, he's a good being. You trust him. You feel you always have.

"GOOD!" says the creature, seeing your calm expression, and it releases you. "WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO. PICK UP THE DWARF AND FOLLOW ME!"

You quickly obey, letting the goblin-creature take Starlight from you. Lifting the unconscious form of Mjolnir to your shoulders, you follow the creature through the door, beyond the sight of all other mortals, to be the slave of a murderous barghest—and, eventually, its dinner. ✕

39

Sheathing your sword, you grab the broom by the handle and try to wrestle it to the floor. The broom proves to be much quicker and stronger than you'd imagined possible, however, and it starts to pull you into the air!

"Mjolnir!" you shout. "Grab my legs and help me pull this thing down!"

"Okay!" Mjolnir calls from below. A moment later, you feel him grab your legs and tug hard, but to no avail. The broom is lifting you higher and higher off the floor.



Suddenly Mjolnir grunts. "That dang broom's done pulled us both off the floor! Do somethin' to it, Jerrak!"

Before you can reply, the broom zooms straight toward one of the walls. Suddenly a door opens in the wall and the broom flies through, moving as fast as a man can run. You don't know whether to hold on to the broom or let go, but in seconds it's moving so fast that you don't dare release your grip.

Around and around you zoom, through hallways, corridors, closets, and rooms of every size and description. As the broom goes through a last door, it starts to slow. Abruptly the broom jerks to a stop, flinging you and Mjolnir away to sprawl painfully and dizzily on the floor.

Groggy, you see your sword lying only a foot away from your head, and you reach for it as you start to get up. But someone puts a foot on the blade, pinning it to the floor.

"Welcome to my hut," a voice from above you says. The voice is that of an old woman, devoid of mercy and warmth and cracked with great age. It chills you to the bone. Turn to 166.

40

Despite your frantic efforts, the criosphinx's mane slips through your fingers. With a wild cry, you fall head over heels, unable to stop yourself, the world spinning dizzily. The last thing you are aware of is landing in a pool of shallow, stagnant water. . . .

Some long time later, you blink your eyes and awaken. A blurred, wrinkled face peers at you with a worried expression.

"Jerrak?" cries Mjolnir. "Jerrak, are you gonna make it, boy? Talk to me, son!"

You try to sit up, but the pain is too great. Your entire body feels as if it has been smashed into pieces. Deduct all of your remaining hit points except 1.

"The—the crio . . ." you gasp painfully.

"It's gone," Mjolnir says. "An' before it went, it picked up your sword in its mouth an' flew off with it. Somehow it must have knowed your sword was magical, an' it set us up t' steal it! By the First Father of the Dwarves, I hate them crio-finks!"

Your sword's gone, you're in so much pain you can hardly move, and you're deep in one of the most dismal swamps in the world—right outside the hut of the cruellest, most powerful witch in existence! You struggle to your feet and decide to escape this swamp while you still can. If you can get out of here alive, you'll come back to the hut another day.

But you know it's a long way home, especially without a weapon. . . . ✕



41

Starlight's antimagical power glows as it activates—but nothing changes! The creature must be real!

As you are thrust into the reptilian monster's gaping mouth, you scream in terror. The world swiftly and mercifully goes black as the creature's titanic fangs sink into your flesh. . . .

Some time later, you blink your eyes groggily. Where are you? You seem to be lying on a floor. Turning your head, you see Mjolnir beside you, one arm thrown across his face as if to block out some horrifying sight.

You sit bolt upright, suddenly remembering the enormous reptilian beast. Instead of being in its stomach,

you find yourself in a small room with a bright lantern on a table near you. You stagger to your feet, finding your sword and Mjolnir's ax on the tabletop, along with the following note.

Sorry to have caused you any distress. You have been the subject of a new illusion spell, one designed to produce great terror. The spell seems to work very well, and your assistance as a test subject was greatly appreciated. Thank you!

The creature *was* an illusion! Though you feel relieved, you wish you could get your hands on whoever cast that spell. Mjolnir offers similar sentiments when you awaken him. At least nothing was stolen from you.

Aside from the door through which you entered the room, you see only one more door, a small wooden one against the opposite wall. After Mjolnir checks it carefully for traps, you proceed on through the door into the brightly lit room on the other side.

Turn to 149.

42

You fight desperately, swinging your enchanted blade at the jet-black dragon over and over again, but the dragon is faster than you could ever have imagined for such a large creature. You stagger backward as the dragon's whiplike tail slaps a wave of foul water in your face. Suddenly you trip over a fallen log. Before you know what's happening, you fall and drop Starlight.

In a panic, you dodge as the dragon's flat, snaky head snaps at the air where you lay on the ground only moments earlier. Scrambling to your feet, you reach for your fallen sword blade just as the dragon's jaws slam shut on your midsection, its cold, sharp teeth tearing through armor, skin, and muscle as if you were a tiny

morsel of food. The pain is overwhelming as the world fades in a haze of agony and darkness. . . .

Turn to **223**.

43

The flash of the exploding lightning ball blinds you for several seconds. As you quickly rub your eyes to try to see where the gray slaad is, you hear Mjolnir cry out in pain, followed by the gray monster's throaty call of triumph.

You blink and hurry forward, Starlight held ready. You find the slaad advancing on Mjolnir, who is obviously in great pain and cradling one arm.

Subtract 2 points from Mjolnir's stealth skill score for the rest of this adventure, with the exception that his score may not go below 1.

With a shout, you catch the slaad's attention, and it attacks you at the same time as you attack it.

Turn to **157**.

44

The first thing you notice about the room you've entered is a huge yellow-glass chandelier hanging from the center of the ceiling. A bright light radiates from it, revealing a long dining table covered in rich cloth. Numerous chairs line the sides of the table.

"Look's like we're late for dinner," Mjolnir observes.

You walk slowly around the table, noting the fine tapestries on the walls and the low, crackling fire on the side wall. It looks like the dining hall of a king, not a witch. Huge goblets, seemingly carved from single, enormous gemstones, rest on the table before each empty, thronelike chair.

Roll one die and add the result to Mjolnir's stealth skill score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **138**. If it is 7 or less, turn to **8**.

On impulse, you turn around to look at the woman who has led you and Mjolnir through the darkened room. You can think of no reason why she shouldn't want to be seen, and she's been helpful so far. . . .

The bright light streaming through the open door causes the woman to blink. Your heart leaps into your throat as you see snakes hanging from the woman's head instead of hair! The writhing serpents open their mouths wide, revealing needle-sharp fangs.

You are too shocked to shout, "Medusa!" and warn Mjolnir of the danger. The woman's red-rimmed eyes catch yours . . . and you know you have looked too long.

"Fool!" screams the medusa angrily as a blinding pain stabs your eyes. Your skin and muscles grow heavy, then harden, and you feel yourself begin to turn into solid stone. . . . ☿

Desperately your fingers grip the wooden beam on the spinning hut's rooftop, and you hang on with all your might. After several dizzying, terrifying moments, your feet find solid footing, and you crawl across the roof to the trapdoor. You try to ignore the landscape as it continues to whirl in your mind, your stomach churning.

"Not bad," Mjolnir calls from above as you reach the trapdoor. "I coulda prob'ly done better, but I didn't wanna make you look bad. Here, catch!"

The dwarf tosses one end of a rope down to you. You notice that he's tied the other end to his tree limb. You quickly tie your end of the rope to the chimney near the trapdoor. Mjolnir then slides down the rope to the roof with ease.

Once beside you on the roof, he cuts the rope with one swing of his ax. "That'll keep it from gettin' wound 'round the chimney," he explains, seemingly unaffected

by the hut's dizzying spin. He crouches down and looks at you closely. "You sick or somethin', Jerrak?"

"No—I'm fine," you lie, still clinging to the roof in desperation. "Let's hurry up and get inside!"

"Hmph," the dwarf grumbles as he checks the trapdoor and pulls it open. You enter first and climb down the ladder below it, weak-kneed and wet with sweat.

Surprisingly, the room you've entered has no sense of the dizzying spinning motion you felt on the roof. Beginning to feel much better already, you draw Starlight and look around as Mjolnir climbs down beside you.

Turn to 26.

47

Starlight's blade radiates its familiar black aura of antimagical power as it charges with energy. The black aura engulfs the excited frog. A loud popping noise startles you, and you let the frog go.

An instant later, a heavy dwarf lands on your foot. "Ouch!" you roar as you drop Starlight and grab your injured foot. Mjolnir picks himself off the floor.

"I ain't never gonna touch another stinkin' thing in this place ag'in, even if my life depends on it!" Mjolnir shouts. "An' another thing—you almost scared me outta my green skin with that sword o' yours! I thought you was gonna skin me!"

When the angry dwarf calms down, you start off in search of the Sage Beryl. Turn to 127.



As you try to get away from the fiery skull, it shoots one last jet of searing flame at your back. The flames do 4 hit points of damage to you before you can get out of range.

As you and Mjolnir rest some distance away from the grinning, yellow-eyed guardian, you hear someone behind you murmur, "Tsk, tsk!". You turn, Starlight raised in your burned hands.

"Whoa, there!" says the bizarre figure that meets your eyes. "Watch out with that sword! I'm a friend—or at least I could be."

The large creature facing you is sitting on a fallen tree trunk. It has the head of a ram, with bright brown eyes and two curved, sharp-tipped horns. The creature's body is that of a golden lion, with two enormous eagle's wings folded along its sides.

You stare at the beast for several seconds in astonishment. You've never seen anything like this particular creature! "Who—who are you?" you ask as you glimpse Mjolnir loosening up his ax-throwing arm.

"I said I'm a friend," says the creature. "You may call me Ulimnashton. I'm a criosphinx, in case you've never seen one before, which you obviously haven't."

"I'm Jerrak," you say cautiously. "A human, in case you haven't seen one before. What do you want?"

Ulimnashton's wings unfurl languidly and fan the stagnant air. The stench of the swamp doesn't seem to bother the creature at all. "Your goal is to get into that hut over there—correct?" the creature asks. When you nod, it continues. "The only entry into the hut is through a trapdoor on the roof. I could carry you up there on my back—for a price."

"Why can't we just walk over an' try the front door?" Mjolnir asks suspiciously. "Or how come we couldn't just climb up on the roof by ourselves?"

"The hut is protected by spells and wards," Ulim-nashton replies easily. "Nasty little magical traps that cause your bones to dissolve into jelly if you come within seven paces of the hut in any direction—except from above. I've seen it happen many times before." The criosphinx shivers. "Ugly mess, to be sure."

You think carefully, weighing your decision. If you decide to take the criosphinx's offer to fly you to the hut's roof, turn to 184. If you refuse the strange creature's offer, turn to 2.

49

If you possessed the magical escape device given to you by the giant mouse prior to entering this room, you now discover that the device is missing, probably lost at some point in the last conflict. Turn to 126.



50

As you grab desperately for the winged creature's thrashing tail, the stingerlike tip slips through your fingers and stabs you painfully in the shoulder. You roll away from it with a shout of pain and anger.

"Ouch! You miserable little—" You stop just as you are preparing to utter a long string of curses. Your shoulder has suddenly gone numb, and a strange, burning sensation pulses through your chest and arms. Poison!

Desperately you try to call out to Mjolnir, who is still wrestling with the creature, but your lungs don't seem

to be working right. The scene before you begins to swim in your vision, and you drop weakly to your knees.

I've got to get up! you think, trying to fight off the effects of the poison. *I've got to get up and help Mjolnir!* But the world is spinning much too fast, and suddenly everything goes black. . . . ✖

51

For several moments, you are too stunned to sort out what is happening. You hear someone yelling at you faintly. Moments later, strong hands help you to your feet and hand you your sword. You groan with pain as you straighten up. Every bone in your body hurts, and you have a massive headache.

"I don't think that way is gonna work, Jerrak," Mjolnir advises you in a shaky voice. "That hut's got more tricks up its sleeve than an orc's got fleas."

"Fools!" mutters a coarse voice a short distance away. "Simply ask the hut to let you go inside. It understands all languages."

Taken by surprise, you turn to see a large manlike creature sitting on a stump about fifty feet away. Gray scales glisten on its hide, and two great, leathery wings protrude from its back, fanning the mist.

"A gargoyle!" Mjolnir growls, his hand tightening on his wooden ax handle. "Never did care for th' stinkin', bloodthirsty things!"

You recover your composure quickly. You don't care for the inhuman gargoyles, either, but it might be worth talking to the monster to find out what it knows. If you think so, turn to 77. If you decide to attack the gargoyle, turn to 216.

52

You grab the Sage Beryl in your hand—and an old, familiar voice cries, "Jerrak! Jerrak!"

“Nicodamus!” you shout, delirious with joy. “Finally I’ve found you!”

“Is that th’ green gemstone a-talkin’, or what?” Mjolnir asks in surprise. You hastily introduce the dwarf to the unseen mage hidden inside the gem.

“Jerrak, you shouldn’t have come after me in Baba Yaga’s hut!” Nicodamus says in excited tones. “You’ve put yourself in grave danger!”

“I had to do it,” you tell him hurriedly. “The witch destroyed grandfather’s mansion and ate everyone there. I *had* to get you back, at least!”

“I have some news for you concerning that,” Nicodamus says, “but first you’ve got to get out of here. If Baba Yaga catches you—”

Another voice interrupts the conversation—a sharp voice, striking as chill as winter’s wind. “I just might let you go. . . .” Turn to 85.

53

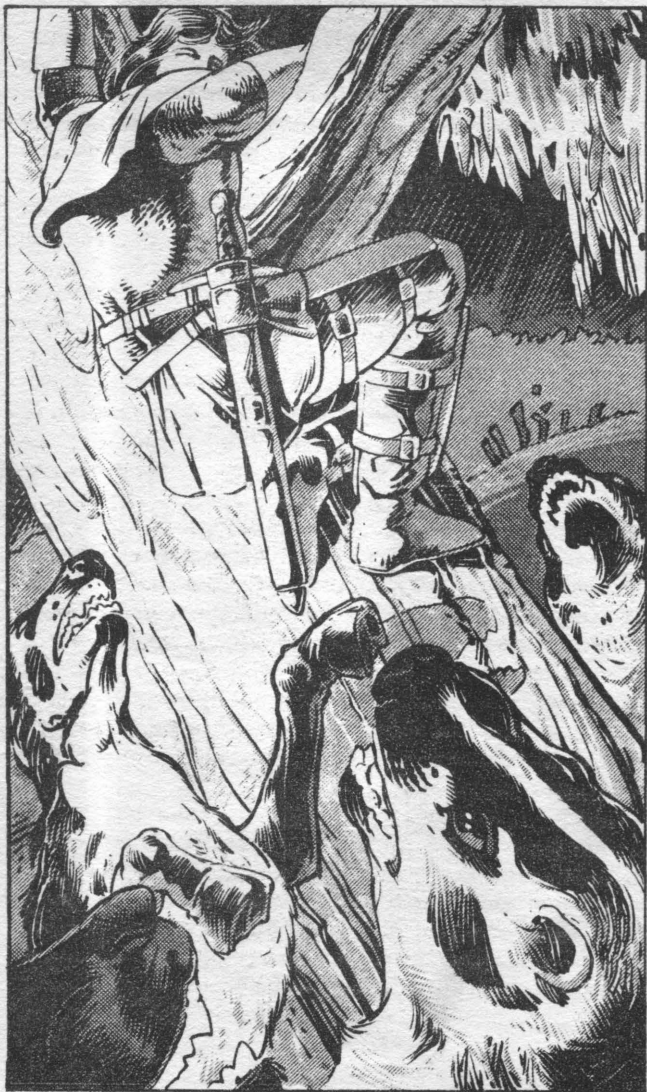
It’s not always wise to fight. You are still weary from the battle with the greenhag, and you seem to be no nearer the Sage Beryl than before. Besides, you don’t like the way the unseen creature in the willow forest is echoing your voice. It’s too eerie.

You motion to Mjolnir. “Get yourself up that tree, fast!” you tell him. “I’ll be right behind you!”

You hear the dwarf scramble off. “Ain’t nobody got to tell this dwarf twice!” he mumbles as he climbs into the tree’s branches, heading for the top.

Pausing only a brief moment to take a last look around, you follow him up the tree trunk. Sheathing Starlight, you grasp the branches and climb as rapidly as you can. You hear strange noises now, more echoes of your own voice and Mjolnir’s as they come closer and closer through the trees.

You are about fifteen feet off the ground when several



large, dark creatures break through the trees and hurl themselves up at your feet, missing your boots by scant inches. You've never seen such ugly creatures in your life. They have the heads of carnivorous mammals and sleek, disgusting bodies like starving greyhounds.

"Them are leucrottas," Mjolnir calls down from above. "I seen 'em once years ago. Uglier than sin. They can make their voices soun' like things they hear to draw their prey to 'em."

"... to draw their prey to 'em ..." the creatures call back as they continue to leap high into the air to snap at your feet. You hurry to climb higher.

"Jole," you call, "there's nowhere to go now but up. Care to see what's at the top of this tree? The footing looks good for some distance above us."

Mjolnir eyes the limbs above, then looks down at you. "We may as well. We ain't doin' nothin' useful here."

You climb for many long minutes, the ground falling away below you. Soon you can't see the lake or the other trees through the heavy foliage beneath you. A dim, purple-gray fog fills the night air, weaving through the branches of the seemingly endless willow tree.

"Jerrak!" Mjolnir calls, hidden from your view in the branches above you. "There's a hole in th' trunk up here! I'm climbin' into a room of some kind!"

You hurry upward, eager to see what your dwarven friend has discovered. You hope the Sage Beryl is close at hand. Turn to 44.

54

Calling on your last ounce of strength, you wrestle the broom to the floor. But once you have it down, you're at a loss to know what to do with it.

"Why don'tcha use your sword on the blamed thing?" Mjolnir observes, standing cautiously off to one side with a firm grip on his ax.

“My sword? To chop it up?”

Mjolnir snorts, shaking his head vigorously. “No, you igner’nt doorknob! I meant use your sword on it to steal its magical powers! Use your brain, Jerrak!”

You shoot a glare at the dwarf and draw Starlight. Touching its black blade to the broom, you activate the sword’s powers. Moments later, the black aura from Starlight drains the broom of its magic, and the broom lies limp in your hands.

Setting the broom aside, you rise to your feet, at the same time as you spot a door on the opposite side of the room. You walk over next to it and hold your ear up to it to listen for any sound, but you hear nothing. Mjolnir can detect no evidence of a trap.

“Cross your fingers and hope we don’t run into any more surprises,” you say to Mjolnir and open the door.

At that exact moment, a hurricane wind blasts through the closet from behind you, whipping mops, utensils, dust, buckets, and brooms high into the air in a whirlwind. Taken completely off guard, you and Mjolnir are swept up by the titanic force of the wind and hurled through the open door like two leaves in a storm. Turn to 123.

55

The room you enter appears to be a wine cellar. A damp, musty odor assails your nose in the cool air. The walls of the darkened room are lined with old wooden barrels and racks full of dusty bottles of purple liquid. Mjolnir sniffs deeply, and a wide smile spreads out over his bearded face.

“Now, this is my kind of place!” he says heartily. “Baba Yaga may be a witch, but she sure knows how t’ stock her hut! Mebbe I’ll just open one of these bot—”

You catch him by the arm as he reaches for a nearby bottle on a rack. “We don’t have time for this, Mjolnir.

We're here to get the Sage Beryl, remember?"

"Oh, that dang beryl can wait a little longer," Mjolnir grumbles. "If you wanna leave, there's a stairway over there, goin' down. There's another one over on that wall, headin' up. As for me, I'll just stay here and sample the liquid goodies. You do what you wanna."

Something rustles against one of the wine barrels nearby and you look around, but you see no sign of any creature. Did you merely imagine the rustling sound? For some reason, you have the feeling you aren't alone in here with Mjolnir. If you decide to look around the room some more, turn to **203**. If you elect to go upstairs, turn to **162**. If you choose to go downstairs, turn to **136**.



56

As the distant chuckle fades, you motion to Mjolnir to walk across the room toward the door with you. "I don't know what Baba Yaga has planned," you say as you go, "but knowing her, the sooner we get out of this place, the bet— Ooof!"

Something enormously powerful strikes you in the back, sending you flying through the air to sprawl on the stone floor. All the air is gone from your lungs, and you can barely do more than roll over.

Roll three dice and subtract the total from your hit points.

Looking back, you see that a huge manlike figure, the color of dark earth, has arisen from the stone floor. Mjolnir turns and dodges as the figure tries to strike him but misses.

"It's an earth elemental!" shouts Mjolnir, hurrying out of its reach. "Th' witch musta brought it here by magic! My ax ain't no good against it!"

In agony, wheezing and gasping for breath, you rise to your feet and ready Starlight for battle. You might be able to reach the door before the elemental gets you.

You might also decide to stand and fight, using Starlight's antimagical powers in combat to try to defeat this magical monster.

Turn to 104 if you decide to fight the monster. If you elect to run to the door, turn to 24.

57

You swing Starlight's magical blade at the stone dwarf as hard as you can. If you can hit the animated statue just right, you hope the sword's antimagical powers will stop the stone dwarf right in its tracks.

Starlight strikes the dwarf with a loud *clang!*, amid a shower of sparks. At the same instant, the sword's black blade seems to flash with a dark radiance, and the dwarf suddenly freezes in place, rocking slightly on its feet.

"What have you done?" shrieks a woman's voice. "What have you done? I'll kill you for this!"

You spin around and see a woman running toward you from the far end of the hall. For the moment, she is shrouded in darkness, and you can't tell if she's armed. Perhaps she's about to cast some sort of spell on you. You prepare to subdue her, but then the last words of Murmur the cat run through your mind.

"Look, but don't touch. Touch, but don't look."

If you decide to try to get a better look at the woman, turn to 152. Otherwise, turn to 4.

"Kill it!" you roar at Mjolnir. You slash at the attacking greenhag and strike it in the arm, but the blow jars you to the bone. The greenhag's skin is as hard as rock!

"I'm tryin' t' kill it!" Mjolnir yells back, sweat running down his face as he swings his ax, "but it's awful dang hard t' do!"

Moments later, you see an opening as the greenhag lashes out at your face with its razor-sharp claws and misses. You dodge under its arms and ram Starlight into the monster's chest. It shrieks like a banshee and falls to the ground, where Mjolnir finishes the writhing creature off with his ax.

Exhausted, you both rest for several minutes before you begin to search the area around the lake more carefully.

Roll one die and add the result to Mjolnir's stealth skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **70**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **80**.

You prod an innocent-looking bright blue flower with Starlight's tip, marveling as the blossom instantly sprouts long fangs and attacks the blade like a wild beast. "Then again, maybe you're right," you say to Mjolnir. "One or two of these creatures is one thing, but a whole field of them is another. Get set to attack!"

The two of you step out of the alcove and attack the flowers with your blades, scything a path through them toward the spiral staircase.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 10 or more, you receive no damage from the fanged flowers. If the total is 9 or less, roll one die and subtract that many hit points of damage.

When you reach the staircase, you motion Mjolnir to start down ahead of you. You follow after him, after tak-

ing a final slash at the beautiful but dangerous garden creatures.

At the bottom of the stairs, another room awaits you. Turn to **26**.

60

Mustering all the strength you've got, you somehow manage to avoid toppling backward down the stairs. Mjolnir clutches at you to avoid falling himself.

After several moments to compose yourselves, the two of you start back up the stairs, which are now littered with bits and pieces of the exploded dummy goblin. "I've no idea what that thing was made of," you observe, kicking at a fragment lying on the steps, "but it almost blew us to bits."

"Dang sneaky trick, if you ask me," Mjolnir mutters. "But it sure felt good t' whack that thing, even if it were just a fake goblin."

Together you reach the top of the stairs and open the door, entering a well-lighted room beyond.

Turn to **49**.

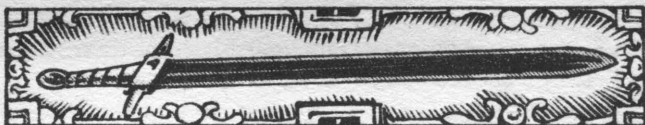
61

You run your sword Starlight deep into the fiendish creature's belly. Your blow wounds the beast and succeeds in spoiling its spell, but it fails to kill it. Two of its narrow arms reach out and seize you, clawing at you as its arms enfold you.

Roll three dice and subtract the result from your hit point total.

The claws from the rest of the creature's arms will have no trouble in reaching you now. Desperately you try to pull away from the creature.

Roll one die and add the number to your strength skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **183**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **215**.



62

The acid from the black dragon's breath scores a direct hit, burning your skin like liquid fire! In agony, you rush forward and slash at the reptile's head with Starlight to keep the monster from biting you in half with its fanged jaws. Enraged, the dragon utters a bestial roar.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **212**. If the total is less than 14 but greater than 5, roll two dice and subtract the total from your hit points because of the damage from the dragon's claws and bite. Then roll to try to hit the dragon again. If the total is 5 or less, turn to **42**. You may add experience points to this roll if you wish.

If, at any time after your first attempt to hit the dragon, you wish to flee, you must have at least 10 hit points remaining in order to escape. Instead of rolling again to hit the dragon, turn to **89**.

63

The fierce blow with your sword whistles by the red slaad's head, missing narrowly. Instantly the red slaad utters a single magic word with a gleeful voice.

You suddenly feel as if you'd been punched hard in the face! You reel backward, nearly dropping your sword. Whatever magic it was, it certainly packed a punch! Shaking your head, you aim another blow at the grinning frog-monster, worried that its magical stunning attack may have ruined your concentration on the fight.

To try once more to hit the slaad, roll two dice and add them to your fighting skill score, but this time you need a total of 14 or more to hit it. If you succeed in hitting the

slaad, turn to 142. Otherwise, roll one die and subtract that amount of damage from your hit point total. Then continue the fight by rolling to hit again. Each time you miss, you must roll one die for damage as above. Remember, you need a total of 14 to slay the slaad, because of its magical stunning attack.

64

Angrily you shove the gnome away from you, and he falls to the floor. "Spare you? When you might have killed us with your spells?"

"You wouldn't have been harmed!" the gnome cries, backing away still farther on his hands and knees. "It was just an illusion! I swear on my honor that it would have done nothing more than frightened you!"

As you advance toward him, the gnome hastily reaches for something in a pocket of his clothing. Fearing that he is about to cast another spell, you leap forward, your blade flashing—and the fight is over almost as soon as it began.

Your rage passes quickly as you stare down at the dying gnome's body. The little fellow gasps as his eyes turn toward you.

"I . . . spoke the truth," he whispers. "For your deed . . . I curse you with the wrath of Baba Yaga! You have earned it richly . . . whoever you are. . . ." His eyes close, and he falls back, limp and motionless.

Reduce your judgment points to 0.

You wonder whether it was a good idea to attack the gnome. Even Mjolnir edges away from you uncertainly, upset and confused.

"Well, come on," you tell the dwarf, trying to cover up your feelings. "Let's go find the Sage Beryl and get out of here." You head for the door across the room. Mjolnir follows slowly, staring back at the gnome's body. You open the door and step through. Turn to 149.

Your hurried blow merely glances off the creature's body. Heedless of your attempt to stop it, the derghodaemon completes its spell. Suddenly you can see nothing in front of your face except absolute darkness!

With an ear-splitting squeal, the derghodaemon tears at you with its claws in the darkness. You fight back desperately, unable to locate your opponent.

Roll two dice and subtract the result from your total hit points. Then roll two dice again, add them to your fighting skill score, and turn to **71** if the total is 15 or more. Otherwise, roll two dice once more and subtract the result from your hit point total. Continue as above until you manage to hit the monster in this fight to the death. Remember, you may add experience points to your dice rolls to try to hit the monster if you wish.

You decide to find out where Baba Yaga is right now. You dread the idea of running into her by accident somewhere in this crazy hut.

"Where's Baba Yaga now, mouse?" you ask, dangling the wine bottle in front of its nose. "You'll get the bottle if you tell me."

The mouse's eyes widen in surprise. "You want Baba Yaga? Well, okaaaay . . ."

The large mouse stands up on its hind legs, dusts itself off, then bends down and reaches for a small red lever on the floor—a lever that you hadn't noticed before.

"No! I don't want Baba Yaga! I just—uh, what are you doing?" You step forward to catch the mouse's arm, but you're just a little too late—the mouse pulls the lever.

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

The blast of smoke and fire kicks you off your feet and carries you over a row of barrels. You slam into the far wall, knocking all the wind out of your lungs.

The air is full of choking, yellow smoke that reeks of burning sulphur. Across the room, you hear Mjolnir cough and curse. Gasping for air, you crawl over toward your sword, where you dropped it during the explosion. You grasp its hilt—

—and a foot wrapped in gray, ragged cloth, with a filthy, blackened robe above it, steps on the sword's blade. You try to lift the weapon, but you can't.

Suddenly the yellow smoke clears, and you can see the rune-covered witch's robe clearly. A dreadful thought comes to mind. You don't dare look up at the figure standing on your sword.

"You may go now, mouse," says the cracked, cold voice of an old woman, and your blood freezes solid. "The art gallery needs dusting."

"Yes, Baba Yaga!" You hear the mouse scramble out of the room and run downstairs, puffing and panting all the way. Turn to 166.

67

At first you are only aware of the howling of the wind in your ears, mixed with your screams and Mjolnir's as you fall through the endless darkness. It seems as if you will never hit bottom.

And strangely enough, you never do hit the bottom. As you gasp for breath, you gradually become aware that you are falling more slowly, that the roaring wind has subsided to a gentle breeze, and that a strange, blue light now surrounds you.

In disbelief, you swing your arms around until you are facing in the direction in which you are falling. To your astonishment, you see that you are drifting at a moderate rate down toward the center of what appears to be a spiral arrangement of . . . floating mushrooms?

Even more astonishing is the sight of a single froglike, humanoid being standing atop each of the mushrooms.



Each frog-man is a different color—the same color as the mushroom it stands upon.

Turning, you see Mjolnir floating near you, his hands clapped tightly over his eyes.

“Jole!” you shout. “Jole, look!”

The dwarf shakes his head briefly. “Nope! Ain’t gonna look down. No way!”

“We’re going to live, Jole!” you shout, grabbing your floating sword out of the air beside you. To your surprise, you find that you can “swim” through the air by maneuvering your arms. It’s clumsy and awkward at first, but it works.

After several minutes, you convince Mjolnir to open his eyes and look around. By this time, you’ve come to a stop just above the top of the spiral. The mushroom closest to you is red. Beyond that, descending like hovering, spiral stairsteps, are blue, green, and gray frog-men, each perched atop a similarly colored mushroom.

You also notice that each mushroom has a door in its stem, as if each mushroom was a house and its cap was the roof. Could these be doors to—

“—other rooms in Baba Yaga’s hut?” The red frog-man completes your thought in a hoarse, croaking voice. “I can read your thoughts, you see. The answer is yes, they do lead elsewhere, but you must fight whichever one of us guards the door you wish to enter! I am the weakest of the Slaad guardians here, while my gray brother is the strongest. The stronger the opponent, the more quickly you shall find your Sage Beryl once you are beyond the doors—that is, if you live that long!”

At this, each frog-man raises its clawed arms toward you and gestures for you to approach. You stare at them, then turn to Mjolnir.

“If we’re going to find the Sage Beryl in this mad-house,” you say aloud, “we may as well get on with it. We’re not getting any younger looking at these frogs.”

Mjolnir groans, readying his battle-ax. "This is crazy!" you hear him mutter to himself. "Ain't never seen a hut like this in all my born days!"

You look down, weighing your chances, and make your choice.

If you choose to fight the red slaad, turn to **3**; the blue slaad, **163**; the green slaad, **213**; the gray slaad, **134**.

68

Seeing an opening, you dodge under the slaad's clawed forearms and stab it deep in the abdomen. The gray slaad staggers, then continues attacking, but it is too weak to carry the fight on for long. Soon the gray slaad succumbs to a blow to the head from your sword.

Panting for breath, you sink to your knees in utter exhaustion. Starlight falls from your grasp. "Mjolnir!" you gasp. "Mjolnir, are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Jerrak," comes the dwarf's gruff voice as he dresses a wound on his thick arm with a torn piece of cloth. "Ain't no toad ever whacked this dwarf an' got away with it!" The dwarf winces as he pulls the bandage tight and ties it off.

After resting for several more minutes, you look around. The other slaadi have disappeared! Obviously they want no quarrel with you and Mjolnir if you could destroy their most powerful companion!

Satisfied that you and Mjolnir are safe, you both swim through the air down to the gray door on the mushroom stem. You open it with your weapons held ready, hoping nothing horrible lies beyond. You see a huge lighted chamber on the other side. Cautiously you both step through the doorway, hoping for the best. Turn to **149**.

69

After you've told Mjolnir of your decision, he looks reluctant to follow you into the cave. Instead he hangs

back, staring into the darkness with narrowed eyes. His hands grip his ax nervously.

"I'll need your help to explore the cave," you tell Mjolnir, getting an idea. "There might well be a dragon's hoard of gold and silver in there!"

Mjolnir nearly falls over himself as he pushes past you into the cave. You follow, pleased that your plan worked. Experience has taught you that Mjolnir will do anything to gain possession of gold and valuables.

Green, phosphorescent fungi light the dank cavern with a sickly glow. It takes but a few minutes to discover that the cavern floor contains only ordinary stones. No treasure beckons.

While Mjolnir fumes, you continue to explore the cave. As you walk along, the cave walls become more regular and smooth. Eventually you discover a door at the end of the long corridor. Oddly enough, the cave is no longer damp and doesn't smell of rotting things and algae.

"Jole," you call out as you look over the door, "what do you make of this place?"

The dwarf checks the door and shrugs. "There are no traps here, unless them runes by th' doorknob are magical," he announces. "But that ain't th' only thing. I don't know how this happened, but we ain't in no cave no more. The stonework's wrong. We're in a house."

You stare at the door and the strange runes carved over the doorknob:

Баба Яга

"I know where we are!" you say suddenly. "That imp wasn't lying after all. Baba Yaga cast a spell over the cave so that anyone passing through it is drawn into her hut." You point to the runes. "Those letters spell out Baba Yaga's name in an ancient tongue. We're standing right at her back door!"

Mjolnir blinks and stares at the runes. "Oh," he says, looking uncomfortable. "I heard that them magical runes can do terrible things to somebody who grabs hold of somethin' they're protectin'."

"Maybe this is a good time to use Starlight's magical spell-breaking powers," you mutter. Drawing your sword, you touch the tip of the blade to the runes to activate the sword's powers.

Suddenly the blade glows with a weird, dark aura, as if the blackness of night radiated from it. A howling sound like wind tearing at trees rises from the sword.

Roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagical power score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **224**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **118**.

70

You and your dwarf companion spend several minutes searching the ground beneath the dripping willows. Finally Mjolnir pauses to investigate an unusually flat rock near the lakeshore. You keep a nervous guard, certain that some other monster must be watching and waiting to attack you.

"Hey, Jerrak!" Mjolnir calls. He points to the rock. "This thing's got a secret door in it! I think I can open it up, if you like."

"Anything's better than staying here," you tell him. "The passage might lead to the Sage Beryl and some way out of this madhouse."

"Couldn't have put it better m'self," the dwarf mumbles. His deft fingers discover an irregularity in the rock, and he pushes hard against it. Suddenly a section of rock slides away, revealing a dark tunnel with a ladder leading down into the darkness.

"Wanna flip t' see who goes first?" Mjolnir asks. He grins weakly, his eyes scanning the dim shore terrain and the swaying willow branches.

You gesture to him to go first. Gratefully he slips into the tunnel and disappears into the darkness. You sheath Starlight and follow him hastily, certain that you saw something approaching through the thick willow branches. You have no desire to wait to see what it is. Sliding the heavy stone door closed over your head, you descend into the blackness.

For many long minutes you climb down the ladder. In time, a light appears below you, and you soon descend into a well-lighted room. You blink your eyes in the unaccustomed brightness as your feet touch the floor. Drawing Starlight, you pray that nothing saw you enter. Turn to 26.



71

Summoning all your energy, you stab the monster with Starlight in one mighty, desperate thrust. The next thing you know, you find yourself on the ground, Starlight torn from your hands. You blink and hastily rise to your feet. The derghodaemon is lying on its side, with Starlight buried up to the hilt in its scaled body, green ichor gushing freely from the wound.

Mjolnir rushes over and slaps you on the side, his face filled with relief. "You got 'im, Jerrak! You got that dang stinkin' monster! We showed that witch, we did!"

"Indeed you have," says a cold, harsh voice behind you. Turn to 85.

72

"Jole," you say slowly, "we've been adventuring together for a long time, and I've never minded before if

you took something from a dungeon or a treasure vault. But we've seen what Baba Yaga can do, and for all we know, she could be watching right now. You'd better put the goblet back."

"But we're here t' steal somethin' anyway!" Mjolnir protests. "One more thing can't hurt anythin'."

"Baba Yaga stole the Sage Beryl from my grandfather after she killed him," you say hotly. "We're only taking back what's rightfully mine!" You calm down, wishing you hadn't gotten angry. "We're going to be in enough trouble when we get the Sage Beryl. Let's not make it worse."

Mjolnir grumbles some more, but he puts the goblet back. "I ain't as fast at pickin' up stuff as I used t' be," he complains. "Must be gettin' old."

You discover a door on the far wall, behind the chair at the end of the table. Carefully opening it, you see that it leads into a large, well-lighted chamber. Motioning Mjolnir to follow, you enter the room. Turn to 149.

73

"How could there possibly be a back door to this place?" you ask Murmur, ignoring her invitation for you to attack her. "We saw only one door from the outside, and I see no sign of a door on the back wall. Besides, if there was a back door, it would lead out of the hut. We came here—"

"I know why you came here," Murmur says abruptly. "After all, I can read minds. And you are wrong about the back door. You don't see it because it's covered by an illusion. Just step through it, and it will transport you somewhere else in the hut."

You glance at Mjolnir, who appears noncommittal. "We'll take the back door—if there is one," you tell the huge silver cat.

"Very well. Remember, however, that what you see is

wrong. Look, but don't touch. Touch, but don't look. The beryl awaits you." With these words, Murmur stretches out on the shelf and appears to fall fast asleep.

Puzzled by the cat's words, you and Mjolnir walk across the tiny room to the opposite wall. Brushing aside a hanging cluster of garlic cloves, you reach out to touch the wall. You give a start as your hand passes through the wooden wall easily. The wall is just an illusion after all! You feel a shiver run down your spine.

Taking a deep breath, you lift your sword and step through the false wall, silently praying for the best but fearing the worst. Mjolnir follows a moment later.

Turn to 171.

74

Your sword lashes out and strikes the annis before she can complete her spell, whatever it was. The hag shrieks so loudly you think you might go deaf, then falls to the floor in a lifeless heap.

For several moments, you and Mjolnir stare at the blue cook's body. Then you notice that her skin is starting to smoke! Within seconds, the cook's body rots away into dust before your eyes! The sight makes you feel exceedingly strange.

"Ain't never seen nobody do *that* before!" Mjolnir grunts.

"She wasn't human, Jole," you reply. After telling the dwarf about your suspicions that the cook was a monstrous annis, you set out to explore the kitchen.

The food—if it can be called that—is completely foul and inedible. Your stomach churns to even think of tasting some of the things you see.

"At least we know why Baba Yaga ain't never in a good mood," Mjolnir says, turning away from the shelves of foul ingredients he was examining. "Specially if she's eatin' this stuff!"

You call Mjolnir over when you finally discover a door leading out of the kitchen. You can't tell if it is the same door you were carried in through or not, but it doesn't seem to matter in this mad hut. After opening the door carefully, you and Mjolnir step through into the next room. Turn to **126**.

75

With a herculean effort, you manage to push the medusa off of you. As she scrambles back, you open one eye just a fraction to judge her location without risking the chance of meeting her gaze. Then you kick her with all your strength, striking her on the point of her chin.

The medusa snaps backward and falls, unconscious. You hastily grab for Starlight and Mjolnir's collar, dragging them both out of the hall and through the doorway at the end of the corridor, into a darkened room.

Several minutes later, you manage to revive Mjolnir, who has a swollen jaw and a lump on the back of his head from striking the floor. "It ain't right," he mutters, gingerly rubbing his head, "a dwarf statue attackin' another dwarf like that. Baba Yaga's got a real mean sense o' humor, she does."

"Worry about her sense of humor later," you say hurriedly. "That medusa will be waking up shortly, and I want to be far away when she does!"

The two of you make your way through the dark room using Mjolnir's acute eyesight. On the other side, you locate a doorknob. Moments later, you step out into the bright light of a new room. Turn to **126**.



Mad with desperation, knowing that you have no other possible way to escape, you swing Starlight's black blade into the earth elemental's trunk—and the dark aura of its antimagical power courses through the monster in moments. Then, just as quickly as it appeared, the aura is gone—and so is the elemental, dispelled by the sword's power.

Overcome with relief, you sit on the floor while Mjolnir takes his time and picks the lock on the door. After several minutes, it opens without trouble, and the two of you set off up the ascending corridor beyond. The test is over, and you've both passed!

"Good fightin' there," Mjolnir says warmly, giving you a slap on the back. "Mebbe it weren't as good as I could do, but it were still good."

You're too tired to retaliate, so you merely grimace at him in reply.

Soon the two of you come to a door at the end of the hall, and after checking it for traps, you open it and go through into a brightly lighted chamber.

Turn to 149.

You know that most gargoyles aren't very clever, but this one seems brighter than most. "Hold on, Jole." You catch your dwarf companion by the shoulder. "Let's hear what our ugly friend has to say before we carve him up."

The gargoyle spits into the swampy waters below the stump. "Big talk from someone who lets a log shack throw him around. You couldn't pull the wings from a dying horsefly, much less stand up to Shupak, mightiest of gargoyles!"

You redden but manage to control yourself and ignore the insults. "You know much about this hut, Shupak?"

The gargoyle laughs a screeching, grating laugh. "I

know that Baba Yaga simply asks her hut to let her inside when she comes home."

"Why are you telling us this?" you ask suspiciously.

Shupak grins, revealing inch-long fangs in a broad mouth. "The witch gives me the scraps from her table in return for leading pr—uh, *adventurers* to her door. It's a pleasant arrangement and takes little effort on my part."

You eye the hut, trying to keep Shupak in view at the same time. "Dancing hut!" you shout aloud, feeling rather silly. "Stop your spinning and let us enter!"

To your amazement, the prancing chicken legs slow to a stop, then bend and lower the hut to the marshy ground. The hut's door, facing you, opens slightly and seems to beckon you to enter.

"Have a nice day," the gargoyle calls from behind as you and Mjolnir approach the hut's doorway. The creature picks at its teeth with one long claw. "I'll see you again soon." Turn to 161.

78

On impulse, you draw your sword back and stab at the incredibly gruesome crone. "This is for my grandfather!" you start to shout, only you don't get that far before Baba Yaga grabs your sword blade.

The look in her eyes is scornful, but it is also one of grim amusement. Panicking, you jerk on your sword, but you can't pull Starlight loose.

"I am definitely not impressed, Jerrak Kimbal," she says in a whisper that makes your skin shiver with cold. With a sudden movement, she wrenches the black sword free from your grip and carelessly tosses it aside, to clatter against a distant wall.

Baba Yaga then claps her hands together twice with an air of finality. Instantly the air is filled with the smell of sulphur and burning ash. A deep grunt shakes

the air behind you, and you turn to look up into the face of a shaggy, bat-winged monster! Mjolnir faints on the spot, hitting the floor with a clatter of armor.

"This is Fang, a demodand and expert torturer," rasps Baba Yaga, flashing a sharklike smile. "We are about to find out what you're made of, my fine warrior. Fang will clean up afterward."

With that, Fang reaches out for you with long, needle-like claws. You scream and try to escape—but this definitely is not your lucky day.

Turn to **229**.



79

You decide to do nothing to stop Mjolnir from charging the goblin at the top of the stairs. The enraged dwarf closes on the thin, yellow humanoid, waving his ax and howling a dwarven war cry. Roll one die. If you roll 1 or 2, turn to **20**. If you roll 3 or 4, turn to **155**. If you roll 5 or 6, turn to **87**.

80

Every moment you spend by this brooding, evil lake stretches your nerves more taut than before. You find yourself all too ready to jump at shadows and at odd movements of the weeping willows around you. Though you and Mjolnir search for a way out, you can find no escape route.

Wearying of the search, you pause to rest beneath one of the silent, swaying trees. The air is chilly, but sweat drips from your hair from exhaustion and fear. Your bald friend doesn't look much better.

Mjolnir stands back from the tree and looks up into its branches. "Now, that's downright odd!" he mutters. "This tree's got no top, Jerrak! Take a look."

You swivel around and stare up into the twilight sky. Oddly enough, the tree seems to go up forever into the half-light, fading away after a hundred feet or so. None of the other trees seem to be nearly as high.

At that moment, a sound echoes through the dim twilight: "... *got no top Jerrak take a look. . .*"

"What was *that*?" Mjolnir asks, raising his ax nervously. Wide-eyed, he stares into the darkness.

The voice speaks again, much closer now. It has a mournful quality about it, as if saddened that it can speak no other words than yours. "... *what was that?*"

After a moment of silence, Mjolnir edges over next to you, beside the giant willow. "If that thing gets any closer, Jerrak, I'm gonna climb this here tree all th' way t' th' sky," he whispers loudly.

It wouldn't be difficult to do, you notice. The willow branches are arranged in a way that would make climbing easy.

"... *this here tree all th' way t' th' sky . . .*" whispers the voice, still nearer now.

"That does it!" Mjolnir pronounces, heading for the tree.

If you decide to investigate the voice, turn to 158. If you think you should climb the tree to escape the voice, turn to 53.

81

You are just about to signal Mjolnir to follow you toward the stairway when you notice something pecu-

liar. All of the flowers in the alcove are facing in your direction. Beyond about ten feet away, the flowers face in random directions.

You catch Mjolnir by the shoulder and gently push him back from the flower beds. Then you step to one side, noting that as you do, the nearest flowers turn to continue facing you.

When you point this out to Mjolnir, the dwarf tries a few experiments of his own and discovers the same effect. "It's just like they're watchin' us, waitin' for us t' try t' get by," he whispers, shaking his head. "I don't like this one bit."

You nod and hold your sword out toward the flowers. To your horror, the flowers themselves suddenly seem to grow teeth and turn into colorful fanged mouths! The hungry flowers snap madly at the sword's blade, their teeth scraping against the blade's metal in their eagerness to reach you.



Jerking Starlight back, you note with relief that the fanged flowers haven't harmed it. You swing the sword at the plants with a swift stroke and cut down a half dozen of the monstrosities.

"Guess we know what we gotta do next," Mjolnir says, stepping forward with ax raised. "We gotta snap them snapdragons!"

"Either that or we could make a run for the stairs," you remark. "They probably wouldn't be able to get more than a few chomps at us."

If you decide to attack the flowers, turn to 59. If you want to run through the flowers toward the spiral stairway, turn to 16.

82

"There should be a catch here someplace or 'nother if there's a way out at all— Got it!" shouts Mjolnir suddenly. You hear a creaking noise, then light floods the stairs around you as the dwarven thief opens a secret door at the foot of the stairwell. Hastily you both push through the opening and leave the stairwell before the slithering horror arrives.

"That was a little too close for comfort, if you know what I mean," Mjolnir sighs as he pushes the secret door shut again. He picks up his ax and looks around. You look around as well. Turn to 26.

83

With a ringing clang, Starlight's black blade slams into the nearest leg of the towering iron golem. The aura of darkness around the sword suddenly envelops the entire armored form of the golem, and the golem grinds to a stop!

Quickly dodging underneath one of the golem's now-still fists, you kneel at Mjolnir's side. The dwarf groans and tries to sit up, muttering incoherently. After a few

minutes of rest, the two of you are ready to continue the search for the Sage Beryl.

"Never been beat on th' head by a gold-yum before," mumbles Mjolnir, dragging his ax on the floor behind him. "It hurt like th' dickens!"

"Golem," you correct him. "You were hit by a golem."

"Golem, schmollem," he grunts. "It don't matter if it were a oxcart what hit me—it still hurt like blazes!"

After a few minutes, the two of you discover a door at one end of the armor museum. Opening the door carefully, you walk through into a new room.

Turn to 149.

84

The thought of wandering around in Baba Yaga's hut without any way of escaping in case things get rough makes you nervous. You didn't live to be this old without being cautious in dangerous situations.

"Mouse—or whatever your name is," you start out, "I'd like to know if there's any way to get out of this hut if I need to leave quickly—very quickly."

"Hmmm . . ." the mouse says foggily, looking around the wine cellar. "Well, there's that ring there on the wall. The one on the wood peg." You point toward it. "Yeah, that one. That's s'posed to be magical or something. Baba Yaga said anyone who wears it can get out of trouble fast."

You pull the ring off the peg and examine it closely. The size of a wedding ring, it looks like any other silver ring. It might fit your left ring finger comfortably. "May I keep it?" you ask.

"Well, it isn't mine. . . ." The mouse looks around nervously. "It belongs to Baba Yaga."

You hesitate. Do you dare take the witch's ring? If so, turn to 187. If you decide to leave the ring behind, go back to the end of 92 and make another choice.

When you and Mjolnir spin around, you see a hunch-backed old woman in filthy robes standing only a few feet behind you. Her face is incredibly ugly. Her long nose is covered with warts, and two tusks curve up from her lower lip. Her catlike eyes burn with a white, unholy fire that chills you to the bone.

"You're a mere mortal," the hunchbacked woman continues. "I've seen more mortals pass through here than I can count. At least you're a clever one, and I don't happen to be particularly hungry at the moment—not even for dwarf, which happens to be a favorite of mine." She leers at Mjolnir, who turns pale.

"But fortunately for you, I've decided to let you go," she finishes. "You're no threat to me, and watching you romp your way through my hut offered me amusement. My sorcerous powers allow me to see everything."

The witch extends a clawed finger and traces a glowing red rune in the air before her. "I hereby cast you out of the hut and back into the swamp. Getting home from there is your problem."

VA-ROOM! With a loud explosion, you and Mjolnir find yourselves standing outside the dancing hut, ankle deep in thick mud. The Sage Beryl is still in your hand!

The gem is still and silent as you turn it over and over in your hand, your heart pounding. "Nicodamus!" you shout aloud. "Nicodamus, are you there?"

"Jerrak!" cries a familiar voice from the gemstone as it begins to pulse brightly. "We've escaped, my boy! You've done it! How did you ever manage to find me?"

You hastily explain the events since you discovered the ruins of your grandfather's mansion, including your quest to recover the Sage Beryl. "You're all that I have left now," you finish sadly.

"Not so!" shouts Nicodamus, the green beryl fairly glowing with light. "Watch!"

Nicodamus utters a few magical phrases from inside the Sage Beryl. Suddenly a host of people appear all around you. Stunned, you recognize your grandfather and all of his servants and assistants!

"Baba Yaga didn't eat them after all," Nicodamus explains as everyone shouts for joy at their escape. "I used my powers to draw them safely inside the beryl so Baba Yaga couldn't harm them!"

After a joyful reunion with your grandfather, you, Mjolnir, and the whole company begin to make your way out of the depths of the swamp. It will be a long journey back to civilization, but it will be a happy one.

"I wish I coulda picked up just a little bit o' treasure from that there hut!" Mjolnir grumbles. "But at least I got a few good stories t' tell about th' trip."

Because you succeeded in recovering the Sage Beryl, reward yourself with 2 extra experience points the next time you decide to play this adventure. ✕

86

You look down at the strange tapestry on the floor in front of you and shiver involuntarily. "I think we'll try the door," you tell the mysterious old woman.

The crone nods her hooded head. "Very well," she says, motioning you toward the door by her loom. "Knock twice and the door will open. The Sage Beryl lies some distance beyond." She returns to her weaving and pays no further attention to either of you.

You swallow and step over to the black iron door, with Mjolnir at your side. You both exchange glances, shrug, and turn back to the door. Carefully you reach out and rap your knuckles once, twice, on the heavy door.

For several seconds, nothing happens. Then suddenly the door opens inward, and an enormous, green-scaled hand with fingers as long as you are tall shoots out of the door and grabs you, pinning your arms to your sides!

It happens so fast that you don't even have time to scream before the hand pulls you through the door and into the black space beyond. A second gigantic green hand snatches Mjolnir and carries him away as well, his startled curses muffled in the monstrous creature's unbreakable grasp.

With both of you gone, the black iron door slams shut, and the hooded crone at the loom laughs to herself as she flips the shuttlecock back and forth. "They *never* expect *that one!*" she cackles.

Turn to 107.



87

Mjolnir swings his ax mightily at the goblin's head—but suddenly the goblin reaches up and catches the ax in midstroke! Stunned, Mjolnir tries in vain to pull the ax away from the creature, swearing loudly.

You step forward as the goblin stands up. With a broad, fang-toothed grin, the goblin, which you now suspect is not really a goblin after all, strikes Mjolnir with its free hand. The blow knocks the dwarf unconscious, and he collapses on the steps.

"PERHAPS YOU WILL BE A MORE WORTHY OPPONENT!" the goblin-thing rumbles in a voice like an earthquake. "BABA YAGA SAID YOU WERE THE STRONGER OF THE TWO. I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU ALL DAY!"

So Baba Yaga knew you were coming after the Sage Beryl! It's too late to worry about that now, as you notice the creature's eyes begin to glow like fiery orange coals. It must be a barghest, a demonic monster that resembles a goblin when young. But even young barghests are incredibly powerful. You know you have a real fight on your hands!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **191**. If the total is between 8 and 13, subtract 10 hit points of damage and roll again to try to hit the monster. If the total is 7 or less, turn to **217**.

88

You quickly see that the fight with the green slaad is one of the hardest battles you've ever had. Even with you and Mjolnir fighting as a team, the green-skinned monster forces you both to fight at the limits of your skill. The frog-man moves with inhuman speed and murderous skill.

Though you fear you may have met your match, you make a sudden, surprise strike and manage to wound the creature in the neck. As it makes a gurgling sound and grabs for its throat, you stab it quickly a second time and finally slay the monster. Mjolnir makes certain that the beast is dead.

You look around nervously, expecting another attack, but the other slaadi don't seem to care if you've killed their fellow slaad or not. The fight is over!

You are so exhausted that you have difficulty saying anything. Silently, you point your sword in the direction of the green door on the mushroom stem below you. Mjolnir nods, and the two of you swim through the air until you reach the door. Drawing a deep breath and raising Starlight, you open the door and step through.

Turn to **44**.

The fight with the black dragon is savage, and you nearly meet your death as the dragon's ivory claws slash out at you with vicious sweeps. But the dragon suffers, too, as a blow from Starlight slices open a long gash on the dragon's snout. Moments later, you stab the beast in one of its forelegs, rendering it lame.

But you realize you won't be able to take much more of this. Seeing an opening as the dragon backs away for a moment, you turn and run, leaping over fallen logs and splashing through pools of stagnant water.

The dragon tries to follow but gives a painful roar as it puts its weight on its injured foot and comes to an abrupt halt. The closely spaced trees make it impossible for the dragon to fly after you, and you manage to escape.

You meet Mjolnir on his way over to help you, his ax held high. "Go back!" you shout. "That dragon's mad!"

Mjolnir skids to a stop, turns around, and hurries off with you. "Well, you got another surprise waitin' for you," he pants as he runs. "Just wait an' see!"

When you arrive at the place where you left Mjolnir and the imp, the dwarf points up into a dead, moss-choked tree and glares. A black bird nearly as large as an eagle sits in the upper branches, cawing loudly in raucous laughter.

"That's th' imp," Mjolnir says morosely. "It never mentioned it could change its shape whenever it wanted to, dang its hide!"

"I was safe all the time!" the raven cackles. "I just hung around for the fun, and you were a riot! Baba Yaga, living in a cave?" The bird breaks into another gale of strident cawing.

You groan, feeling the weight of your wounds and sudden exhaustion. Wiping at a long, red scratch on your arm, you glance in the direction of the hut.

"Let's try the hut," you tell your friend. "Maybe we'll

have more luck there.”

Mjolnir helps you bind your wounds, and you leave the raven behind, laughing in the mist. Turn to 103.

90

Exhausted from the fierce fight with the hobgoblins, you turn to Mjolnir, only to see him lying motionless on the ground! You rush to his side and find that he was seriously injured in the fight.

“Jerrak,” Mjolnir whispers faintly, his face ashen and his lips flecked with blood. “Jerrak, I’m . . . I’m done for. Leave me behind and get yerself out o’ this stinkin’ place. . . .”

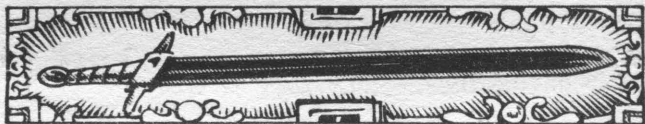
“Since when did I start taking orders from you?” you say calmly, carefully binding the dwarf’s wounds with torn pieces of clothing from the dead hobgoblins. Then you ease him onto your back, grunting from the weight.

“Jerrak . . . don’t!” Mjolnir gasps. “You’ll never make—”

“Quiet, Jole!” you bark. You’ve abandoned all thoughts of getting into Baba Yaga’s hut to get the Sage Beryl on this trip. Mjolnir’s life is more important. But you do still have to get out of this swamp safely before you can get home.

Many days pass as you make your way back to civilization, carrying Mjolnir’s weakened body all the way. Eventually you find a friendly town and wait while Mjolnir is nursed back to health.

By mutual agreement, you and your dwarven friend decide to return to Baba Yaga’s hut and renew your search for the Sage Beryl. Begin your adventure over again, but this time you may add 1 extra experience point to whatever total you roll. You are also assumed to have made it past the hut’s outside guardians, and you may approach the hut directly by turning to 103 when you are ready to begin the adventure. ✚



91

"Mjolnir, stay back!" you shout, readying your sword, Starlight. The black blade begins to charge with magic-destroying power as you approach the creaking iron golem. "I'm going to silence this creature for good!"

"I ain't a-gonna abandon ya, Jerrak!" Mjolnir roars back, though he keeps a safe distance away.

You look for an opportune moment to charge at the golem and make contact with your blade. The animated iron statue appears to consider you as well, looking down at you through the empty black eyeholes of its helmet visor.

Seizing the initiative, you charge forward, your sword upraised. The armored monster's iron hands turn into massive fists and pull back, preparing to strike.

Dodging to avoid the full force of the monster's blow, you strike at the golem's closest leg, trying not to hit it too hard so as not to damage your sword.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **106**. If it is 9 or less, you miss the golem and it strikes you back. Roll three dice and subtract that many hit points of damage.

If you wish to continue fighting the golem, repeat the roll to hit it as above. If you wish to flee from the golem, turn to **170**. You may not choose to flee if you have 10 or fewer hit points remaining, since you will be too weak to run.

92

You lean forward and poke the mouse's fat, furry stomach. "Wake up there!" you call loudly. "We want to talk

to you!" You keep your sword raised, ready to strike if necessary.

The mouse blinks drowsily and suddenly sits up with a gasp, rubbing its eyes with its forepaws. "Oh, no!" it cries in a whining, squeaky voice. "I wasn't asleep! Honest, Baba Yaga! I wasn't asleep!" Panic-stricken, the mouse hides its face in its paws.

You clear your throat. "Uhh, Mr. Mouse, the witch isn't here. It's just us, Jerrak and Mjolnir."

The mouse looks at you with frightened, bloodshot eyes sunk into its puffy, furry face. "Oh!" it gasps in relief. "Are you the new hired help? My head hurts! I need a drink. Please, can I have a drink? Just one little drink?"

"Uh . . . I guess so," says Mjolnir, still unable to believe that he's talking to a giant mouse. He starts to hand over the bottle he's holding.

"Wait a moment, mouse, or whoever you are," you say, taking the bottle away from the dwarven thief's outstretched hand. "First give us some information. Then you'll get your drink."

The mouse moans and begins to cry. "Please, just one little drink? Pleeeeease? Oh, pleeeease? I'll tell you anything! Pleeeeeeeeeeee—"

"Okay, okay! Knock it off!" You shake your head in exasperation, then wonder what to ask it. If the mouse does know something about the Sage Beryl, this would be a good time to get the information you need. But other things besides the Sage Beryl beckon—like Baba Yaga's other riches, or ways to escape the hut if that becomes necessary. You could also try to find out where Baba Yaga is at the moment.

If you choose to ask about the Sage Beryl, turn to **102**. If you decide to ask about Baba Yaga's treasures, turn to **167**. If you want to find out about escape routes, turn to **84**. If you simply ask the mouse about Baba Yaga's whereabouts, turn to **66**.

Beside you in the fiery oven, Mjolnir collapses, overcome by the searing temperatures. You grip the door handle and pull on it with all of your strength. The door groans, but fails to open. Knowing that death is moments away, you try again—and the door gives!

Grabbing Mjolnir by one limp arm, you drag him through the doorway into the blessed coolness of the air in the next room. Before you slam the iron door shut, you see the wooden bridge collapse in a gigantic shower of sparks and towering flames.

After a long drink from your small flask of water, Mjolnir regains consciousness. When he seems well enough to travel, you help him up and look around at the massive new room you've just entered. The room is so huge that you can barely make out the ceiling and walls in the distance.

"Where—where are we now, Jerrak?" Mjolnir mumbles. "I can't figger this place out at all—Oops!"

To your astonishment, you see the door through which you entered the room begin to shrink—either that, or you and Mjolnir have started to grow at a fantastic rate! You clutch at each other in fear for several seconds as the enormous room grows smaller before your eyes! You both continue to grow rapidly, until suddenly everything comes to a stop. The room appears anything but huge, now that you've both returned to normal size. You look around, weak with shock. Turn to 35.

You grab the Sage Beryl in your hand, and immediately a brilliant violet flash blinds you for several seconds. Staggering backward, you blink and rub your eyes for several seconds.

When you are able to see again, you find yourself and Mjolnir in a circular room, apparently without exits.

The area is well lit, though you can see no source for the light. The ceiling opens to a black night sky. You still clutch the Sage Beryl in one hand.

The chilling voice of the old crone filters down through the stale air once more. "I dislike vermin, particularly the two-legged, thieving, mortal kind—but I sometimes find bright vermin rather interesting. You have done well so far, Jerrak Kimbal. Let's see you how you fare against . . . this!"

A loud *pop* sounds nearby, and an amazing creature suddenly appears before you. The creature stands eight feet tall and has a bloated, yellow-scaled body that stands on three legs. Five small arms with clawlike fingers project from the ball-like body, and two round, icy blue eyes glare at you from its bony, insectoid head.

"This pet is called a derghodaemon, a creature from the evil realms of Hades," says the voice. "It is a rather stupid beast, but it is unmatched in its ferocity. If you should happen to succeed in slaying it, the two of you may go free."

"Is that promise?" asks Mjolnir nervously.

"I *always* keep my promises," says the voice coldly. "Not that it will help you."

Turn to 154.

95

"This has got to be the key to the hut," you tell Mjolnir, showing it to him. "Now we can get inside and start looking for the Sage Beryl!"

Mjolnir edges away from the key with a fearful look on his face. "You hold the darned thing," he says nervously. "I don't want nothin' t' do with keys what was once talkin' monsters! It might bite my hand off or somethin'."

You walk over to the little log hut and notice a keyhole by the doorknob. With a silent prayer, you push the key



into the lock and twist it. The lock clicks softly, and you carefully push the door open. Turn to 161.

96

The fight with the blue slaad rapidly exhausts you and Mjolnir. The frog-man moves with inhuman speed and fights with cunning skill, but with a sudden strike, you manage to wound the creature in the leg. As it stumbles, you stab it quickly a second time. At the same time, Mjolnir strikes it from behind with his ax. The blue slaad falls, but you make sure it's dead.

You glance around nervously, expecting another attack, but the other slaadi merely shrug in your direction, then turn away. They don't seem to care. You've won!

"Well, that's 'nuff exercise for me!" Mjolnir mumbles, wiping his ax off on the cap of the blue mushroom. "That were a real fight there!"

"I can't imagine it being much worse," you observe, staring down at the green and gray slaadi below. "Can you imagine what it would have been like if we had chosen one of them?" you ask, gesturing toward the slaadi below. "Well, it's over with now. Let's go through the blue door and find that Sage Beryl!"

Mjolnir nods, and the two of you swim through the air until you reach the door in the blue mushroom. Drawing a breath and raising your sword, you pull open the door and look through. A ladder descends down a narrow, dark shaft. You climb down the ladder with Mjolnir behind you, hoping you aren't blundering into a trap. Moments later, you come out into a brightly lighted room. Turn to 26.

97

Starlight's black metallic blade shines with a weird, dark aura as the barghest's flaming eyes peer deep into

yours. Suddenly the shadowy aura envelops the barghest's head, blocking the sight of its orange eyes from yours.

Its influence over you is broken! Before the monster can recover, you leap to your feet and attack the barghest furiously, trying your best to kill it before it can attempt another magical attack.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **191**. If it is 13 or less, subtract 10 points of damage from your hit point total, then roll again to try to hit the beast. This is a fight to the death. Continue attacking until either you or the monster is slain.

98

You run as hard as you can, straining your muscles to their limits. After several moments, you hear the heavy branch crash to the earth right behind you.

"Too bad I missed," the gargoyle calls in disappointment. "Maybe my aim will be better the next time I see you!" With a grating laugh, the monster flies off over the moss-covered treetops.

Your lungs heaving, you stand ankle-deep in scummy water for a minute to calm down. When you look around at Mjolnir, he's as embarrassed as you are.

"Sorry, Jole. That was a stupid idea," you mutter, running a hand through your hair. "At least now it's done, we're still alive, and we can continue our search for the Sage Beryl." Mjolnir nods, and a faint grin appears on his face. "You're a lot faster'n I thought you was, Jer-rak," he says. "Guess we got a lot t' learn 'bout messin' with things around here."

You manage to smile back weakly. "I guess so," you agree. You turn toward the hut just in time to see it settling slowly to the ground! The chicken legs simply fold up beneath the little hut as it descends. Within the

space of a few heartbeats, the hut is on the ground and its single door is facing you, slightly ajar.

"Jerrak," whispers Mjolnir, "do you think Baba Yaga made th' hut do that just t' get us t' go inside?"

"Perhaps," you say quietly, "but we may as well accept the invitation." You start forward, your sword held ready, and reach for the doorknob. Turn to 161.

99

The hungry black aura around Starlight's blade makes contact with the earth elemental, and instantly the monster is enveloped in its dark glow. In the next moment, the aura is gone—and so is the elemental!

Overcome with relief, you hurry to the door, where Mjolnir is picking the lock. "The elemental's gone!" you shout giddily. "Look!"

Mjolnir doesn't bother. "Just keep your shirt on, Jerrak, an' let me work." Suddenly he stops what he's doing and looks up with a puzzled expression. "Is that water what I'm hearin'?"

You look around, startled. All at once, a torrent of water bursts down from an opening in the ceiling above the center of the room. Within seconds, it becomes obvious that the chamber is watertight—and flooding! You have to escape!

Mjolnir turns, sees the water, and goes back to work. "Just calm down, Jerrak," he mutters. "I can open anythin' as long as I take my time."

But as the dwarf works, the water continues to rise. Before long, it reaches the dwarf's waist, hampering his efforts. It won't be long before Jole will have to swim, and soon after that, you'll be swimming, too!

If you decide to push Mjolnir aside and try to force the door open with your brute strength, turn to 139. If you prefer to let Mjolnir continue to work, hoping he can pick the lock in time, turn to 111.



100

"Mjolnir," you ask quietly, hoping he's in a good mood, "may I can borrow a gold piece from you? I'll pay you back when we get home."

Your grizzled friend's eyes narrow beneath his thick eyebrows. "I dunno, Jerrak. You're my buddy, but I don't like to be givin' out gold left an' right!"

Nonetheless, after several minutes of persuasion, Mjolnir reluctantly hands over a coin. You take the gold piece and toss it up to the raven, who deftly catches it in its beak. The black bird carefully lays the coin on the branch beside it, then gives you a sly wink.

"Hey, guys!" the raven shrieks loudly. "These two yokels are loaded! Get 'em!"

"What th—" Mjolnir's curse is interrupted by a general rustling from the bushes around you. Without warning, several armed hobgoblins step into view, looking at Mjolnir with special hatred in their eyes. Dwarves and goblins are very old enemies.

So it was a trap! You quickly consider the situation. You could take on several hobgoblins alone in a fight, but Mjolnir isn't quite as skilled in combat as you are. He might get hurt seriously, and the hobgoblins aren't likely to let him get away alive. If you choose to surrender to the hobgoblins, turn to 211. If you elect to fight them, turn to 105.

The door groans as you tug desperately on it. You're blind from the stinging in your eyes, racked with coughing from the poisonous green vapor that fills the air around you, and terrified that you're going to die before you have a chance to rescue the Sage Beryl.

Suddenly the door pulls free! Staggering through the doorway, you barely have strength to pull the door shut behind you before the floor rushes up to meet you. . . .

What seems like ages later, you awaken as cool water splashes against your face. Coughing, you roll over and manage to sit up. Your lungs ache and your eyes and nose are running uncontrollably—but you're alive!

"It's 'bout time you got up, Jerrak," Mjolnir says with obvious relief. "I was gettin' kinda worried 'bout you, I was. Looks like you took a good snort o' gas there."

"I'll—cough!—be fine—cough, cough, cough!" you gasp through a dry, itchy throat. You force yourself to relax and try to catch your breath. Soon you feel well enough to continue. You get to your feet and look around in the new room you've entered. Turn to 149

Your reason for entering this nightmare of a witch's hut was to recover the Sage Beryl and, if possible, to find out what happened to your grandfather and his servants. You hold out the wine bottle before the mouse's bleary eyes.

"I want to know where the Sage Beryl is," you ask gently, keeping the bottle just out of the mouse's reach.

"The whaaaaat?" The mouse looks at you with a puzzled expression. Then its furry face clears. "Oh! The . . . the . . . whatchamacallit is in the museum for safekeeping. Now can I have a drink? Pleeeeeeeee—"

"Wait!" interrupts Mjolnir. "How do we get t' that dang museum from here? Answer up or I'll bust that bottle t' pieces!"

"Nooooooo!" cries the giant mouse in panic. "You can go upstairs or downstairs. It doesn't matter—you can get anywhere from anywhere else in the hut. Now, give me the bottle, pleeeeeeee—"

In disgust, you hand the bottle to the mouse. Seizing the wine bottle with its furry forepaws, the mouse drinks the contents down within seconds, then passes out cold on the floor.

"An' I thought I looked foolish when I was all liquored up!" Mjolnir grumbles into his beard. "'Nuff to make me want to quit drinkin'—almost."

You examine the two stairways. If you decide to go upstairs, turn to **162**. If you prefer to head downstairs, turn to **136**.

103

As you approach the log hut, you're certain that there are plenty of surprises in store.

Indeed, suddenly the cabin tilts and begins to rise from the ground. Before your astounded eyes, two huge chickenlike legs appear from beneath the strange hut and begin a dancing motion, spinning the hut around in a circle and treading the marshy ground with muffled thunder.

"How do we get inside now?" you wonder aloud. The hut is perhaps a dozen feet above the earth, whirling like a top. Mjolnir is too astonished to even try to frame an answer.

If you decide to attack the hut's strange chicken legs, turn to **179**. If you choose to try using Starlight's magical powers on the hut, turn to **198**. If you try to get Mjolnir to give his suggestions, turn to **204**.

104

There's nothing left to do but fight the elemental face-to-face. Too frightened to help you, Mjolnir runs for the

closed door. As the huge, manlike creature advances, stiff-legged, across the solid stone floor toward you, you draw Starlight back and swing mightily.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 11 or less, you miss the monster and it strikes you. Roll three dice and subtract the result from your hit point total. Then you may either roll again to attack the monster or you may attempt to flee from combat (see below).

If you strike the monster, roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagical power score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **99**. If it is 7 or less, Starlight's antimagical blade failed against the elemental and it strikes you. Roll three dice and subtract the result from your hit point total. Then decide once more whether to try to hit the elemental or flee, and go on as before.

You must have at least 10 hit points left in order to flee, or else you must stay and fight the elemental. Otherwise, you may flee at any time. Turn to **6** if you choose to flee from combat.

105

"Jole," you say quietly, "I count five hobgoblins against the two of us. You know what that means, don't you?"

"What?" Mjolnir mutters, holding his ax in battle-ready position.

"We've got to even the odds!" As you speak, you lunge forward and run Starlight's blade through the nearest hobgoblin's armor with a shivering crunch. The hobgoblin gasps and falls. At the same moment, the others rush you and Mjolnir.

Roll two dice and add the number to your fighting skill score. If the total is 9 or more, you've struck and killed one of the two hobgoblins attacking you. If you roll 8 or less, both attacking hobgoblins succeed in striking you.

Roll two dice and subtract the result from your hit point total. Then roll to try to hit the hobgoblins again, repeating the above process.

If you kill one hobgoblin, you must attack and kill the other hobgoblin in the same manner. If you miss the second hobgoblin when you attack, roll only one die for damage instead of two dice. You may not retreat from this fight. If you succeed in killing both hobgoblins before losing all your hit points, turn to 141.

106

Dodging the golem's massive blow, you slip and fall to the floor before it. You hear Mjolnir shout out a war cry, and the dwarf suddenly appears beside you, swinging at the iron monster with his ax.

The iron golem's right fist smashes down, grazing the dwarf's head just hard enough to send him sprawling to the floor beside you. You leap to your feet and strike at the golem, with Starlight's blade glowing darkly with its antimagical power.

Your sword slams into the side of the golem's leg with an ear-ringing clang. At the same moment, the antimagical aura around Starlight flares brightly. But will it stop the golem?

Roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagical power score. If the total is 9 or more, turn to 83. If it is 8 or less, your sword fails to stop the iron golem, and the monster strikes you. Roll three dice and subtract the result from your hit point total.

Then repeat the procedure for attacking the golem. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. This time, and all subsequent times, if the total is 10 or more, turn to 83. If the total is 9 or less, you miss the golem and it strikes you back. Roll three dice and subtract that many hit points of damage.

If you wish to continue fighting the golem, repeat the

roll to hit it, as in the paragraph immediately above. You may flee from the golem at any time during the fight. If you wish to flee from the golem, turn to **170**. You may not choose to flee if you have only 10 or fewer hit points remaining, since you are too weak to run.

107

The enormous green-scaled hands clutching you and Mjolnir sweep you rapidly through the darkness, higher and higher in a whirl of wind and fury. Jole cries out, but his cry is muffled by the titanic fingers in front of his face. You are scarcely less afraid, but you are too frightened to shout.

You twist your neck to look up—and gasp in horror as you see an enormous, reptilian head with shining green eyes and a mouth that could swallow a small town in one bite! The hands are drawing you and Mjolnir straight toward the titanic creature's fanged maw!

Cold terror courses through your bloodstream, but some part of you remains skeptical, despite your terror. How could this monster be real? If this room is part of Baba Yaga's hut, how could such an enormous creature live inside it? How could such an enormous thing exist in the first place, even in a world filled with magic?

It must be an illusion, a spell cast over your mind and senses to make you believe this is really happening! If so, there's no other way to escape except by destroying the spell!

One of your hands still rests on the hilt of Starlight, your sword that can counter magical spells. You concentrate and activate the sword's magical powers, hoping against hope that it will dispel the illusion before the gigantic reptile eats you alive!

Roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagic score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **221**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **41**.

Certain that only Starlight has a chance of saving you, you raise your sword and aim it at the vicious gray slaad. The black blade suddenly gleams with power, and a soft cloak of darkness forms around the blade as the antimagical powers activate.

"Mjolnir!" you whisper to your friend. "Get ready to attack that frog-thing from behind! Don't fail me or we're doomed!"

Mjolnir nods and starts to move around to one side as you wave your black-cloaked weapon at the slaad, keeping its attention. Suddenly the gray slaad raises a clawed hand and launches another ball of crackling white lightning at your body.

Roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagic score. If the score is 7 or less, roll three dice and subtract the total from your hit points. If the score is 8 or more, the sword absorbs the gray slaad's spell and you are uninjured.

Whether you were successful with the first die roll or not, next roll another die again and add the result to Mjolnir's stealth skill score. If the total is 8 or less, turn to 43. If it is 9 or better, turn to 114.

As your thoughts return to the present, you notice a light flickering off to your left, very close by. Nervously you reach down and tap Mjolnir on the top of his bare, bald head.

"Jole," you whisper softly, "look over there, off to the left. Can you tell what that is?" You know that Mjolnir's dwarven sight is better than yours in dim light and darkness.

He squints into the mist, then grunts. "Looks like a human skull, stuck on top of a pole. It's got a candle or somethin' inside it."



You shrug off a feeling of apprehension. "Probably a trap," you say casually, trying to hide your true feelings. You've heard that Baba Yaga is in the habit of setting magical guardians around her hut for extra protection. "Is there some way we can get around it?"

"Sure," Mjolnir grunts, insulted. "I'd be mighty useless if I couldn't outsmart a bone on a stick, wouldn't I?" He leads you off through the undergrowth soundlessly, keeping out of sight of the fiery-eyed skull. Both of you keep alert for enemies as you go.

Roll one die and add it to Mjolnir's stealth skill score. You may not add any experience points to this roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **143**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **189**.

110

"I can't find no way out!" Mjolnir whispers shakily in the darkness. "Jerrak, that slitherin' thing's gonna catch us here!"

You fight down your own panic and turn, facing upstairs, sword raised, ready to fight the unseen horror. If you have the special escape item that the mouse gave you, and you wish to use it, turn to **148**. Otherwise, you must fight **(30)**.

111

Fighting back your panic, you force yourself to let Mjolnir do his best. He continues to tinker patiently with the lock as the water level continues to rise. With luck, it won't rise too high before he is successful.

Roll one die and add the result to Mjolnir's stealth skill score. If the result is 7 or more, turn to **205**. If it is 6 or less, you may shove Mjolnir aside and make one attempt to break down the door. Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 9 or more, turn to **14**. If it is 8 or less, turn to **33**.



112

With the speed born of desperation, you dodge out of the way of the creature's thrashing tail. You grab it above the stinger with a powerful grip, then jam the stinger hard into a tree trunk beside you. The little creature howls in pain and frustration and stops struggling.

As Mjolnir pins the creature to the swampy ground, you suddenly recognize it. "It's an imp!" you cry, noting its flame-red color, short horns, and enormous nose. The imp stares malevolently up at Mjolnir, who sits astride the little devil and holds it down with one broad hand planted on its chest.

"You think you're tough, eh?" sneers the imp in a nasal voice. "Well, you're scum, an' I can prove it! Lemme up an' let's fight fair! I'll knock your teeth in!"

You and Mjolnir merely laugh. "We gotcha right where we want ya, ya little wimp imp!" Mjolnir roars. "Now, talk! Tell us 'bout that witch by th' name of Baba Yaga that lives 'round here!"

The imp's eyes grow wide, then narrow with malice. "Witch? Witch? Whaddaya mean, witch?"

"You know who we mean," you tell it flatly. "If you don't give us any trouble, you might live to be a big devil someday, even though you don't deserve it."

The imp strains to get away from Mjolnir's iron grip without success. Exhausted, it gives up. "All right

already!" it whines. "You got me. That witch don't live around here. She's got a place over thataway"—the imp jerks his head away from the direction of the hut—"in a cave. Don't tell her I told you where she lives, or she'll feed me to her pet black dragon!"

Mjolnir looks at the imp scornfully. "You expect us to believe a whopper like that? Why, I oughta—" He grips his ax and raises it high above his head threateningly.

"Wait!" shrieks the imp. He turns to you with pleading eyes. "Please don't let this bloodthirsty midget whack me open! I ain't lyin'! That witch is over in the cave! You gotta believe me!"

You frown as you consider the imp's words. Imps are notorious liars, but they've also been known to tell the truth to save their own skins. Should you believe the imp or not? If you decide to head for the cave, turn to 208. If you don't believe the imp, turn to 131.

113

Within moments after you attack the goblin, you manage to run the creature through with your sword. It falls past you and rolls down the stairwell.

"Good goin', Jerrak!" Mjolnir shouts, getting to his feet. "I'd 'a' whacked that little booger m'self, but—"

"Never mind, Jole," you tell your friend, looking down the stairs as the goblin's body rolls to a stop. "Let's just get on up to that door."

When you reach the door, Mjolnir examines it and the walls around it for traps but finds nothing. With a sigh of relief, you open the door and enter the well-lighted chamber beyond, hoping to see some sign of the long-lost Sage Beryl. Turn to 49.

114

The flash from the exploding lightning ball catches you off guard, and for several seconds all you can see is

the afterimage of a huge spot of purple in front of your eyes. As you blink and your vision begins to clear, you hear Mjolnir's shout of triumph and the monster's throaty gasp of pain as the dwarf attacks.

Staggering forward to Mjolnir's aid, you discover the gray slaad has been badly wounded by a blow from Mjolnir's ax. Quickly you attack, Starlight's black blade scything through the air at the monster.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **68**. If it is 12 or less, roll two dice and subtract the result from your hit point total, then roll to try to hit the slaad again. Repeat the process until either you or the gray slaad is slain.

115

With all your might, you thrust Starlight deep into the slimy flesh of the creature before you on the dark stairwell. For an instant, you feel a cold, wet tentacle brush against your face. In shivering horror, you slap at it and it falls away.

The slithering sounds stop suddenly, replaced by a shuddering sigh. You must have hit a vital spot. The creature makes no further sound. Have you killed it?

Suddenly the stairwell is flooded with light. Mjolnir has found a secret door—and you see that the thing you've fought is truly dead.

You see before you what could best be described as an animated slime—jellylike, sickly yellow in color, with a glistening, sticky surface that could form into armlike shapes with which to attack. Your sword slashed the monster open, spilling a river of ooze down the steps and over your feet.

You hastily back away from the thing, shaken by its foul appearance. A few moments later, you and Mjolnir leave the stairwell through the secret door and find yourself in a lighted room. You feel ill, still overcome by

the ghastly sight of the slithering horror on the stairs, but you think you'll recover.

"It weren't pretty, that's fer sure!" Mjolnir says, looking slightly green himself. "But you'll get over it, Jerrak. Just tell me when you're ready." He pats you on the shoulder in a friendly, grandfatherly fashion.

If you possessed the special escape item given to you by the giant mouse, you find now that the item has mysteriously vanished. Perhaps it came off when you fought the slithering thing.

After a brief rest, you get your breath back and feel a little better. You rise to your feet and survey your surroundings. Turn to **26**.

116

Murmur's savage attack is almost more than you can deal with. Her flashing white claws and teeth rip your clothing and scar your flesh. It's all you can do to keep the creature from tearing you to pieces. If Murmur is only "playing," she's playing for keeps!

Spotting a momentary opening, you plunge your sword into the tiger-cat's chest. With a deafening howl, it sags limply to the floor. At the same instant, a white-hot scream of telepathic pain burns in your mind. You lie gasping on the floor beside the tiger-cat's body for several long moments.

The dwarf seems to have been clawed in the fight as well, but not as badly as you were. "Jerrak," Mjolnir wheezes faintly. "Listen, I been thinkin' mebbe we been kinda hasty here. Mebbe we oughta leave and think 'bout this for—"

"Quiet, Jole!" You push yourself up and retrieve your sword with renewed determination. You remember that Murmur said something about the cellar, attic, and back door. You explore the room until you find a trapdoor in the ceiling, but you see no sign of the other two exits.

"Let's see if Baba Yaga has anything hidden in her attic," you mutter as you discover a ladder behind the stove and prop it up. "I've no idea how this place is constructed. For all we know, the museum could be in the attic, and the Sage Beryl could be there in front of us."

"Sure, Jerrak. An' mebbe the jolly ol' Yule gnome will hand it to us, too," grumbles Mjolnir into his beard as he prepares to follow you up the ladder. Turn to 135.

117

For several seconds you press on slowly through the hazy fog in the new room, groping for any landmarks. Suddenly a voice rings out in the air around you.

"Alert! Alert! Someone has stolen an item from the Grand Dining Hall! The thieves will be sent directly to the test!"

You spin around and look down at Mjolnir, who opens his jacket in shock and removes one of the carved gemstone goblets. "You don't think they was askin' 'bout this, do you?" he asks nervously. Immediately the goblet flies from his hand and out the door through which you entered.

Before you can answer, you and Mjolnir are instantly teleported out of the fog and into a new room. If you arrived at this section from 23 by allowing Mjolnir to keep the stolen goblet, subtract 1 point from your judgment score. Then turn to 144. If you didn't see him take the goblet, you needn't subtract a judgment point before turning to 144.

118

The black aura vanishes from Starlight as suddenly as it appeared as a forked bolt of lightning snakes out from the runes on the door, striking your sword. The shock jars you to the teeth, and every part of your body shakes uncontrollably! Then the lightning vanishes,

and you slump to the floor. Jole lies groaning beside you.

Roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total.

To your horror, you discover that you can't move! The lightning bolt must have paralyzed your muscles, and you lie helpless, your feet stretched out before the strange door. Just as you decide that nothing could be worse, you hear something moving behind the door.

Suddenly the door bursts open, shoving your nerveless legs aside. One, two, then three left arms appear, then a woman's head and torso! The woman is coldly beautiful, like a white glacier, and her smoky black hair hangs in ripples around her shoulders.

With a sinking heart, you see that the woman isn't a woman at all. The three left arms all belong to her, as do the three right arms revealed when she pushes the door open the rest of the way. Instead of legs, glistening scales cover her from the waist down. She has the gleaming green body of a giant serpent!

"Well, well, well," she says crisply, her blood-red lips curled into a smile that could freeze sunlight. "I never thought I'd see the day when dinner would walk right up to my door and lie down, all ready to eat. I'm one lucky demon!"

Her lips pull apart and reveal a mouth full of shark-like teeth. "Baba Yaga requested me to pop in if someone disturbed her runes or opened this door. She wanted me to save you for her lunch. I'll give her what's left of you when I'm done—if anything is left of you, that is."

As the strange being slides nearer, you summon every last ounce of strength that you have, knotting your muscles in a desperate fight against the paralyzing spell from the runes on the door.

Roll one die and add the number to your strength skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 195. If it is 6 or less, turn to 229.

"Baba Yaga can't hear you," purrs a sleepy feminine voice in your mind, "but I certainly can. Welcome."

Startled, you look quickly around the room.

Mjolnir looks just as confused. "What was that?" he cries. "Who said that?"

"It was I," the voice continues in the same sleepy tone. "I'm here, on the shelf by your head."

You glance up into the emerald-green eyes of an enormous silver-striped cat. It watches you with bored amusement. *"I can read your thoughts," it seems say. "No sense in beating around the bush with introductions. You're here for the Sage Beryl. I believe Baba Yaga has it in the museum."*

"Th-thank you," you say hesitantly. How does one address a telepathic cat? This whole situation seems like a bad dream. "Do you have a name?"

"My name is Murmur. I doubt you'll ever get near your precious talking gemstone, but I don't mind offering you a little help."

"You may go up into the attic or down into the cellar, or you may try the back door. Or—" The cat yawns lazily. "To put it bluntly, I'm rather bored. I'd welcome someone to wrestle with about now."

You frown deeply. Why would you want to attack a cat? Maybe it just wants to play.

If you want to go to the attic, turn to **29**. Turn to **201** if you prefer to go to the cellar, and turn to **73** if you wish to go out the back door. Finally, turn to **181** if you'd rather attack the cat.

120

You decide it isn't worth irritating the cook, whatever her treatment of you and your companion. Your goal is to find the Sage Beryl as soon as possible and get out of this madhouse!

"We'll be on our way, then," you tell the incredibly ugly blue cook, retrieving your sword from the coal pile. She peers down at you with narrowed eyes as you rise to your feet, but she seems to relax a bit.

"Ain't right, people burstin' into me kitchen like that, blowin' all me spices about!" mutters the cook, turning back to her stoves to stir the contents of a large pot with her ladle. "Can't even make a cup o' tea without someone interruptin' me!"

"I don't know how that wind carried us here," you whisper to Mjolnir, "and I have no idea how to get out of here. We'll just have to keep searching until we find the Sage Beryl and hope we can make it out of this mad-house afterward."

After a brief look around the kitchen, you find a door and open it, your sword at the ready. Motioning Mjolnir to follow, you pass through the door into a new room.

Turn to 126.

121

A talking raven trying to con me out of gold so that I can get into Baba Yaga's hut? you think. It sounds like some kind of bad dream. You certainly have no intention of giving good money to a mere bird. You just want to get your grandfather's Sage Beryl back.

"We don't have any gold for you," you say flatly. "We came here looking for Baba Yaga's hut, but we don't need any help from you to get inside."

The raven caws with laughter. "If you have nothing to give me, then by all means, go on to the hut—with my best wishes. And give the old witch a kiss from me, eh? She's an evil one if ever evil there was! Have a nice day!"

With that, the raven takes to the wing and flies lazily away. You watch it recede into the distance, then set off for the hut once more, with Mjolnir at your heels. Turn to 103.

122

You struggle to pull the exhausted Mjolnir free from the carnivorous flowers, but to no avail. Dozens of the petaled monsters tear viciously at your legs and feet, their teeth clacking and grinding, heedless of your attempts to kick them off.

In desperation, you release Mjolnir's limp form and draw your sword, slashing at the snapping flowers in your fury to escape. But even as you do, you feel certain of eventual defeat. Your sword arm soon grows weary, and you begin to feel weak from loss of blood.

After one last swing at the hundreds of tiny, toothed mouths, you stagger. The world starts to spin, and your vision goes black. Exhausted, you collapse across the body of your dwarven friend, hopelessly trying to push the biting, fanged flowers away. . . . ✚

123

The whirlwind bearing you and Mjolnir aloft soon comes to an abrupt end. For a split second, you continue to fly through the air, then crash into a hardwood floor and roll into a large pile of black rocky material. Mjolnir crashes to a stop right beside you.

You groan painfully and look around. The black material is actually hard coal. Off to one side is a large iron oven, its sides shimmering from the heat inside it. To the other side are cabinets and shelves crammed with thousands of used jars, dirty dishes, broken glasses, crusts of bread, wooden spoons, tin boxes, and glass mugs half filled with strange liquids.

"An' wot does you think yer doin' in me kitchen?" screeches an incredibly shrill voice. Standing before you is a tall, thin old woman with blue skin and black hair that writhes as if it had life of its own. The old woman is wearing a cook's apron, and she clutches a long iron ladle in one hand.



"An' who wants t' know?" roars Mjolnir, getting to his feet and taking out his ax.

"I do!" screams the blue cook, shaking the ladle in your faces. "An' you bloody well ain't got no permission from me to be 'ere, so out you go! Begone! I got dinner t' fix 'ere for her nibs, Baba Yaga, an' if you don't watch out, you could be it!"

Something about her appearance is familiar to you. Could she be an annis? An annis, you recall from Nico-damus's stories, is a haglike monster with magical powers. You can't remember what spells annises can cast, but you do know that they are unspeakably evil.

If you decide to stay in the kitchen, regardless of what the blue cook says, turn to **197**. If you'd rather leave, turn to **120**.

124

The greenhag fights furiously and savagely. Several times its sharp claws rake deep gashes in your flesh through your clothing. It's all you can do to keep the creature away from you.

Roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total.

"Jole!" you shout, tiring quickly from the fight. "Do something! I'm not sure I can hold out much longer!"

Mjolnir backs off from the thick of the battle for a moment, and the snarling greenhag concentrates on you. You barely escape having your face taken off, when suddenly the greenhag stumbles and falls with a shriek. Mjolnir, having managed to trip it somehow, dodges out of its reach.

"Run!" you shout, and both of you run like the wind. You hurtle through the stillness of the nightmare forest with your dwarf friend at your heels. But to your horror, when you steal a glance behind you, you discover that the greenhag trails you by only a short distance!

"Jerrak!" Mjolnir shouts, pointing ahead. "I see a door up ahead! Let's head for it!"

As you run, you see a wooden doorway set in the trunk of an enormous tree. You reach the door only moments ahead of the greenhag, throw it open, and stumble inside, right behind Mjolnir.

You slam the door shut, then hear the greenhag claw at the door in fury for several minutes. Before long, the clawing ceases, and it seems safe to assume that the greenhag has given up and gone away. Turn to 35.



125

"I'm fine!" you roar back at Mjolnir as you leap to your feet in rage. "But you won't be!" you storm, pointing your blade at the grinning skull.

You leap at the strange creature, Starlight singing in your hand, as the skull prepares to launch another burst of flame at you. There's no time to try absorbing the skull's magical power with Starlight.

In order to destroy the skull, you will need to hit it twice with your sword. You get the first swing in the melee.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 11 or more, you've hit the skull, but you still need to hit it again to destroy it. If you miss, the skull shoots flames from its eyes and inflicts 4 hit points of damage to you.

Continue as above, rolling to hit the skull and suffering 4 hit points of damage if you miss it, until you manage to hit the skull twice, or until Jerrak's hit points are gone and he dies. If you win, turn to **25**. After one round, you may elect to escape instead by turning to **48**.

126

As you enter the new room, you find yourself in an alcove opening into a room with a brightly lit garden of some sort. The ceiling arches high over the circular area, which is perhaps a hundred feet across and filled with low shrubs, flowers, bushes, and crawling vines.

"Hope this don't start my hay fever goin'," Mjolnir remarks as he looks around. He sniffs and points toward the center of the room, where the top of a spiral staircase is visible. "That looks like th' only way out o' this place. Wanna check it out?"

You look over the room carefully, alert for any possible dangers. You remind yourself that, even though the garden is colorful and innocent-looking, this is Baba Yaga's hut. . . .

Roll one die and add the result to your observation skill score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **81**. If it is 7 or less, turn to **31**.

127

Mjolnir follows you through the museum, through gallery after gallery of untold riches and exquisite art masterpieces. You feel tiny and insignificant when you think of the meager possessions you've accumulated in your own life. How can you hope to achieve success against a witch with power and wealth such as this?

Just as you are thinking of turning back, Mjolnir tugs at your sleeve. "Jerrak," he says. "Look at that sign over there." You follow his gaze to a sign hanging over a small alcove.

THE SAGE BERYL

Sitting on a crystalline pedestal, on a cloth of the finest white silk, is a fist-sized green gem that glows faintly in the museum's light.

You can't believe your good fortune! The Sage Beryl! Your grandfather's gem! The magical gem that contains your old friend Nicodamus!

You start forward, then suddenly come to a dead stop. There must be a trap somewhere nearby! You ask Mjolnir to check, but he finds no traps at all nearby.

Shivering with excitement, you reach out for the Sage Beryl. Turn to **200**.

128

When the aura of darkness makes contact with the dancing legs of the hut, everything seems to happen quickly. A light as bright as the heart of the sun appears, accompanied by a booming blast that sweeps swamp water, algae, dead branches, rocks, and you and Mjolnir away with ease.

Things happen so fast that you are only hazily aware of crashing through tree limbs and vines at high speed. Finally you strike against something solid that rattles you to the core. Roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total, then turn to **51**.

129

Something about the inscription on the door bothers you. You can't believe that Baba Yaga would give away all of her gold to anyone who wants it, even if they have made it this far into the hut. It must be a trap.

You tell Mjolnir of your suspicions, and he agrees with you. "I sure hate t' leave a door like this unopened," he sighs, "but this one can be an exception."

Turning away from the door, the two of you start back

down the fungus-lit corridor. Within moments, however, something becomes horribly apparent.

"We ain't goin' down the right tunnel," Mjolnir grumbles nervously. "There shoulda been a turn about here, but there ain't no sign of one. The walls an' floor seem t' be made outta a different kinda stonework now. We ain't where we was at, but there ain't no other tunnel t' follow! I'm all confused!"

"Probably a magical trap," you groan, coming to a stop. "The tunnel has been cursed to change itself around somehow. We're hopelessly lost."

Your greed for Baba Yaga's treasure seems to have gotten you into a worse mess than you were in before. Subtract 1 point from your judgment score.

After a moment of silence, Mjolnir shoulders his ax. "Well, there ain't no use cryin' 'bout it now," he says as he starts walking again. "May as well see if we can find that Sage Beryl of yours."

Minutes later, you both arrive in a small chamber with two doors. Several torches burn in nearby sconces on the walls. Each door is identical in appearance. Nothing else seems to be in the chamber, except for a large red X in the center of the floor.

You may investigate the red X (17), go through the door on the right (35), or try the door on the left (44).



You resist the urge to attack the repulsive Baba Yaga. You're sure she must have earned her reputation for being unkillable.

You force yourself to relax and listen to her words. She seems to sense this and nods.

"You and your dwarven companion," she says, indicating the terrified Mjolnir, "will now be sent through a little test. If you survive, you may have the item that you seek—the Sage Beryl, I believe. If you don't survive, then . . ." Baba Yaga tilts her head and smiles, her eyes shining like ice.

Your throat is dry from tension, but you can still speak. "It's a deal, then."

The witch nods approval. "What other choice do you have, Jerrak Kimbal?" she says, echoing the very thought that was going through your head.

With that, Baba Yaga extends one clawed, bony finger before her and traces an arcane pattern in the air. As she does, a glowing green design appears, similar to a rune. You can't recall having ever seen magic like this before.

When the pattern is finished, Baba Yaga leans forward and breathes on it. Something explodes in the air around you, jarring you to the bone. You feel disoriented, as if you were falling, and everything vanishes, then suddenly reappears. But now you're somewhere else. Turn to 144.

You reach over and grab Mjolnir's ax handle. "I don't trust this little red devil any more than you do," you tell the dwarven thief, "but let's take him along with us to Baba Yaga's hut anyway. He may know where the Sage Beryl is hidden."

"You can't make me rat on that witch!" the imp sneers. "She'd skin me alive and use me as a dishrag!"

"Then I suppose Mjolnir will have to cut off your head after all," you say with a sigh. "Sorry about that."

"Hey! Wait a minute!" the imp cries, seeing Mjolnir raise his ax once again. "Okay, so maybe I do recall a few details about that hut. Sure, I'll go with you guys. Just keep dat midget and his chopper away from my neck!"

Minutes later, the three of you arrive near the outside of Baba Yaga's hut. "Remember th' skull on th' stick, Jerrak?" Mjolnir warns. "It was right over there. Let's be sure not wake it up." Glancing around nervously, he sets off into the foliage to scout around.

The imp, with a rope tied around its neck and a piece of wood stuck over the end of its tail to render the stinger useless, looks in the direction of the skull. Then it turns to look at you with a nasty grin.

"Whatever it is you're thinking about," you advise the imp, "forget it. One false move and—"

Suddenly, with an audible popping sound, the imp turns into a black raven! Snapping its wings once, the raven shrugs off the rope, and the wood that formerly rested on its tail splashes into a puddle of water. Then the imp-raven flies off toward the skull!

"Mjolnir!" you shout, rushing off into the heavy growth to search for him. "Come back! The imp escaped, and it's heading for the skull!"

You crash through the swampy vegetation and finally emerge in a cleared area, only to discover the raven cawing a warning to the same fiery-eyed skull on a post you tried to avoid earlier. The skull turns in your direction as the raven hastily flies off into the marshlands. At the same moment, Mjolnir appears beside you, looking around wildly.

You don't know what magical powers the skull might possess, but you aren't willing to take a chance that it's harmless. More than likely, the skull has been endowed

with powers to make it suitable as a guardian of Baba Yaga's hut. Raising your sword Starlight, you point it in the direction of the skull and activate its antimagical powers.

Roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagical power score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **153**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **103**.

132

You quickly put Starlight back in its sheath again and flex your fingers. Even a magical broom should be harmless once you get your hands on it and wrestle it to the ground. When you see an opening, you leap out and grab the broom firmly by its handle.

You quickly discover that the broom is incredibly strong. It resists your every attempt to subdue it.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **54**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **39**.

133

Your keen sword is an even match for the vicious criosphinx's curved horns and claws, and the two of you slash at each other for many long minutes. The creature is bent on killing you and attacks ferociously, wild with fury.

In the end, however, a sword thrust to the creature's heart decides the fight. With a shuddering gasp, the criosphinx collapses on the boggy ground and is silent, its open eyes glassy.

You hear a loud whoop. Mjolnir splashes through a shallow pool to congratulate you on your victory, but you're too exhausted to reply for several minutes. When you finally get your breath back, you see something that causes you to gasp.

An eerie, golden glow is radiating from the crios-

phinx's still body. Within seconds, the creature shrinks rapidly into a new shape—that of a golden key.

Mjolnir stares at the key as if it were a live rattlesnake. "I don't care if it's real gold or not," he mutters. "I ain't a-gonna touch it. I ain't even gonna get near it!"

"It might be valuable," you tell him. "Perhaps it's a key to the hut." Then again, you think, it might not be. Is this magical transformation a trap?

Carefully you step forward and pick up the golden key. The key has some strange runes written upon it. Concentrating, you read, "I WILL LET YOU IN, BUT YOU MUST GET YOURSELF OUT!"

If you decide to take the key, turn to **95**. If you'd rather not take it, drop the key and move on to the hut. Turn to **103**.

134

"If the fastest way to the Sage Beryl is through the gray slaad's doorway, then let's go fight the gray slaad," you tell Mjolnir confidently. You don't feel nearly as confident as you sound, however. You're challenging the worst of the lot and you can't help but wonder if it's a wise decision.

Mjolnir shrugs and lifts his ax. "If you say so, Jerrak," he mutters in a low voice. "But that there gray toad looks meaner'n a demon with hives!"

You swim through the air toward the gray mushroom, noticing that the other three slaadi are watching you with interest. *What could be so bad about the gray one?* you wonder.

The moment you touch the gray mushroom, you find out. The gray slaad raises its clawed fingers as you charge for it, and it whispers a few words in a ghastly voice. Suddenly a ball of white lightning flashes out from the fingers of one of its hands, stunning you with electrifying power.

Roll three dice and subtract the total from your hit points.

It occurs to you that perhaps you could block the slaad's magic with Starlight's antimagical powers. If you did this, perhaps Mjolnir could attack the beast from behind and slay it. On the other hand, that would put Mjolnir in serious danger.

If you wish to use Starlight's power against the gray slaad's magical attacks from now on, turn to **108**. If you wish to fight hand-to-hand instead, turn to **157**.

135

You proceed cautiously up the ladder and push the trapdoor open with Starlight's tip. You see a flickering yellow light in the attic, as if from a lamp.

With a last glance back at Mjolnir, you carefully climb the remaining rungs and step out onto the attic floor, ready for anything. Mjolnir is only moments behind you.

The attic is much larger than you thought it would be. Dusty trunks and baskets full of moldering clothing, shoes, trinkets, and scrolls are stacked in piles around the room. In one corner sits a small oil lamp with a flickering, yellow flame.

The light of the lamp falls upon a hunched-over, robed figure seated at a loom. It appears to be a woman. She's flipping a shuttle from side to side as her practiced fingers work at a dull-hued tapestry. The figure's face is hidden in the depths of her cowl.

Could it be Baba Yaga? Your mouth goes dry in fear, but you straighten your shoulders and step forward. "We're here for the Sage Beryl, Baba Yaga!" you announce with a confidence you do not feel.

The withered, white hands cease their weaving motion, and the figure arises and slowly pulls the tapestry from the loom. With a casual motion, the old woman

spreads the tapestry on the floor before you.

"I'm not Baba Yaga—merely a friend of hers," the old woman whispers in a voice that makes your skin crawl. "However, she told me you would be coming for the Sage Beryl. I believe I can help you.

"You might be able to find it if you pass through the threads of the land depicted in this tapestry. You may enter simply by stepping on this scene." She indicates the tapestry before you with a bony finger. "Or you might find it through that passage." The hooded figure points to an iron door beside her loom. "Go either way. It does not matter."

You glance down at the tapestry. In it, you see a lake surrounded by gigantic willows. Something about the scene is eerie and makes you uncomfortable. You think you see things hidden in the branches of the trees, and something seems to lurk beneath the surface of the lake, but you can't see what it is.

"Step into the tapestry or pass through the door, and you may discover your destiny," the old woman whispers once more as she gestures toward the scene at your feet.

You look at Mjolnir, who looks back at you, then at the door, the tapestry, and the old woman. "It's up to you, Jerrak," he says at last.

If you choose to enter the tapestry, turn to **22**. If you wish to leave by the iron door, turn to **86**.

136

Mjolnir follows along as you leave the wine cellar and start down the stairwell. The stairs circle around and around endlessly, spiraling into complete darkness. You slow down, fearful of stumbling.

Immediately Mjolnir bumps into you from behind. "Oof! Careful there, Jerrak! Here, lemme lead."

You allow your dwarven friend to push by you, and you follow after the soft sound of his booted feet on the stair

steps. The darkness grows deeper with each passing second. After several minutes, it's your turn to bump into Mjolnir from behind. You nearly fall over him.

"Watch it, Mjolnir!" you exclaim irritatedly. Your voice echoes oddly in the stairwell.

"Watch it yourself, you big oaf!" Mjolnir shouts back. "It's just as well I stopped you, 'cause there ain't no place t' go past here! Feel around here an' see!"

You regain your balance and carefully feel the wall next to you, leaning over Mjolnir's head in the total darkness. You're shocked to discover that the stairs ahead of you end in a solid wall! You've reached a dead end.

"I knowed it was comin' from the echo of our footsteps," Mjolnir grumbles. "This crazy hut! Baba Yaga oughtta have 'er head examined."

"Can you check around for secret doors or traps or something?" you ask, fighting down a sudden sense of claustrophobia.

"Yeah, but it'll take some time," the dwarf mutters back. "Guess I may as . . . well . . ."

You wait for him to finish. "May as well what?" you ask.

"Shhh!" Mjolnir hisses. You make no sound, not even daring to breathe. Mjolnir's senses are second to none in the dark.

As you wait, you suddenly hear a faint sound. Slowly turning your head, you realize that something is moving—slithering—down the stairs behind you.

"Do you hear it?" Mjolnir whispers fearfully. "Somethin's comin' for us." He turns, and you hear his hands press against the wall ahead of you, desperately searching for some way out of this death trap.

Roll one die and add the result to Mjolnir's stealth skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 82. If it is less than 7, turn to 110.

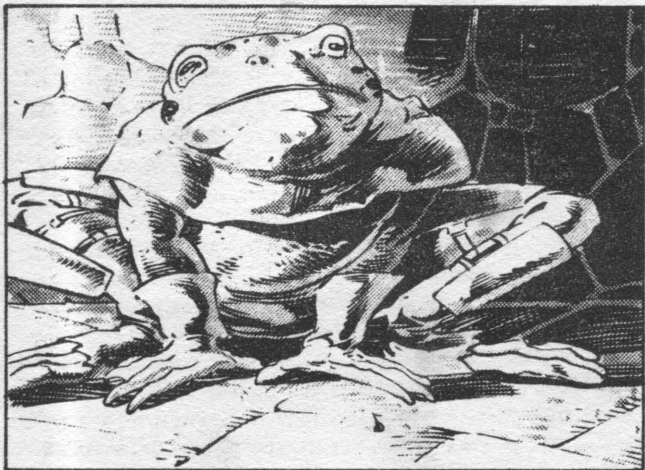
You decide that maybe it wouldn't hurt to let Mjolnir take a few small items from the museum.

Mjolnir starts off toward one of the glass cases full of rings, and you ignore him while you look around to see if the Sage Beryl might be in this room.

A few minutes pass as you search among the treasures and trophies for the Sage Beryl, but to no avail. Finally you turn back to look for Mjolnir. "Jole," you call, "let's shake a leg and move on. There's no sign of the Sage Beryl in this area. . . . Jole?"

No one answers. Making your way over to the glass case where you last saw the dwarf, you find the case open and several rings missing. You also find Mjolnir's ax, and muddy boots lying on the floor.

Panic grips you. Where's your small friend? "Jole?" you shout again desperately, looking around the large room. "Jole, where are you?"



"Ribbit," goes something at your feet. You look down. Something is moving about, wearing Mjolnir's clothes! With a sinking heart, you carefully lift it up . . . and stare straight into the eyes of a small, green, angry-looking frog.

"Mjolnir?" you ask hesitantly.

"Ribbit!" affirms the frog, rubbing its face with one webbed forefoot. *"Ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit!"*

The glass case must have been protected by a spell that would turn anyone disturbing it into a frog!

Subtract 1 point from your judgment score.

You wonder if Starlight's antimagical powers might help. Carefully holding the frog in one hand, you draw the ebon blade and reach out to the frog, which starts to panic at the sight of the weapon and tries to escape.

Roll one die and add the number to Starlight's antimagical power score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 47. If it is 6 or less, turn to 196.

138

As you examine the room, you hear a soft clanking noise. You turn your head to see the dwarf stuffing one of the huge gemlike goblets inside his shirt. He looks up at you at the same moment and gives you a sheepish grin.

"May as well take a little somethin' for a souvenir," he says with a shrug. "Th' witch ain't gonna miss one li'l bitty glass."

You worry about hidden guardians. You look around the room but see nothing. "I'm not sure if picking things up in here is a such a good idea," you say uneasily. "Remember, this isn't any ordinary witch's hut."

"Yep, I remember. But I ain't gonna leave here without no souvenir," Mjolnir says stubbornly. "It ain't gonna hurt nothin' an' nobody. Th' witch can afford it."

If you decide to let Mjolnir steal the goblet, turn to 23. If you'd rather tell him to put it back, turn to 72.

Unable to stand it any longer, you shove Mjolnir away from the door and step back, sheathing Starlight. Mjolnir roars curses at you, but you ignore him.

Subtract 1 point from your judgment score.

With the urgency that comes of desperation coursing through your blood, you hurl your weight against the door in hope of breaking it open and allowing you to escape the rapidly flooding chamber.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to 14. If it is 7 or less, you fail to open the door on your first try. You may try one more time by making another die roll as above. If you fail on the second roll, turn to 33.

"Well?" asks Mjolnir bluntly, "are we just gonna stand here all day, or are we gonna head for th' hut an' get the Sage Tub?"

You blink, abruptly brought back to the present. "You meant the Sage Beryl—but you're right, Jole," you reply with a smile. "It's time we went inside and paid Baba Yaga a visit." You wish you felt as confident as you sound.

"I'm sure she'll enjoy the company," hisses a rasping voice from somewhere nearby. Startled, you spin around, holding Starlight ready, then recoil in horror.

The voice came from a fleshless human skull, stuck atop a thin wooden post rising from the swamp. In place of eyes, yellow flames burn in the skull's eyesockets. It seems to be staring directly at you.

"By th' beard of th' First Father o' th' Dwarves!" Mjolnir whispers. "It must be one o' th' witch's guardians, Jerrak!"

"I am indeed," the skull says with a toothy grin. "I was once alive like yourselves, a wayward rogue who

thought he could best Baba Yaga and win a mighty treasure from her hut—but this was my reward, to serve her like a dog for eternity.”

“I’d say you make a poor watchdog, without legs or fangs,” you reply, finding the courage to speak. “How exactly do you serve Baba Yaga?”

The fire in the skull’s eyesockets flickers brightly. “I was given magical powers to keep away uninvited guests . . . such as yourselves.”

You don’t know what magical powers the skull possesses, but your instincts warn you that it’s about to attack. Quickly you raise Starlight and point the star-flecked black blade toward the skull, activating its anti-magical powers.

Roll one die and add the result to Starlight’s antimagical power score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **153**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **214**.



141

Having finally disposed of your two hobgoblin attackers, you turn to see how Mjolnir is faring. To your horror, you see that the other two hobgoblins have backed Mjolnir up against a tree stump and are about to kill him!

You leap forward, your sword swinging at the nearest hobgoblin. Roll two dice and add the number to your fighting skill score. If the total is 9 or more, turn to **206**. If it is 8 or less, turn to **199**.

The fight with the red slaad rapidly exhausts you and Mjolnir, even with both of you fighting as a team. The frog-man moves with inhuman speed, but eventually you manage to strike out and impale it on your sword, running Starlight through the slaad's bony chest.

The red froglike humanoid shrieks, then collapses, its eyes wide, staring into nothingness. You look around, but the other slaadi merely shrug in your direction, then look away. You've won!

"Bout time we took a look at that door, eh, Jerrak?" Mjolnir asks, wiping his forehead with his sleeve. "That fight darn near done me in!"

You nod, and the two of you swim through the air until you reach the door leading into the red mushroom. Drawing a breath and holding your sword at the ready, you swing open the door and step through. Turn to 26.

"It just ain't natural, puttin' somebody's head bone on a stick," Mjolnir mutters under his breath as he leads you on the path around the guardian skull. "Only a witch'd do somethin' eerie like—" Mjolnir comes to a sudden halt. "Oops!" he whispers.

You freeze. You've learned that whenever Mjolnir says "oops," something is very wrong.

Your dwarf companion turns to you and puts one finger to his lips. Then he slowly creeps forward, pushing aside the weeds and thick vines. He crouches low, then leaps with a shout out into the thick fog!

"Jole!" You rush forward, Starlight flashing in your hand. When you break through the undergrowth, you discover the dwarven thief splashing about in the muck, wrestling with a small, red, winged monster.

"Jerrak!" Mjolnir gasps. "I got it, Jerrak! Help me wrassle this dang thing down so we can question it!"

You ram Starlight into the muddy turf and leap into the fray. Almost immediately, you regret that you did. The strange winged thing's tail is lashing about wildly, and on the end of it is a sting like a scorpion's!

Roll one die and add the result to your strength score. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **112**. If it is 5 or less, turn to **50**.

144

You and Mjolnir reappear instantly in a large, stone-walled room that reminds you greatly of a huge prison cell. The room is lit by numerous torches in sconces along the walls. You see nothing but cold stone all around—and the single door on the far side of the room.

"Welcome to the test." You jump as you hear the rasping whisper echo through the empty chamber. The air seems to grow noticeably colder.

"The test is very simple, gentlemen," the voice goes on. "Leave the room, and you can continue searching for the Sage Beryl. Fail—and you die. That's it."

You stare at the distant doorway in the flickering torchlight. Mjolnir looks around uneasily.

"What's the catch?" you shout aloud fearfully.

You hear a distant chuckle. "I don't want you to leave!" the whispering voice says.

Roll one die and add the result to your observation skill score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **151**. If it is 7 or less, turn to **56**.

145

Your desperate grip on the criosphinx's mane is the only thing that saves you from probable death. As your body swings over the creature's head, you slam hard into its long nose.

The criosphinx bellows in pain and spins into a dive, stunned by the blow. You grip the creature's mane in

panic as the ground rushes up toward you.

At the last possible moment, Ulimnashton's wings snap up and brake the fall, and you and the creature crash into a shallow pool of stinking swamp water.

Roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total.

After a moment, you stagger to your feet, choking on algae and pond scum. The criosphinx isn't faring much better. In fact, one of its wings appears to have been broken in the fall and drags uselessly in the water.

The creature sees you and roars, blood dripping from its smashed nose. As Ulimnashton leaps at you in fury, you draw Starlight and meet its charge head-on!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 9 or more, you've succeeded in killing the monster; turn to 133. If the total is 8 or less, subtract 8 hit points of damage as the criosphinx rams you with its horns and rakes you with its clawed forepaws. Then continue the fight, subtracting 8 hit points of damage each time you fail to kill the beast. Continue the battle until either you win or are slain. If you are killed, turn to 223.



146

You and Mjolnir turn around and look toward the door you just entered. It seems to have closed behind you once you both entered the hut.

"Go out the way we came in?" you ask in amazement. "But we'll just go back outside into the swamp!"

"Oh, no!" trills Witchcraft, breaking into giggles and fluttering upside down for a moment. "The door is magical! Only the gods and Baba Yaga know where you'll end up once you pass through!"

You glance at Mjolnir, who shrugs his shoulders in helpless confusion. With a last glance at Witchcraft, you walk over to the door and grab the knob.

"Oh!" cries Witchcraft suddenly. "One more thing. Before you do that, you should—"

You freeze in the act of opening the door, but it's too late. A tremendous gust of wind blasts through the tiny room, flipping furniture into the air and sending a cloud of dust and ash swirling across the room.

You and Mjolnir try to fight the wind, but it begins to drag you forcibly through the door in its howling grip. You shout at Mjolnir, but the deafening hurricane drowns out your voice as you are carried through the doorway.

Once you and Mjolnir are gone, the door slams shut with a loud bang. The wind-swept dust begins to slow, settling across the general devastation.

After a few moments, a tiny, butterfly-winged red elephant peers out from behind the stove, where it had hidden from the wind blast. "As I was saying, before you open the door," it continues, looking around the room for you and Mjolnir, "you should grab onto something that's firmly—oh, never mind." Turn to 123.

147

Sheathing Starlight, you suddenly rush forward, ignoring Mjolnir's surprised shouts. If you can catch the golem off guard, you might have a chance to shove it over and possibly cripple it or destroy it.

The golem towers above you, watching you emotionlessly through its empty visor, then strides slowly toward you. You time your attack to occur just as

the creature is taking a step. Then you grab the golem's forward leg and push against it as hard as you possibly can.

The monster's foot comes down hard, barely missing your own feet. Your pushing had no effect whatsoever. *This thing must weigh tons!* you think. You scramble back, but you feel something incredibly strong grasp you by one arm and lift you into the air.

Your arm feels as if the golem is pulling it out of its socket! You struggle helplessly, barely hearing Mjolnir's anguished cries, and feel the iron golem grab you around your waist with its other hand.

As its fingers tighten around you, you have just enough time to wish that you'd done *anything* other than try to wrestle with an iron golem! . . . ✕

148

You rub the ring on your finger, wondering how it is supposed to save you. The mouse said it would help you get out of trouble quickly. You've decided now is the time!

"Okay, ring," you murmur hopefully, "this is it! Get us out of this mess!"

Mjolnir starts to say something, but you never find out what it was.

A rush of exploding air blasts your ears, and blinding light assails your eyes. Staggering back, you fall to the ground into a pool of stinking swamp water!

You blink, wiping at your eyes. You're outdoors, only thirty feet away from the hut! The ring teleported you out of danger! As you glance at your hand, you see that the ring has disappeared from your finger.

Then it dawns on you that you're alone.

"Mjolnir!" you shout, rising to your feet. You look back at the hut in horror. "MJOLNIR!"

As the mouse promised the ring helped *you* to get out

of trouble, but Mjolnir's still in danger, back inside Baba Yaga's hut!

You run madly toward the hut's door. Curse Baba Yaga! Curse that drunken mouse! Curse this stupid hut! You'll get your friend out of this nightmare world if it's the last thing you do!

But the door to the hut won't open, and nothing you do can get you back inside. . . . ✕

149

As your eyes adjust to the bright light, you're astonished to see that you've apparently entered a museum of some sort. Beautiful paintings, mounted in solid gold frames, hang from white marble walls. Fine statuary, carved from the finest quality stone and disturbingly lifelike, rests on pedestals or stands on the floor. Cases and cases of jeweled necklaces, bracelets, tiaras, rings, headbands, earrings, and crowns flash beneath globes of crystal light, suspended from the ceiling on sparkling silver chains.

Mjolnir's breath is taken away momentarily. When he recovers, he whispers softly, "In all my born days as a thief, I never guessed I'd see a place like this! Ain't no king or queen ever had this much wealth!"

You know what's going through his mind. No guardians seem to be about, and Mjolnir's gotten little in the way of treasure from this adventure so far. Perhaps it wouldn't hurt to let him take a little souvenir before moving on in search of the Sage Beryl. . . .

If you decide to let Mjolnir take a few items, turn to 137. If you stop him from taking anything and continue searching for the Sage Beryl, turn to 28.

150

As you glance out over the ghostly lake, you suddenly see a faint movement in the water. "Jole!" you warn.

“Get away from the shore! There’s—”

Suddenly a figure, as tall as a man, bursts out of the lake. It appears to be a withered, incredibly ugly, green-skinned woman of ancient age. The figure’s dripping arms and legs are bone-thin, and its fingers are curved into claws instead of nails at the end.

“Jole, get back!” you yell. **“It’s a greenhag!”**

“A green what?” Mjolnir shouts back as the monster wades out of the lake, its amber eyes burning hungrily into yours.

“A greenhag!” you shout again, keeping Starlight pointed in the direction of the approaching monster. **“Greenhags are man-eaters, ogre-women who live in swamps and prey on people for food!”**

“Oh,” Mjolnir says in sudden understanding. **“That ain’t good, is it?”**

With a frightening roar, the greenhag charges you, its clawed hands groping for your flesh.

If you wish to attack the greenhag, roll two dice and add the number to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **58**. If it is 11 or less, subtract 6 points of damage from your hit point total and reroll to attack again, starting the process over.

If at any time you want to escape from the greenhag before it kills you, turn to **124** instead of rerolling. You must have at least 10 hit points left to be able to escape; otherwise, you must fight to the death.

151

As the distant chuckle fades, you hear something scrape against the stone behind you. Turning, you see what appears to be the form of a huge earthen man emerging out of the very stone itself!

“It’s an earth elemental!” roars Mjolnir, stepping back away from it. **“Th’ witch brung it here by magic t’ kill us! Reg’lar weapons ain’t even gonna scratch it!”**



"How do you know so much about these things?" you shout back, uncertain of what to do next.

"I'm a dwarf, ain't I? O' course I know what a earth elemental is! Dwarves meet 'em all th' time in caves an' things."

If Baba Yaga brought the elemental here with her magic, then Starlight's antimagical powers might be able to drive the creature away while you give Mjolnir a chance to run for the door leading out. Or you could save time and skip using Starlight and just make a run for the door. . . .

Turn to **172** if you decide to use Starlight on the earth elemental. Turn to **202** if you simply try to beat the creature to the door.

152

With Starlight sheathed, you rush at the woman to grapple her. You have no intention of attacking a woman with your blade.

But as she hurls herself at you, you see that she isn't really a woman at all. The snakes that writhe atop her head rear up and hiss at you, and her red-rimmed eyes catch yours in a paralyzing stare.

"Touch, but don't look," Murmur had warned you.

She's a medusa! you realize before you feel a stabbing pain in your eyes. Instantly your muscles grow rigid, your skin hardens, and your entire body painfully turns into solid stone. . . . ✕

153

Starlight's black blade radiates a dark aura of power as it confronts the fiery-eyed skull. The magical guardian lets out a maniacal laugh and cries, "Burn, fool!"

Streams of flame burst from the skull's eyesockets, streaming toward you and Mjolnir. Instantly Starlight's aura engulfs the spurting flames. A hollow booming

sound echoes through the swampy air as the flames vanish, sucked into the whirlpool of power around Starlight's blade. Then the skull's fiery eyes blink out, and the darkened skull falls from its post into the murky waters of the swamp.

You feel weak with relief. You glance at Mjolnir, and his face looks unnaturally pale.

"I—I suppose we can go on to the hut now," you say uncertainly, looking around for any sign of another guardian.

"I thought I'd seen 'bout everythin'," Mjolnir admits, "but I ain't never seen a skull like that one. Jerrak, you think th' witch has got others like it?"

"I'm sure there are all manner of surprises waiting for us inside," you say quietly. Swallowing, you step forward through the mire toward the log. You aren't as confident about entering the hut as you were a few short minutes ago, but you know you have to go on. "We may as well find out what they are."

"If you say so," Mjolnir sighs, gripping his ax, "but I feel like I just aged 'bout a hunnerd years."

Turn to 103.

154

Instantly the insectoid monster scuttles forward on its stubby legs, its many arms groping for you and Mjolnir. You dance back, trying to stay out of its reach, looking for an opening.

Mjolnir tries to circle around the creature to attack from behind, but the creature's head rotates and manages to keep both you and the dwarf in view. Suddenly the creature's mandibles begin to vibrate, making a buzzing noise that sounds almost like speech. Its crystalline blue eyes light up brightly. Is it casting a spell?

If you decide to attack the derghodaemon, turn to 37. If you elect to use Starlight's antimagical powers

against the spell it is casting, roll one die and add the number to Starlight's antimagic power score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **226**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **65**.



155

Mjolnir swings his ax mightily at the goblin's head—and suddenly the goblin dodges beneath it, lashing out at the dwarf with its bare foot. The kick knocks Mjolnir off balance, and he almost falls down the stairs.

The goblin then pulls a long knife from behind it and advances toward the stunned dwarf. Galvanized into action, you leap up the stairs at the goblin, your sword flashing out at the creature.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **113**. If it is between 6 and 9, subtract 3 hit points of damage and roll again. If the total is 5 or less, turn to **180**.

156

The door groans under your combined efforts, but it doesn't give.

"By th' First Father o' th' Dwarves!" Mjolnir swears aloud in frustration. "Jerrak, you gotta stop that elemental thingamajig with your dang sword!"

Nodding grimly, you move out and attack the onrushing monster.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 11 or less, you miss the monster and it strikes you. Roll three dice and subtract the result

from your hit point total. Then roll again to attack the monster. You may not attempt to flee from combat.

If you strike the monster, roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagical power score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **76**. If it is 7 or less, contact with Starlight's antimagical blade failed to stop the elemental. Roll three dice for damage as above, then roll two dice to try to hit the monster as before.

157

You will need to strike the gray slaad twice in order to slay it. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 13 or more, roll again. If the second total is also 13 or more, turn to **68**.

If the total on either roll is 12 or less, the gray slaad waves its clawed hands and casts another lightning-ball spell from its claws. Roll three dice and deduct the total from your hit points. Then roll the dice again until you get a total of two hits against the slaad. Each time you miss, you must roll three dice for damage. As soon as you've struck the slaad a second time, turn to **68**. However, if you ever miss it three times in a row, turn to **185** without subtracting any points for damage.

158

"Wait, Mjolnir," you say, and the dwarf stops just as he is about to climb. "Let's investigate the voice first."

"It's your funeral!" Mjolnir replies with his usual mournful pessimism.

Gathering the remains of your courage, you step forward toward the strange cries. "Who's out there?" you call loudly.

"... out there?..." the strange voice echoes.

"Wish you hadn't done that," Mjolnir says softly. He winces as the words "... wish you hadn't done that ..." drift back to him.

You gird your courage once more and move still closer to the voice. "I said, who's there? My name is Jerrak. Who are you?"

"... *who are you?* ..." the voice repeats.

You groan inwardly. "It's nothing but an echo, Mjolnir," you say at last, lowering your sword. "There's nothing out here that can harm us."

At that moment, four large black creatures leap into view, bounding lightly over tree roots and ground as they head rapidly straight toward you. Though you can't see well in the dim light, you can tell that these monsters are repulsively ugly. They look like bloated greyhounds with short-muzzled, fang-toothed faces.

"... *nothing out here that can harm us* ..." cries the lead creature as it leaps for your throat. Its snarling, foam-flecked jaws clamp shut on your upraised sword blade as the impact knocks you flat on the ground.

"Great hammer of th' dwarves!" shouts Mjolnir in horror. "Them's *leucrottas*!"

You have no time at all to frame a reply. Another beast leaps on top of your chest and begins to tear at your free arm. The other two bowl Mjolnir to the earth and begin to gnaw at him. The dwarf's screams fill the night, mingling with your own as more of the creatures appear from the trees to join the awful feast. ✚



159

You thrust your sword deep into the oozing creature before you in the darkness. Suddenly a cold, slimy tentacle slaps against your face. Panic-stricken, you drop Starlight and claw at the slime, which covers your mouth and nose. You can't breathe!

Your lungs burning, you stumble and fall forward into the indescribable clutches of the slithering horror on the stairs. You try to scream as the cold, slimy flesh of the creature presses against you, envelops you, suffocates you. The last thing you are aware of is Mjolnir's voice, shouting hoarsely as if it were far, far away. . . . ✖

160

You make it to the door only moments after Mjolnir has begun to pick the lock. Startled, the dwarf drops his lockpicking wire and utters an oath that shocks even you.

"I ain't got time t' pick th' lock!" Mjolnir cries desperately as the earth elemental closes in on both of you. "Help me break th' door down, Jerrak!"

With all your strength, you and Mjolnir rush the door together. Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. Add 2 more for the dwarf. If the total is 10 or more, turn to 21. If it is 9 or less, turn to 156.

161

You have no idea what to expect as you push the hut's door open wide. Darkness fills the small room beyond. You take a deep breath and think of the Sage Beryl and of your late grandfather. He might be rather proud of you right now, as might Nicodamus, if only they were here.

You slip inside, with Mjolnir entering cautiously behind you, his ax held at the ready. As your eyes adjust to the gloom, you see the usual trappings of a peasant woman's hut: a wood-burning stove, a pile of firewood, a rickety table with eating utensils—and an empty plate stained with . . . *blood*?

Nervously you step away from the table and examine the room more closely. The walls are lined with bags of onions, herbs, and cloves, as well as a number of more

unusual items such as human bones and strips of dried meat. The wooden walls, ceiling, and floor appear sturdy, though old. The air is foul with the odor of rotting food and filth.

"I don't see anything magical about this place," you say in a low voice. You wonder if the witch can hear you.

Roll one die. If you roll a 1, 2, or 3, turn to **119**. If you roll a 4, 5, or 6, turn to **225**.

162

"Let's try our luck upstairs," you tell your dwarven friend. Mjolnir grunts, hefts his ax, and follows you across the wine cellar.

The staircase is lit by a seemingly endless series of torches held in wall sconces. You wonder for a moment how such a small hut could possibly hold a staircase this long, but then you remember that the hut is magical.

As you make your way up the stairs, roll one die and add the result to your observation skill score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **165**. If it is 7 or less, turn to **227**.

163

With a whispered last word to Mjolnir, you swim down through the air toward the blue frog-man, or slaad, as the red one said they were called. The blue slaad grins evilly as you and Mjolnir approach. You see its claws have an extra row of bladelike ridges along their backs.

As soon as you touch the edge of the blue mushroom, the slaad leaps to the attack, its razor-sharp claws extended. Each time it slashes down with a clawed hand, the bladelike ridges on the back of its hands arc out like long, unforgiving daggers.

You need to strike the blue slaad twice in order to slay it. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 11 or more, roll the two dice again and add that result to your fighting skill score, as above.

If the second total is also 11 or more, turn to **96**.

If the total on either roll is 10 or less, you miss and the blue slaad attacks you. Roll two dice and subtract the result from your hit point total. After you tally the damage, roll the dice again until you get a total of two hits against the slaad. As soon as you've struck it a second time, turn to **96**.

164

As you flail at the air before you, you suddenly strike something solid directly in front of you! The blow stuns the nerves in your arm from its force, and moments later you hear a thump as something hits the ground, but you see nothing!

You don't dare investigate until several minutes have gone by. Finally you and Mjolnir examine the ground on your hands and knees. In seconds, you discover a large, invisible body. Mjolnir kicks dirt over the object until you can see the shape of what is—or was—the greenhag. Obviously your blow struck home.

"Lucky shot there, Jerrak," Mjolnir comments, stepping back and looking solemn. "Not bad for a human, if I do say so m'self."

"Thanks," you tell him, giving him a friendly rap on his bald head with your knuckles. "Let's find a way out of this stinking lake area before something else decides to try to make mincemeat out of us. We've got to find a green gem with a wizard inside it."

Mjolnir examines your surroundings with his sharp gnomish eyes. Roll one die and add the result to Mjolnir's stealth skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **70**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **80**.

165

The steps look sturdy enough as you climb them, until suddenly you notice a peculiar crack running along the

edges of the steps ahead of you. You stop before you step on them.

"What's the matter, Jerrak?" Mjolnir grumbles. "Somethin' comin'?"

"There's something wrong with these steps, Jole. Take a look at this." You step aside as the dwarf moves ahead of you and bends down to examine the stairs.

"It's a pit trap," Mjolnir says finally. "Woulda dropped us right through the stairs into somethin', prob'ly somethin' pretty nasty." He flashes you a grin. "Least-ways, it woulda dropped you through the stairs. That's whatcha get for walkin' in front."

After a few minutes, you manage to find a way to get around the trap by walking along the edges of the steps, and the two of you continue on up. Soon a heavy, oak door appears at the top of the stairs—with a small, yellow creature sitting cross-legged in front of it. It looks like—



"A GOBLIN!" Mjolnir roars, trying to push past you with his ax raised. "A stinkin', filthy, ugly, soon-t'-be-dead GOBLIN!"

Until now, you'd almost forgotten how much dwarves and goblins hate each other. The two races have warred with each other for centuries. Oddly enough, the goblin simply watches the two of you without moving, a wicked smile on its lips.

If you allow Mjolnir to attack the goblin, turn to **79**. If you decide to talk to the goblin, turn to **173**.

166

You stare up at the frighteningly repulsive sorceress, Baba Yaga. Two tusklike teeth curve up from her lower jaw. Her large nose is covered with scars, moles, and warts. Wisps of thin white hair hang down from the top of her head, beneath the ash-gray cowl she wears. Her eyes seem to burn with a white, unnatural light that chills your bones as if you had been frozen alive.

"You have not had a very fortunate day," Baba Yaga says quietly, her voice filled with menace, "and I'm afraid things are going to get worse for you. Usually I don't need to trouble myself to become involved with those who try to explore my hut."

The ancient crone steps back, releasing your sword. She makes no other move, but her manner is relaxed and confident. "But now you have met me, and now we'll see what you are made of. Let's hope it will be easy to clean up afterward!"

You glance at Mjolnir, white-faced, standing near you. His legs are trembling so much that you fear he'll fall over. He meets your gaze for a brief instant, but you can tell he's too terrified to do anything to help.

You realize that there is nothing to prevent you from attacking the witch at any moment you choose. If you succeeded in slaying her, you would put an end to her

reign of terror once and for all. Maybe the rumors about her being immortal are only fables. On the other hand, maybe they aren't.

The ugly old witch standing before you seems unconcerned. Baba Yaga merely scratches at her long, warty nose with one clawed finger and regards you with a curious malign gaze.

If you attack Baba Yaga, turn to **78**. If you listen to what she has to say, turn to **130**.

167

The idea of locating Baba Yaga's treasure room, if one indeed exists, appeals to you strongly. You know that if she caught you there, she could turn you into toast with a snap of her fingers—but if she *didn't* catch you . . .

You lean forward, waving the wine bottle before the giant mouse's nose. "Tell me where Baba Yaga's treasure room is!" you whisper aloud.

"Her whaaaat?" the enormous mouse squeaks. "You want to go to Baba Yaga's *treasure room*?"

"Is that where ya think th' witch hid your gemstone, Jerrak?" Mjolnir asks gruffly.

"I'm not sure," you reply, still staring at the mouse, "but even if the Sage Beryl isn't there, it wouldn't hurt anything to get rich before we go after it."

The mouse appears terrified, but when Mjolnir threatens to break every wine bottle in the room, the mouse tells you everything you need to know.

"There's a secret door in the wall over there," it says in a whining, fearful voice. "If you knock on the wall twice, you'll be shown to the treasure room." The mouse sniffs. "Baba Yaga will be angry if she catches you there."

"That's okay," you reply, walking over to the wall. "She's not going to catch us." Mjolnir follows after handing the wine bottle to the mouse, who drains the bottle dry, then passes out on the stone floor.

You ready your sword, then reach out and knock on the wall twice. Suddenly a secret door appears. You push it open but see nothing beyond except a dark tunnel.

The dark, twisting hallway is lit only by patches of strange, glowing fungi. The light is more than enough for Mjolnir, whose dwarven sight allows him to see well in the dark, but it's not much help to you. Soon, however, you make out the presence of a door ahead.

Quickly Mjolnir checks the door and finds no traps. He does find an inscription, however:

*Beyond this door my treasures lie
Unwatched by beast or soldier's eye.
Who enters here will take the whole,
Desiring nothing evermore.*

"I ain't sure I know what th' witch means by that," Mjolnir mutters, frowning. "Sounds like she's a-givin' all 'er treasure away t' whoever man wants it, an' that don't make no sense. Why would she do that?"

"I don't know, but it sounds tempting," you admit. "It sounds like all we could ever want is in here."

If you choose to open the door, turn to 7. If you decide to turn back the way you came, turn to 129.

168

You grab the Sage Beryl in your hand, and it immediately shatters at your touch! The fragments turn cold and slimy as they splatter across your hand and arm and begin to burn your skin!

It's green slime! It's eating away your very flesh! Terrified, you try to scrape the slime away with your sword blade before it destroys you, but something catches the sword and rips it from your grasp as easily as you would pluck a blade of grass. Mjolnir spins around, then cries out in terror and drops his ax.

Standing only a few feet from you is a hunchbacked old woman in tattered robes. One gnarled hand holds your sword by its blade, but the woman's fingers aren't even scratched. The old woman's face is repulsively ugly. Her misshapen nose is much too long, sharp tusks curl up from her lower lip, and warts and scars disfigure her face. Sorcerous runes are tattooed across her cheeks and forehead. Casually she flips the real Sage Beryl up and down in her other hand. It's Baba Yaga!

"Help me!" you scream. "Please! Help me!" Your hand is disintegrating before your eyes. Cold, glistening slime crawls up your arm, eating away skin, cloth, nerves, muscle, bone. The pain is driving you insane!

"I think not," Baba Yaga says calmly, looking at you with a bored gaze. "I didn't care for the high-handed manner in which you treated my pets and possessions. I'm afraid you are worthless, like all the other human scum that enters my hut. Farewell." She turns away as you scream in agony and sink to your knees.

She turns toward Mjolnir, white-faced and shaking, and casts an unpleasant gaze. "But your friend may join me for dinner tonight. We're having . . . *dwarf*."

Turn to 229.

169

You hesitate as you forge your way through the tangled swamp growth. Did you hear something ahead of you?

You crouch down in the slimy vegetation and wait, your eyes focused dead ahead of you. Moments later, you are stunned to see an enormous, black reptile wading through the swampy forest near what appears to be a cave. You almost gasp as you recognize the beast as an acid-breathing black dragon!

The dragon lumbers by you slowly, its huge feet crushing the vegetation as it goes. Though its head sways in your direction several times, it fails to notice you.

Shaking with relief, you hurry back to Mjolnir and the imp. "You little rodent!" you shout angrily at the imp. "You didn't tell me Baba Yaga's black dragon was right in front of that cave!"

Mjolnir turns on the imp with a wrathful look. "I shoulda knowed that you'd try somethin' like that!" he snarls, preparing to give the little devil a fatal blow with his ax. As the imp cowers in fright, you decide to take action. Turn to 131.



170

"Mjolnir!" you shout. "Let's get out of here before that thing smashes us to pieces!"

Without replying, Mjolnir breaks into a run, easily outdistancing you, despite his shorter legs, as the two of you fly through the museum with the iron golem behind you. As you run, a horrible thought occurs to you.

"If I remember correctly," you shout, "Nicodamus once said iron golems can breathe poisonous gas!"

Mjolnir glances briefly behind him and wails aloud, "Darn you, Jerrak! I think you went an' put ideas in that thing's head!"

You turn in horror. The golem, sensing that it can't outrun you, has stopped some distance behind. Its iron jaws open, and a huge green cloud of boiling vapor spews out toward you. You realize it will reach you in seconds!

You see an open door ahead. Mjolnir hurries through, leaving it open for you. Moments before you reach the exit, however, the green cloud of gas blasts past you and

pushes the door closed. Unable to stop, you slam into the door, jamming it shut.

Your lungs begin to fill with poisonous gas. At first you can only cough, the incredible fumes burning your eyes, your throat, your sinuses. You stagger back from the door, your lungs aching as if they were on fire.

I've got to get out of here! you think desperately. Wheezing and gasping, you grab for the door and tug on the knob. It won't move! Desperately you summon all your strength and jerk on the knob as hard as you can.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **101**. If it is 5 or less, turn to **182**.

171

You've entered a corridor, perhaps a hundred feet long with a high, vaulted ceiling. Colorful paintings of landscapes and statues of humans, elves, and other beings line the carpeted hallway. Several large chandeliers spread soft candlelight over the length of the hall.

Mjolnir starts toward a statue of a dwarf. "Well, th' witch's got good taste, anyway," he says.

If you think you should stop your friend from his investigations, turn to **36**. If you let him investigate while you explore the hall for yourself, turn to **11**.

172

You raise Starlight and point it straight at the approaching elemental. The smell of fresh earth is strong inside the confines of the chamber as the creature raises its fists in preparation for battle.

"Get to the door and open it!" you shout to Mjolnir. "I'll try to hold this thing off!"

Starlight's dark ebon blade suddenly seems to disappear into a darkly radiant cloud. As you point the sword at the monster and the black aura reaches out from the

sword to touch the elemental, you feverishly hope you won't have to fight it!

Roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagical power score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **99**. If it is 7 or less, the antimagical attack fails, and you must either run for the door (**24**) or fight the monster (**104**).

173

You reach down and restrain your dwarven friend, holding him back. "Put your ax down, Jole!" you warn him. "This could be a trap!"

Holding your sword ready, you slowly approach the grinning goblin. "We're looking for the Sage Beryl," you tell it, hoping it can understand human speech. "We'd like to get past you, through that door."

The goblin stares at you for a moment, then seems to nod. Then, before your eyes, the goblin seems to fade into mist, dissolving into the air!

Mjolnir interrupts the brief silence that follows. "Sorta wish all them goblins'd do that," he mutters. "Just fade away forever an' leave us dwarves alone!"

Carefully you walk up the steps to the door and examine it. It appears safe. It takes but a moment to open it and walk through into the well-lighted chamber beyond.

Turn to **49**.

174

The fight with the greenhag is savage. You and Mjolnir swing sword and ax against the monster as it lashes out repeatedly with claws as sharp as razors. Still exhausted from the creature's underwater attack, you aren't able to escape from its attacks as easily as you might have if you were fresh.

Dodging one of your sword strokes, the greenhag moves in close and grabs you by your free arm. You feel

the unmistakable tingle of a magic spell as the creature grabs you, and suddenly you feel your strength begin to rush out of your body through the monster's iron grip. It's draining your energy away!

You try to jerk away from the creature, but you stagger from weakness, barely able to keep your feet. You hear Mjolnir cry out your name as the greenhag knocks Starlight from your hand, picks you up, and leaps into the stagnant lake with one of her taloned hands holding your ankle with a grip like steel. Greatly weakened, you kick as hard as you can to try to escape.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is a 9 or more, turn to **220**. If it is 8 or less, turn to **12**.

175

For several seconds after you tap your heels together, you feel as if you are falling wildly through space. You can hear Jole's startled shouts near you, but you can't see him in the darkness that surrounds you.

Then a voice fills the dark air, coming from everywhere but nowhere. . . .

"Welcome to my hut," says the voice. It sounds like an incredibly old woman's voice, cracked and rough, but frigid and without a trace of humanity. "You've come in search of something valuable, and you've chosen to take the direct route to get it—my test. I am impressed."

"It was an accident!" you shout back, wondering what in the world this test could be. "Who are you?"

A dry chuckle fills the endless night around you. "Perhaps I am not as impressed as I thought . . . but no matter. I could use some light entertainment, and you and your friend should do nicely."

The voice vanishes, leaving you completely, utterly alone in the blackness. A moment later, you reappear—in yet another unfamiliar place. Turn to **144**.

You and Mjolnir attack the beast fiercely, striking at it in a frenzy in hope of killing it quickly.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **71**. If it is 12 or less, roll two dice and subtract the result from your hit point total. If you survive, then roll one die and add the result to Mjolnir's stealth skill score as he tries to surprise the beast with an attack. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **190**. Otherwise, repeat the entire sequence, starting with your roll to hit.

You swing Starlight at the stone dwarf as hard as you can, hoping that the sword's antimagical powers will drain the sorcerous energy from the strange statue. But to your horror, your black sword shatters as it strikes the hard stone of the statue's head!

The dwarf catches your sword arm with a crushing grip and hurls you hard against the wall. Stunned, you try to flee, but the statue grabs you and begins to squeeze. You try to pull free but can't break its iron grasp.

The room grows dark. Your lungs are on fire with pain. Your ribs start to crack. It looks like the end. . . . ✕

You find it almost impossible to attack the green slaad successfully. It is obviously very skilled in melee combat and is much faster than you are. You step back for a moment to rest, giving Mjolnir a chance to fight the creature by himself, when—

KABOOOOM! An enormous blast of bright yellow flame suddenly erupts from the mushroom cap below you, the exact spot where you saw the green slaad make its magical gesture before the fight started. It must have cast a delayed-action fireball spell!

Roll four dice and subtract the total from your hit points.

Mjolnir manages to escape the explosion, but you are thrown back by the blast. The green slaad leaps to try to finish you off quickly. You stagger to your feet in agony, your hair singed and your clothes smoldering.

Continue the fight as before by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. You need a total of 12 or more to hit. When you have hit the green slaad twice (if you hit it once earlier, remember to count it), turn to 88. Each time you fail to hit it, roll two dice and subtract the result from your hit point total.

179

You quickly decide that your best chance to get inside the hut is to whittle it down to size. You heft Starlight and approach the hut's dancing legs, hoping for the best.

When you get within sword reach, you swing out savagely at the nearest leg in hope of severing it cleanly and dropping the hut to the ground. You plan to leap back quickly to avoid having the hut land on you.

Unfortunately, you never get to complete your attack. Before your blow lands, the hut's other leg lashes out, snatches you around your waist, and flings you away from the hut as easily as you would toss a child's doll. Whirling images fly before your eyes as you yell and try to catch your balance. With a bone-jarring crunch, you slam into a fallen, rotting tree trunk.

Roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total, then turn to 51.

180

You stab at the goblin with Starlight but miss, instead ramming the black blade of the sword into the wooden door behind the creature. As you jerk on the sword to try to pull it free, the goblin pushes you off balance.



You feel yourself falling as Starlight suddenly comes free. As you tumble backward, your other hand catches Mjolnir, pulling him off balance, too.

Turn to **32**.

181

The cat is undoubtedly in a playful mood, you decide. You smile and say, "Okay, I'll play along and 'attack' you." You reach out to poke the cat with your free hand.

In that same instant, Murmur leaps at you from the shelf, a blur of screaming, murderous, white-clawed ferocity, growing to the size of a tiger in a split second.

Murmur does 6 points of damage to you with her claws and teeth in her initial attack. Subtract them from your hit point total. Subtract 1 point from your judgment point total as well.

You slam into the rickety table and smash it flat, desperately fighting for your life. Mjolnir slashes at the monstrous tiger-cat with his ax.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **116**. If you fail the roll, you receive 6 more hit points of damage and must roll again for a total fighting score of 12 or more. Continue the process until either you or Murmur has been slain. Remember, you may elect to spend some of your experience points if you wish.

182

You struggle desperately with the door, fighting the choking effects of the poisonous gas, but the door won't budge. You try shouting to Mjolnir for help, but the green gas fills your lungs, and you break into another fit of racking coughs.

The world is swimming before your eyes. Your lungs feel as though they've been roasted in a bonfire, and your throat is in agony. Desperately you drag Starlight

from its scabbard, meaning to pry the door open by using the sword as a crowbar. But too much of the gas has worked its way into your lungs.

Gasping, blind from tears, unable to breathe, you sink to your knees. Starlight drops from your quivering fingers, and you slide into endless, eternal oblivion. . . . ✕

183

With a mighty effort, you pull free from the beast's claws and fall backward to the floor, out of its reach. The enraged derghodaemon waves its arms about in frustration. Mjolnir signals you that he's going to rush the beast, and you prepare to charge at the same time, your blade drawn and ready. Turn to 176.

184

If the criosphinx is lying to you, you could only be left stranded on the roof of the hut. It would be a simple matter to climb down afterward and enter through the front door. But if it's *not* lying . . .

"It's a bargain," you tell the strange creature. "But what sort of payment are you asking?"

"Your friend has a money belt around his waist," Ulimnashton says calmly. "I'll take that for payment."

"WHAT?" Mjolnir raises his ax, red-faced with rage. "My money belt? Why, you stinkin', goat-headed—"

"Mjolnir!" Hurriedly you rush over to your friend, and after a few moments, you manage to calm him down. Finally you have to promise him to later repay him twice the amount that he has in his belt. He agrees, shooting dangerous looks at Ulimnashton, however.

Several minutes later, you nervously sit astride the criosphinx as it prepares to take off. "All nice and comfy back there?" it asks, pleasantly enough.

"Fine," you tell it, trying to sound certain.

"Let's go, then!" The criosphinx flexes its legs

beneath it, then leaps forward, its mighty wings beating the air with hammerlike strokes. Suddenly you're airborne, and the ground drops away quickly as the criosphinx gains altitude.

So this is what it's like to fly! you think, exhilarated. You can barely contain your excitement as your mount levels off and circles the roof of Baba Yaga's hut. The criosphinx slowly drops in a long glide.

Far below, Mjolnir stares up at you and shakes his head. You smile down and start to wave just as the criosphinx's wings abruptly snap open, braking its descent! The sudden slowing catches you by surprise, and you start to fly forward over the criosphinx's head into empty space! The creature purposely tried to kill you!

In the last second before you fall into space, your left hand catches a handful of the criosphinx's mane.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **145**. If it is 7 or less, turn to **40**.

185

The fight isn't going well for you, but still you fight on, hoping that you can soon turn the tide. The gray-skinned monster has the endurance of a legion of men and fighting skill beyond belief! Suddenly the gray slaad steps back and points a clawed forefinger at you, uttering a single magical word.

Suddenly you can't see the gray slaad! The entire world has been dropped into darkness! You're blind!

You freeze, then slash out wildly at the air with your sword to try to keep the slaad back. *Where is the monster?* you think in panic. *It could be anywhere by now!*

"Jerrak!" Mjolnir shouts, horrified. "Turn around, boy! That toad-man's right—"

An incredible pain blasts the back of your head. The slaad's behind you! You fall to the ground, dropping

Starlight, conscious only of your terrible pain. As you black out, you wonder if Mjolnir will be able to slay the fearsome gray slaad and save you. . . . ✕

186

Long ago, your grandfather owned a large, green gemstone known as the Sage Beryl. A wizard called Nicodamus, in ages past, had had his own spirit placed inside the fist-sized crystal to escape a demon. Afterward, however, the wizard was unable to escape his beautiful green prison.

Since that time, anyone who possessed the Sage Beryl could communicate with Nicodamus. The old wizard was still able to cast spells from inside the Sage Beryl and was very helpful to his more worthy owners, but he refused to do the slightest thing for those who were of evil heart.

You found out about the Sage Beryl as a young boy. Nicodamus took an immediate liking to you, and his disembodied voice often entertained you with tales of dragons, giants, and witches of ages past.

Then one gray October day, the sorcerer Baba Yaga attacked your grandfather's mansion and stole the Sage Beryl. When you returned from an errand, you found only smoking ruins where your grandfather's manor once stood. There was no sign of your grandfather or of anyone else. From what you knew of Baba Yaga, you assumed that the witch killed and ate everyone present.

You'd heard tales of Baba Yaga since you were old enough to understand. Of all known witches, none were more terrible. She could scarcely even be called human, resembling instead some kind of ancient ogre-woman. Immortal and steeped in arcane sorcery, she was feared above all other beings—and still is.

You have no illusions about destroying Baba Yaga—she's beyond physical attack. But you also know that

Baba Yaga is immortal, and immortals can get bored. Baba Yaga might be complacent enough to let a determined man steal something valuable from the magical hut in which she lives and get away with it.

As your thoughts come to the present, roll one die and add the result to your observation skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **109**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **140**.

187

"I'll take good care of the ring," you promise, handing the mouse the open wine bottle. The mouse seizes it and drinks it down rapidly. Moments later, the scruffy rodent passes out cold on the wine cellar floor. Although you try for several minutes, nothing you do can awaken it. Subtract 1 point from your judgment score.

"Where do we go now, Jerrak?" Mjolnir asks.

You glance around quickly, then make your choice. If you elect to go upstairs, turn to **162**. If you head downstairs, turn to **136**.

188

Starlight strikes the cook squarely on her skin—and bounces off! You step back, taken by surprise. Perhaps you have to strike the blue annis in a vulnerable spot, or maybe you just have to hit her harder. You prepare for another blow, but you never get the chance to strike.

The annis's fingers complete her spell, and a thick, rolling fog envelops the room, obscuring all vision in a gray cloud. You freeze, unsure of what to do next.

Roll one die and add the result to Mjolnir's stealth skill score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **10**. If it is 7 or less, turn to **194**.

189

For several long minutes, you and Mjolnir circle through the swamp until the fiery-eyed skull vanishes

behind the vines and dead trees. You sigh in relief, glad to have such a weird thing behind you.

"AWWK!" squawks a loud, raucous voice directly above you. A huge raven rests in the tree branches.

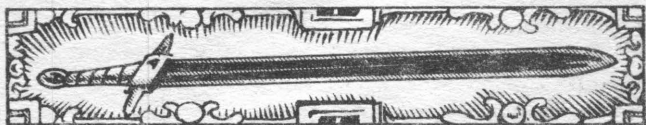
"That thing just 'bout scared me outta my boots!" Mjolnir grumbles, lowering his ax. "I thought it was somethin' dangerous."

"Dangerous? Me?" the raven caws. "You must be joking! I'm here to give you some advice!"

"What kind of advice?" you ask suspiciously.

"Listen carefully!" the raven says. "The only way you'll ever get inside Baba Yaga's hut is to give me gold to bribe the witch to let you in. Now, cough it up!"

You eye the raven suspiciously once more. You know that Mjolnir has some gold coins in his money belt that could be used to bribe the raven, but you still aren't sure whether this is a trick of some kind. If you choose to hand over the gold, turn to **100**. If you refuse to offer the bribe, turn to **121**.



190

You fight with all your might, but you are unable to kill the creature. But suddenly the derghodaemon squeals loudly, its eyes flashing as its head tilts back in agony. Then it stumbles and falls to the floor, almost crushing you beneath it.

You rise to your feet, confused and shaken. Then you see Mjolnir's ax stuck in the creature's body. The old bald dwarf is jumping up and down in excitement.

"Jerrak!" he shouts aloud in glee. "I done kilt that dang critter! Didja see that? I whacked it good with my

ax, an' down it went! I kilt a five-armed, three-legged whatzit!"

You sigh, relieved that the fight is over at last. "Let's just hope this pleases Baba Yaga enough to let us go," you gasp.

"It does," says a ghastly voice from behind you.

Turn to 85.

191

The fight with the goblinlike barghest is savage and furious. Starlight's razor-sharp blade slashes out again and again against the monster's thick hide, and the beast's ivory-yellow claws and teeth tear at you mercilessly in return.

With one last, quick thrust to the beast's neck, however, you put an end to the fight. Choking and clutching at its throat, the barghest rolls down the stairwell past you.

Immediately you sheath your sword and help Mjolnir to his feet. Though he is somewhat woozy at first, Mjolnir finally collects his wits.

"Never met a goblin what had a punch like that one!" he mutters as he tries to smooth his unruly beard. "Almost knocked me out o' my boots!"

"I'm glad he didn't," you tell him with a smile. "I'd have had an awful time finding a partner to fit them."

"Ain't nobody good enough t' replace this dwarf," he says. "They broke th' mold when they made me!"

You avoid any further kidding with your brave companion. Instead, you draw your sword again and proceed on up the stairs to the door.

"Cross your fingers and hope that the Sage Beryl is somewhere beyond this door," you tell Jole.

Mjolnir nods and gingerly rubs his jaw. You open the door and step through into the well-lighted room beyond. Turn to 49.

Summoning every ounce of strength that you have left, you pull the injured Mjolnir free of the snapping flowers. Almost blind with pain, you run frantically for the stairs, but with the added weight of your dwarven friend, you barely make it to safety before you collapse.

Roll two dice and subtract the result from your hit point total. If you are still alive, subtract 1 point from your judgment score. You realize now that trying to run through the flowers was a foolish decision. There were just too many of them.

You wait until Mjolnir regains consciousness, then bandage his wounds. Finally he signals that he is ready to go on. "I'm just scratched up pretty bad, that's all," he says wearily. "Prob'ly gonna get my hay fever back again, though."

You and Mjolnir go carefully down the stairs. Soon you come out in a new room. Turn to 26.

You peer inside the open stove and see that it's filled with black coal and firewood turned to charcoal. One unburned piece of wood runs from the door of the stove to the back of it, where you see a miniature iron door, perhaps an inch high, at the end of the wooden "bridge."

"How can we possibly get inside there?" you ask as Mjolnir crowds in for a closer view.

"You enter the stove . . . like this!" cries Witchcraft. Suddenly you feel yourself shrinking rapidly and falling toward the door of the stove! Mjolnir whirls through the air beside you, shouting wild oaths and clutching his ax with both hands. Moments later, you find yourselves standing by the oven door, on the wooden "bridge" spanning the inside of the stove.

"You're on your way!" Witchcraft calls in a merry voice, fluttering by the stove door. "Thank you for com-

ing, and I hope you enjoy your visit!" With that, Witchcraft's trunk reaches for the stove door and flips it shut, plunging you into darkness.

It doesn't stay dark for long, however. Almost immediately, a dim red light filters up from beneath the wooden bridge. You glance over the edge and see that the coals below you are heating up rapidly!

"This is some kind o' dang crazy dream I'm havin'," Mjolnir groans, "but it's awful real-lookin'. It even feels like it's gettin' warmer in here!"

"It *is* getting warmer in here!" you shout excitedly. "Head for the door on the other side!"

The two of you begin to rush across the wooden beam, even as you smell the wood start to smolder from the intense heat below. Suddenly a fiery blast of wind fans over you, singeing your face and hands. As you run up to the iron door, you almost feel ready to faint from the intense heat. You look back to see flames leaping from the wooden bridge you just crossed! You grab for the iron door's handle, but it doesn't seem to want to open.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **93**. If it is 6 or less, you fail to open the door. Roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total, then repeat the first roll to try to open the door. Each time you fail to open the door, you must roll again for damage. Continue this sequence until you get out or lose all your hit points. Remember, you may spend experience points if you wish.

194

As you stand in the milky fog, trying vainly to wave it away with your free hand, you hear someone or something move past you quickly. You swing at the sound but you strike nothing.

A sudden thought occurs to you, and you forget about keeping your location a secret from the annis. "Hey,



Mjolnir!" you shout. "Was that you just now?"

"Was *what* me?" calls Mjolnir from the other side of the room. "I'm over thisaway, Jerrak."

The fog slowly lifts, breaking apart into wisps. The annis has fled the kitchen through a nearby door, locking it behind her. Mjolnir, with his thieving talents, tries to pick the lock, but he is unsuccessful. After a brief search, you locate another door. Turn to 26.

195

Exerting every ounce of strength you have left, you strain until you think your bones will crack. Suddenly you feel the spell's power shatter! You're free!

The demon's eyes widen, and she comes to a halt as you snatch at your sword and swing out wildly at her. Starlight's blade slashes across one of her six arms, splattering drops of inky black ichor from the wound.

The demon gives a deafening shriek, clutching her injured arm in agony. Suddenly she vanishes before your eyes!

"Where'd she go? Where'd she go?" Mjolnir asks in confusion after his paralysis has worn off.

"She wasn't prepared to fight for her dinner, so she used some kind of magic to escape," you reply, rubbing your arms to restore the circulation. "Let's go inside and see what Baba Yaga's hut looks like."

Reluctantly Mjolnir agrees, and you step past the door into the room beyond. Turn to 55.

196

Starlight's blade radiates its familiar black aura of power around it as it charges with antimagical energy. The black aura engulfs the frog and your hand, then suddenly fades. Nothing's changed!

The frog looks at its webbed forefeet with bulging eyes. "*Riiiiibiiiiitt!*" it cries in despair.

"Calm down, Jole," you say comfortingly, feeling terrible nonetheless. Without Jole's help, the chances of getting the Sage Beryl are very slim now. You'll have to get him out of Baba Yaga's hut and back to a magic-user somewhere who can lift the curse.

With a heavy heart and a very depressed frog in your shirt pocket, you begin to search for a way out of this nightmare realm, hoping against hope that Baba Yaga doesn't find you before you get away. . . . ✕

197

You have no particular reason for wanting to stay, but you decide you don't like the annis's pushy attitude. You reach for your sword as you get to your feet. "We'll leave when we're good and ready to leave!" you tell the cook angrily, not in the mood to be pushed around.

"That's tellin' 'er, Jerrak!" Mjolnir cries, stepping to your side with his ax held ready. "You ain't a-gonna tell us what we can— Oops!"

The indignant cook drops her ladle and steps back to another stove behind her, on which a large caldron of water is boiling. Seizing the caldron with both hands, she launches its steaming contents at you!

You see it coming, and you throw yourself to one side, shoving Mjolnir the other way. The scalding water splashes across the coal pile, fogging the air with steam.

Maybe getting tough with the annis wasn't such a good idea, you decide, but it's too late now to change things. Subtract 1 point from your judgment score.

You decide to go on the attack and charge the annis. Mjolnir quickly picks himself up off the floor once more and hurries to get behind the cook. The annis cook's foul mood gets worse, and she shrieks in a petrifying voice as she waves her hands at you. Her long, black fingernails flash as she starts to chant a spell.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill

score. If the total is an 11 or more, turn to 74. If it is 10 or less, turn to 188.

198

The hut is obviously enchanted. Perhaps your sword would be able to drain the sorcerous powers that animate its dancing chicken legs. You decide it's worth a try, anyway.

When you tell Mjolnir your plans, he merely shrugs. "Let's just hope ol' Baba Yaga don't get mad 'bout you messin' with her hut," he says.

"We're almost certain to meet her sooner or later anyway," you reply, trying not to sound fatalistic about it. "She won't like the idea of our taking the Sage Beryl, even if it's rightfully mine, but that can't be helped."

You raise Starlight's star-flecked black blade and fearfully point it at the dancing hut. But it's either this or choose to leave Nicodamus trapped in the green gem forever. You sigh and concentrate to activate the sword's antimagical powers. The blade gives off a dark glow that makes a deep whirring sound like wind rising. Suddenly the black aura shoots out from the sword toward the hut's legs.

Roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagical power score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to 5. If it is 7 or less, turn to 128.

199

Your blow merely grazes the hobgoblin. The gruesome creature turns to meet your attack as its companion swings a scimitar at Mjolnir.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 8 or less, roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total, then roll again to hit. You need a total of 9 or more to kill your opponent, but then you must face the hobgoblin who is attacking

Mjolnir. Roll once more for another total of 9 or more. If you fail against the second hobgoblin, roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total and roll again. If you succeed in killing both of them, turn to 90.

200

Roll one die and add the result to the number of judgment points you have remaining. No experience points may be added to this roll. Then turn to the appropriate section as indicated below.

If the total is 10 or more, turn to 52.

If the total is 7, 8, or 9, turn to 94.

If the total is 4, 5, or 6, turn to 18.

If the total is 3 or less, turn to 168.

201

You see no sense in attacking the cat, even if it is a little snooty. "We'll take the cellar, thank you," you announce. Then a thought suddenly occurs to you. "Wait a minute. How can this hut have a cellar if it dances around above the ground?"

Murmur merely looks bored with you. *"This is a magical hut, remember. It can have anything Baba Yaga wishes it to have. Last week it even had a colosseum, complete with chariot races, but Baba Yaga grew bored with that. A pity. Anyway, to get to the cellar, just kick on the floor twice and the door will open at once."*

You lower your eyes to inspect the floor. "I don't see any door," you say.

"Oh, just kick the floor," murmurs Murmur irritably. *"Trust me."* With that, the silver cat stretches out on the shelf and appears to go to sleep.

Raising your right foot, you stomp hard on the floor twice and wait for results. Instantly the floor beneath your feet drops open, and you both fall screaming down an infinite shaft of darkness. Your cries fade from the

room within moments as the trapdoor swings shut again.

Murmur flicks an ear lazily, and a satisfied smirk slowly crosses the cat's face. Turn to 67.

202

You turn and run from the advancing elemental as fast as you can, hoping to make it to the door leading out before the creature catches you.

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score. If the total is 6 or more, turn to 160. If it is 5 or less, you stumble over a raised stone in the floor, losing precious ground to the elemental, and it's too late to try to escape. You'll have to fight the elemental for at least one round of combat. Turn to 104.

203

"I suppose it wouldn't hurt if we stayed for just a little while longer," you say quietly, edging over to the place where you heard the rustling noise. It sounded as if it came from behind one of the wine barrels.

Gripping Starlight tightly, you reach out and grab one of the upright barrels by the rim around the top. The barrel is cool to the touch and feels very heavy. Taking a deep breath, you jerk on the barrel, pulling it over.

What you see next takes you completely by surprise. Behind the barrel is a giant mouse, lying on its back with its paws in the air. The mouse is so fat that you can scarcely imagine that it ever was able to walk at all. Its eyes are closed fast in sleep, and the mouse smells as if it had been soaked in alcohol.

"Whatcha find there, Jerrak?" Mjolnir asks conversationally as he strolls toward you, fingering the cork on a wine bottle. He blinks when he sees the huge mouse. "Hmm. Baba Yaga's got a rodent problem, she does."

Suddenly the mouse stirs and begins to talk in its sleep. "Yes'm, Baba Yaga," it mumbles. "I'll clean th'

wine cellar. Yes'm, I promise I'll clean it up. Yes, ma'am. No, I won' drink anything. I promise. . . ."

It's hard to say who's more surprised, you or Mjolnir. "Now I've seen everythin'—a drunken, talkin' mouse!" Mjolnir exclaims, eyes wide. "Should we wake it up?"

As you stare at the mouse, the thought occurs to you that disturbing it might not be a good idea. What if it isn't really a mouse but some sort of monster instead? On the other hand, if the creature can talk, maybe it knows something about the hut—or the Sage Beryl.

If you decide to wake the mouse up, turn to **92**. If you elect not to wake it up, you can go upstairs (**162**) or downstairs (**136**).

204

You consider a number of possible plans for gaining entry to the hut, but each of them has flaws. If you attack the hut's legs, they're almost certain to fight back. And Starlight's antimagical power might not work against the powerful magic of the hut, either.

"I'm stumped, Jole," you admit. "I wish we knew some way to get inside. Got any ideas?"

The dwarf's bearded face furrows in concentration. After a few moments of deep thought, he walks over to a tree and ties his ax to his broad back. "Mebbe it'd help t' take a look at th' hut from above," he mumbles.

With surprising agility, Mjolnir climbs a tree until he can look down on the hut. "Oho!" he shouts triumphantly. "Th' hut's got a trapdoor in its roof, Jerrak! All we need to do is get on top and we're all set!"

"Get on top of the dancing hut?" you call back. "How do we do that?"

"Just get on up here and you'll see!" Mjolnir calls down. "And hurry! Th' hut's a-dancin' over thisaway! We'll just jump down on top o' th' roof!"

Sure enough, the hut is slowly spinning in the direc-

tion of the tree Mjolnir's in. You hastily sheath Starlight and start shinnying up the tree until you reach Mjolnir's precarious position on an overhanging limb.

"You go first, Jerrak. Once you hit, just hang on for dear life!" Mjolnir cautions. "See if you can land right next to that trapdoor there."

You look down to see a trapdoor near the center of the hut's roof. You wait until the hut dances to a point just below you, then leap for the spinning rooftop. You hit the roof hard and desperately grab hold of a crossbeam slippery from the mist. The hut's rotation pulls you toward the roof's edge—and the long drop over the side!

Roll one die and add the result to your strength skill score to see if you can hang on. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **46**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **228**.

205

After what seems like an eternity, the lock on the door clicks open—just as the water is lapping at your thighs.

As the door opens, the water cascades around your legs, spilling up the hallway beyond the door. You find higher ground farther down the corridor and spend several minutes drying out somewhat. Mjolnir complains about getting his feet wet, but you can tell that he's quite proud of himself.

"I guess we showed Baba Yaga we could pass that dang test!" Mjolnir crows, unable to hold it back.

Ready for action once more, you and the dwarf proceed up the hall toward a door you spot at the far end. The door proves to be safe, and the two of you pass through it into an area of great brightness. Turn to **149**.

206

Starlight glows with a black aura as it strikes the hobgoblin nearest you. The grizzled warrior howls as the blade penetrates deep into its side, then falls at your feet.

Mjolnir swings his mighty ax at the remaining hobgoblin, and it slices through the creature's left arm. With a wild cry, the hobgoblin staggers backward. Mjolnir's next blow ends its cries.

A loud caw echoes through the dripping, mossy branches above you. The raven! It was part of the attack! Angrily you reach down, snatch up a rock, and hurl it at the creature. As the rock knocks the raven from its perch, the dark bird immediately changes into a small, flame-red, winged humanoid with a large nose and a wicked look about it. You recognize it as an imp, a minor devil devoted to causing trouble.

"You scumsuckers!" the imp shouts in a nasal voice. "I hope Baba Yaga grinds you both into ground beef!"

The imp flies off angrily through the air. You sigh and lower your sword. "Let's move on to the hut, Jole. Baba Yaga is probably expecting us now, but we've got to get the Sage Beryl. The imp won't bother us again."



Mjolnir agrees, and you head for the hut, avoiding the fire-eyed skull on the way. Turn to 103.

207

You look at the towering iron shape briefly, then shrug. "It looks like a suit of giant's armor," you say.

You start to walk through the strange museum to search for the Sage Beryl among the hundreds and thousands of items displayed in the vast room. But seconds after you turn away, you hear a earth-rattling crash from behind you. You spin around.

The iron statue has come to life! Already it's struck Mjolnir, whose unconscious body lies at its feet.

You draw your sword, charging the star-flecked blade with antimagical power in hope of destroying the iron statue's magical force. Too late, you recognize the creature as an iron golem, an enchanted guardian used by wizards and witches to protect their valuables.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 9 or less, you miss the golem and it strikes you back. Roll three dice and subtract that many hit points of damage. You cannot flee from the golem, because it will undoubtedly attack and kill. Next, repeat the roll to try to hit it, as above.

If your total on your roll to hit was 10 or more, you succeed in striking the golem. Roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagic power score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to 83. If it is 7 or less, the sword was unable to stop the golem. Roll three dice and subtract the result from your hit point total, then repeat the roll.

208

It might be a mistake to trust this creature, but if it is, it will be the imp's *last* mistake. "Jole," you say, getting up, "let's check out his story. If he's lying to us, he'll never be able to lie again. If Baba Yaga's lair is in that

cave, though, we'll let him go."

You tie a rope around the imp's neck and jam a piece of wood over its tail stinger. The imp wades through the stagnant, stinking swamp water with a look of disgust on its face.

"Life ain't fair!" it grumbles. "Here I was, enjoyin' myself, an' then you guys gotta mess up my day. I'll remember you for this!" He comes to a stop and points. "Over there, by that broken tree—that's where the witch's cave is. Now lemme go!"

You sigh, wishing you knew what to expect next. "I'll check it out, Jole," you say. "If I give you the signal that the imp's told the truth, then let this runt go." You prod the imp in the back with your sword. "Let's hope for his sake that he's been straight with us."

The imp gives you a dirty look. You start forward toward the shattered tree. Beyond it, you can make out the faint outline of a cave in a rock outcropping.

Roll one die and add the result to your observation skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **169**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **19**.

209

As you sprint for the door, you see Mjolnir hastily trying to pick the lock.

Suddenly a tremendous blow slams into your back, between your shoulders, and drives you to the floor with bone-crushing force. Pain explodes in your chin, chest, and back. Everything seems foggy and gray. You're dimly aware that you've dropped your sword. You claw desperately at the floor in a feeble effort to escape the elemental's next blow, knowing that it's futile. . . . ✖

210

You look down at your feet, feeling rather foolish. Tap your heels together three times? It seems harmless

enough. Deciding that it can't hurt anything, you rise up on the balls of your feet and begin to click your boots together. "Like this?" you ask.

Witchcraft nods and waves its red trunk in farewell.

Instantly everything changes before your eyes. The decrepit surroundings of the hut vanish, and you and Jole find yourselves falling, falling. . . . Turn to 175.

211

You decide not to risk a fight. Hobgoblins are wicked and cruel, but they might spare you if you can offer them money for your safety and Mjolnir's. It's worth a try.

Carefully you lower Starlight to the ground, then hold up your hands. "Don't attack! We surrender!"

"You mean YOU surrender!" Mjolnir roars, enraged. "As sure the Nine Hells are hot, I AIN'T!" With that, the dwarven thief lunges at the nearest hobgoblin, his ax whirling. The hobgoblin meets the charge but dies as the ax slices through its throat.

The other hobgoblins rush you and Mjolnir. You reach for your sword, but a bright steel blade held in a hobgoblin's hand swings down at you in a blur.

As you fall in agony, the last thing you hear is the raucous laughter of the black raven in the tree. ✖

212

The fury of the dragon's attack is frightening, but you've fought too many foes to let this one get the best of you. Dripping steaming saliva, the black dragon's jaws snap shut on air as you charge forward, dodging its bite. In return, you drive your sword into its neck.

With a gurgling shriek, the dragon jerks its head back, your sword stuck deep into its hide. Clawing at the terrible wound in its throat, the dragon thrashes about in a pool of water, acid, and blood at its feet.

After several agonizing moments, the dragon falls

heavily over on its side and kicks its feet several times spasmodically. You hang back, hoping it doesn't snap Starlight in half in its death throes. When the dragon lies silent at last, you claim your sword.

"Jerrak!" Mjolnir's worried shout echoes through the swamp. "Are you hurt? I'm comin' t' help you!"

Mjolnir appears, splashing through the swamp on his short legs. He seems to be all out of breath. "That dang little imp disappeared the very second I let go of him!" he thunders. "If I ever catch him again, I'm gonna—"

He stops abruptly as he sees the dead black dragon at your feet. Then he raises his eyes to look at you with new respect. "Looks like you didn't need any help from me!" he whispers in awe.

You look around, deciding on your next course of action. You could either go on into the cave, or you could head back toward the hut. If you choose the cave, turn to **69**. If you decide to proceed on to the hut, turn to **103**.

213

With a whispered last word to Mjolnir, you swim down through the air toward the green frog-man, or slaad, as the red one said they were called. The green slaad grins as you and Mjolnir approach, then makes a magical gesture at the mushroom cap at its feet.

As soon as you touch the edge of the green mushroom, the slaad leaps to the attack, claws swinging out to tear your flesh. It screeches a repulsive sound like an enormous croak as it flies toward you.

You need to strike the green slaad twice in order to slay it. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, roll once more to hit. If the second total is also 12 or more, turn to **88**.

If the total on either attempt is 12 or less, the green slaad rakes you with its claws and teeth. Roll two dice and subtract the result from your hit point total. Each

time you fail to hit, roll two dice for damage until you get a total of two hits against the slaad. However, if you ever miss the green slaad three times in a row, turn to **178** without rolling for damage.

As soon as you've struck the slaad a second time, turn to **88**.

214

Starlight's black blade radiates a dark aura of power as it confronts the fiery skull, but before the blade can destroy the skull's magic, the skull gives out a maniacal laugh and cries, "Burn, fool!"

Streams of flame burst from the creature's bony eyesockets, pouring across you and Mjolnir in red-hot waves of pain. You scream in agony as your clothes and hair burst into flame. As you drop and roll in the puddles of filthy water, the skull howls with evil laughter.

Subtract 4 hit points from your hit point total. If you decide to flee, turn to **48**. If you choose to attack the skull with Starlight, turn to **125**.

215

You struggle against the creature's viselike grasp, but your struggles are in vain. The beast's clawed arms are entirely too strong. Giving up, you stab desperately at the monster in hope of killing it with a chance thrust to a vital organ—if a derghodaemon has one.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **71**. If it is 12 or less, roll three dice and subtract the result from your hit point total. If you survive that attack, roll one die and add the result to Mjolnir's stealth skill score as he tries to attack the monster unexpectedly. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **190**. If it is 7 or less, repeat the first roll to try to hit the creature and continue through the entire process again, fighting to the death.

The last thing you need is for a monster to insult you—especially a wicked and savage monster like a gargoyle. You heft your sword in anger and advance toward it.

The gargoyle seems unconcerned and grins at you as you approach it. When you are about twenty feet from the creature, it suddenly snaps open its great, gray wings and leaps straight up into the air, out of sword reach, laughing harshly as it does so. Subtract 1 point from your judgment point total.

“Curse you!” you shout after the monster. “Come down here and fight!” Suddenly your cries stop. With a cackling laugh, the gargoyle hovers over a dead tree, then breaks off a thick, moss-covered limb. Murder in its eyes, the gargoyle then flies directly toward you!

You turn and run, knowing immediately what’s going to happen. Roll one die and add the number to your strength skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 98. If it is 6 or less, turn to 15.

The fight with the goblinlike barghest is savage and furious. To your horror, again and again you land blows with your sword that would have slain any normal goblin, only to find them bouncing off the creature’s hide!

Beginning to feel desperate, you stumble as you make yet another stab at the monster, missing cleanly. Instead of attacking in return, it waves a clawed hand in the air—and vanishes!

Shocked, you stare at the air before you. Then a powerful hand grabs you from behind, spinning you around and forcing you back against the steps. You stare up into the fiery, glowing eyes of the goblinlike barghest!

The creature’s eyes burn even brighter, holding you motionless through sheer force of will. “YOU WILL BE MY SLAVE!” whispers the evil creature, its eyes shin-

ing in the darkness. As you stare, entranced, all other details of the creature fade from view except for those orange eyes. "YOU WILL BE MY SLAVE!" it repeats.

Feebly you grasp Starlight and activate its antimagical powers to try to fight the spell the creature is attempting to cast over your senses.

Roll one die and add it to Starlight's antimagic score. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **97**. If it is 7 or less, turn to **38**.

218

After examining the huge armored figure for a moment, you realize that the figure is made entirely of iron.

Suddenly you gasp and step forward. You're sure you saw the statue's arm move! Could it really be . . .

"Get back, Jole!" you shout frantically, hurrying forward to grab the dwarf. You drag him away from the iron statue quickly, just in time to avoid being crushed as the statue's arm, its hand balled into a massive iron fist the size of someone's head, smashes into the floor where Mjolnir stood only an instant earlier!

"It's an iron golem!" you shout excitedly, dancing out of the monster's reach, sword in hand. "It's an animated iron statue, a wizard's guardian!"

"How can we fight th' thing?" Mjolnir pants. "Even if we hit it, it'll just ruin our weapons!"

You glance around hastily as the iron golem slowly begins to advance toward you, its joints creaking and groaning as if they had nearly rusted together over the ages. You realize that you could try to run from the thing, or you could try to destroy it with Starlight's antimagical powers. But you're not sure if you could outrun the monster, nor are you certain how effective the sword would be in stopping such a powerful creature. You could try to topple the golem over on its side, but a twelve-foot iron statue might well be too much for you.



If you run from the monster, turn to 170. If you attack it with Starlight, turn to 91. If you rush it and try to push it over, turn to 147.

219

You swing at the attacking broom with Starlight, at the same time trying to dodge the blows of the animated broom handle. The broom slaps at your face and arms, trying to stun you into submission.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 10 or less, you miss the broom and it strikes you back. Roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total. If the total is 11 or more, you strike the broom. Unfortunately, merely striking it won't stop it. But perhaps Starlight's antimagical power will drain the broom's magical powers.

If you hit the broom, roll one die and add the result to Starlight's antimagic score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 13. If it is 6 or less, return to the beginning of this section and roll to hit the broom again. You receive no damage if you hit the broom but fail to deactivate it, as the blow knocked the broom away from you. Repeat this sequence until you succeed in deactivating the broom.

220

With a mighty effort, you kick free of the inhumanly strong grip on your foot and swim hard for the water's surface, your lungs on fire.

In moments, you break the surface. "Jole!" you gasp, swimming for shore. "Jole!"

"Jerrak!" Mjolnir cries. "Look out behind you!"

Desperately you reach for the bank and heave yourself out of the water—but not fast enough. Razorlike claws slash through your leather trousers and boots. Subtract 4 points of damage from your hit point total.

Mjolnir rushes past you, dropping Starlight onto the

shore within your reach. Hurling himself at the ghastly apparition behind you, he flails at it with his battle-ax as you grab your sword and scramble to your feet.

You turn to see a skeletal-thin old woman with dull green skin and clawed hands, glancing from you to Mjolnir and leering evilly. You recognize it as a greenhag, an evil, man-eating monster.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **58**. If it is between 6 and 11, subtract 6 hit points of damage from the greenhag's claws and turn to **9**. If you roll a 5 or less, turn to **174**.

221

A wave of cold passes through you as the enormous reptilian hand sweeps you closer and closer to its tremendous red mouth. Suddenly Starlight gives out its strange, familiar aura, and everything goes black!

Just as suddenly, the blackness vanishes, withdrawing back into the sword you hold in your hand. You're free! It was merely an illusion!

You look around wildly. You are standing in a small, stone room with a single lantern resting on a table before you. The "hand" grasping you turns out to be your own! The huge red, reptilian maw that hovered above you is merely the lantern light on the ceiling.

Mjolnir blinks and steps back. He's standing on the floor beside you, looking confused. "What . . . what happened?" he sputters, his eyes the size of dinner plates.

"Uh-oh!" says a new voice. You spin around, your sword raised to strike. A small human-looking being with a long white beard and spectacles peers worriedly up at you from behind the door you just entered. He clutches a piece of parchment in trembling fingers.

"D-D-Don't look at me like that!" the little bearded fellow cries. "Look at the huge dinosaur that's going . . .

to eat . . . Oh, rats! Help! Help! Save me!"

You grab the little fellow and lift him up to your face. "You're the one who cast a spell on us to make us think we were going to be eaten alive, aren't you?"

"I—I was just practicing!" wails the little man, whom you recognize as a gnome. Gnomes barely come up to your waist and strongly resemble dwarves. This one's shiny bald head is covered with beads of sweat.

"Now, Jerrak," Mjolnir says in mock consolation as he pulls on your arm. "Don't you start cuttin' up that little feller!" He turns smoldering eyes on the gnome. "Leastways, not till *I* get a chance t' do some *first*!"

"Spare me!" The gnome howls. "I can help you! I'm Baba Yaga's helper! I'll tell you anything!"

You hesitate, your anger cooling slightly. "Where's the Sage Beryl?" you growl.

"Sage Beryl?" the gnome asks wildly. "Oh! You mean the big green gem she keeps in the museum! Just go through that door over there! Now will you spare me?"

You look across the room and see a plain wooden door on the opposite wall. If you choose to spare the gnome's life, turn to 27. If you decide not to spare him, turn to 64.

222

You shove as hard as you can against the medusa's chest, but she twists aside and pulls your arm up toward her face. You feel the needle-sharp teeth of the venomous snakes on her head sink into your hand and wrist.

Instantly your entire arm goes cold and numb. The chill quickly spreads to your chest, and you feel your heart shiver, then stop, as the poison reaches it. The room darkens and fades as you slide into oblivion. . . . ✱

223

Hours later, a warm, red ball of flame rises over the eastern horizon. The hiss and chatter of the night crea-

tures fade from the edge of the swamp as a lone, hunched figure staggers through the last of the trees and into open country.

The figure rubs at his mud-stained face with a grubby fist, then brushes at his waterlogged beard. Seeing the dawn, he gives the sun a weak smile, then puts down his ax and collapses on the solid earth, too exhausted to move another step.

"Never thought I'd see another day start without ya, Jerrak," the dwarf mutters. "But that's th' way of it sometimes. I hated t' see you get yerself killed like that, but at least it were quick. Or I hope it were, anyway."

He sits up, looking back into the mist-shrouded swamp. "Ain't no point in me goin' back into that hell-hole again. Baba Yaga can keep that ole Sage Beryl, for all I care. I got my life, an' that's good enough for me."

The dwarven thief rests for a while longer, then painfully rises to his feet. The way to town is long and arduous, but he hardly notices in his grief. The sunlight's warmth and the bright colors of the countryside do little to ease the pain of the loss of his best friend—you. ✕

224

Starlight's black aura drinks in the runes on the door. They vanish letter by letter as if someone were erasing them. When they're gone, the door clicks open.

"Well," Mjolnir mutters. "That were easy enough. Let's go find that Sage Bucket an' then go home an' get somethin' t' drink." Turn to 55.

225

"Hello!" pipes a cheerful, squeaky voice that seems to come from inside the wood-burning stove. "Company here already? I'll be right out!"

Startled, you back away with your sword held ready as the door to the oven swings open . . . but what you see

next stops you dead in your tracks. A creature with large, beautiful butterfly wings in every color of the rainbow flies out of the stove. The creature's body is that of a small, red elephant!

"What the—" begins Mjolnir in amazement.

"Greetings!" squeaks the creature, hovering before you on flashing wings. "Welcome to Baba Yaga's marvelous, amazing, incredible dancing hut, the wonder of the ages! You must be Jerrak and Mjolnir, the two adventurers Baba Yaga said would be coming for the Sage Beryl!" it says brightly. "I'm Witchcraft, your hostess. What can I do for you?"

"How—how did Baba Yaga know—" you start.

"—that you were coming? Oh, my! Baba Yaga knows everything! Would you like to start searching for the Sage Beryl now, or would you rather eat first?" Witchcraft indicates dried vegetables on the walls and ceiling—and a plate covered with dried blood.

"We'd prefer to start searching now," you say hastily, uneasy with the idea that Baba Yaga could be watching you even as you speak. "But is there any chance at all to find the Sage Beryl in this magical place?"

"Certainly!" Witchcraft cries, as if insulted. "It's all a game to Baba Yaga! It keeps her amused—but you'll have to play well, or she'll have you sliced, diced, and made into julienne fries. It's a terrible fate, but it happens all too often, I'm sorry to say."

"Um, how do we go 'bout findin' this here Sage Beryl?" asks Mjolnir.

"Well," Witchcraft begins brightly, "you can climb in the stove, you can tap your heels together three times, or you can go back out the way you came in. Any one of those will send you on your way. But this offer expires in five minutes, when Baba Yaga comes down for dinner."

Mjolnir turns to you with a completely mystified look on his face. You know that you look just as confused.

However, it's easy to decide that anything would be better than meeting Baba Yaga for dinner. If you decide to climb in the stove, turn to **193**. If you elect to tap your heels together three times, turn to **210**. If you want to leave by the door you came in, turn to **146**.

226

Starlight's black, star-flecked blade sends out a halo of darkness all along its length. The dark halo suddenly bridges the gap between you and the derghodaemon, covering its head in blackness. When the black aura fades, the derghodaemon's spell is ruined.

Before the yellow-scaled monster has a chance to recover, you and Mjolnir rush it together, with weapons drawn. Turn to **176**.

227

The stairs ahead of you appear solid enough—until they suddenly give way beneath your feet!

Panic-stricken, you grab wildly for anything nearby, which happens to be Mjolnir. He shouts hoarsely as you pull him off balance, and the two of you plunge down a dark shaft that seems to go on forever. Turn to **67**.

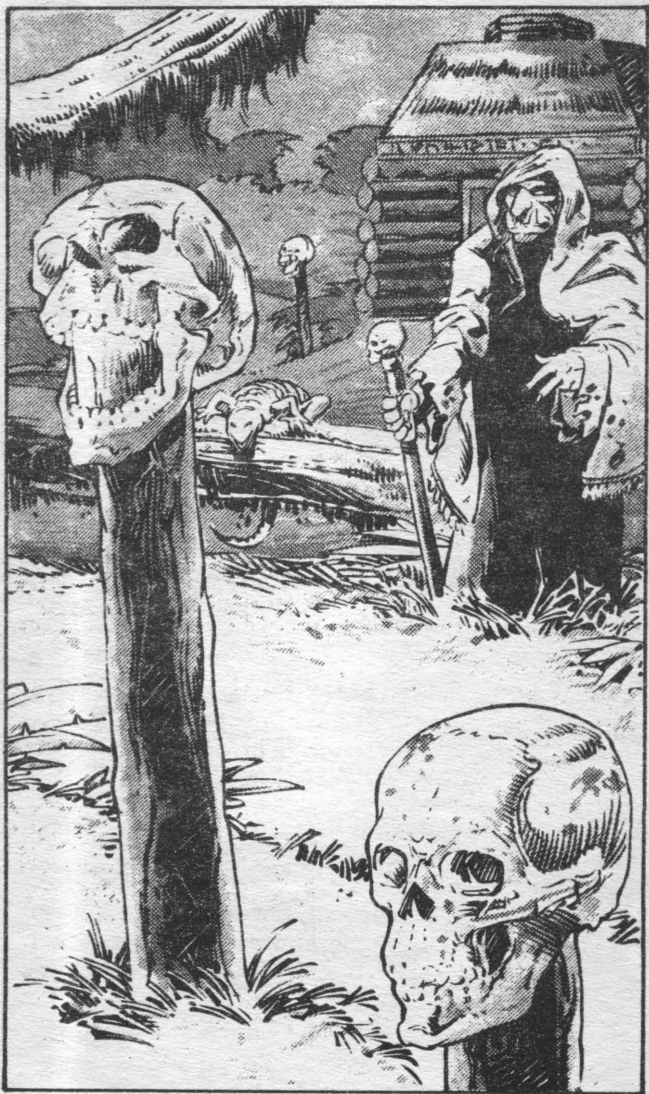
228

Desperately your fingers grip the wooden beam, but your grip isn't strong enough to hold on. You feel your hands pull free, and you spin out of control down the roof and out into open space, screaming wildly.

Seconds later, you splash into a shallow pool of slimy mud, not far from the hut's dancing feet. Fortunately the hut veers away from you at the last minute and moves off.

Roll one die and subtract it from your hit point total.

Feeling very woozy, you are vaguely aware of the sounds of someone shinnying down a tree. Turn to **62**.



Deep in a forgotten swamp, surrounded by dripping, moss-covered trees and pools of foul, algae-choked water, a strange little hut spins and dances on two scaled, chickenlike legs. Slithering reptiles watch the scene, uncaring. The cries of beasts and monsters echo in the dank air and fog.

After a time, the hut slows and settles to the ground, and the wooden door opens. A withered old crone in tattered clothes steps from the hut with a sack that leaves a trail of red droplets behind it as the crone moves. She makes her way to a spot near the hut and sets the bag on the ground.

Tearing a solid branch from a tree, the old crone scrapes it smooth against her stone-hard tusks and fangs, stripping the leaves and smaller branches away with clawed fingers. She sniffs it with her enormous, warty nose, then jams the staff into the soft ground with violent, unnatural strength. Moments later, she finishes a second staff and sets it upright as well.

Reaching into the bag, the crone pulls out a red-stained human skull and sets it atop the first pole. A dwarven skull follows, to be perched on the staff beside it. The old hag absently wipes her hands on her filthy rags, then raises her clawed fingers and chants, beginning a spell.

When she finishes, each skull has two tiny flames burning inside it, one in each eyesocket. The skulls look at the crone in silence.

"You know your duty," the hag says with a broad, wicked smile. "Go to work!"

"Yes, Baba Yaga," the skulls whisper. The old crone nods and heads back to the hut. She tosses the sack and the remains within it into the swamp for her pets to eat. The door of the hut closes, and the hut rises. The endless dance begins again. . . . ♣

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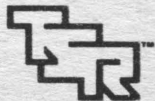
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In the UK £1.95 Net
ISBN 394-74556-6
0-88038-286-4 8958
Printed in U.S.A.