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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

ADVENTURE 18 GAMEBOOK

PRINCE OF THIEVES



By Chris Martindale

0-88038-596-0

CHARACTER STATS CARD

PRINCE OF THIEVES



NAME: Jadd Hachen

CHAR. CLASS: Thief

SKILL POINTS:

Fighting 5 + ____ = ____

Agility 5 + ____ = ____

Cunning 6 + ____ = ____

EXPERIENCE POINTS:

6 + ____ = ____

HIT POINTS:

25 + ____ = ____

GEMS:

	blue	green	red
lost			
found			

ADDITIONAL WEAPONS:

_____	flasks
_____	fire-stick
_____	lightning rod

ALONE AGAINST AN ARMY OF MONSTERS!

Searching through an underground cavern with your companion, the beautiful thief Zane Nazzari, you discover a portal to another dimension—a realm of monsters of every description!

Zane cannot save you as you are accidentally pulled through the portal, and when you arrive at the other side, you look out over an army of creatures gathered before the portal. They are waiting to invade your world!

Suddenly a mace flashes through the air and lands at the base of your skull, and you collapse instantly. Through a dim haze, you realize that you are being held aloft by a brutish ogre with too many teeth for its mouth to hold.

"See how weak our opponents are, brothers?" it yells as the army cheers. "We will conquer!"

Your senses swim as you feel yourself being carried away. When you rouse once more, you are overlooking a great yawning fissure in the ground. "Welcome to Eternity Pit," laughs your ogre captor. "It called that because it takes eternity to hit bottom." The ogre lifts you high overhead, mutters, "Good-bye, worm," and hurls you into the pit.

As you fall, you twist in midair and make a desperate grab for the edge.

Can you save yourself from the bottomless pit?

Roll two dice and add the result to your agilty skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to 16. If it's less, turn to 143.



An ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS®
Adventure Gamebook #18

PRINCE OF THIEVES

By Chris Martindale

Cover Art by Jeff Easley
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**To Bill Larson,
for helping me get a foot in the door**

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All characters in this book are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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AN EXCITING NEW EXPERIENCE IN BOOKS!

Welcome, you who are about to journey with the **PRINCE OF THIEVES**, 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, is explained on page 12.

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 Jadd Hachen, a thief in the city of Vasivada. Throughout the city's Thieves' Quarter, you are known as the Prince of Thieves.

You earned this title not only through your mastery of the thieving arts, but also through your compassion for the poor. You recognize the vast gap between the Vasivada's wealthy citizens and its poor ones, so you often distribute what you steal from the rich to the poor. Thieving for you is a skill that is best utilized for good, and you have little patience with lazy thieves who steal because they don't wish to work hard for a living.

Your activities have not gone unnoticed by your wealthy victims, however. Three years ago, you were captured by Captain Hadrian Turk and thrown in his dungeons. Turk is a cruel, ruthless man, who saw only the fact that you stole from his employers, not the good you were doing. While in his dungeons, you were blinded in your left eye.

You now wear an eyepatch over that eye. It has become a symbol by which you are easily recognized. Like other thieves, you wear leather mail and dark clothing. You also wear a cloak with a hood. Because of your open enmity with Turk and his soldiers, you often use this hood to hide your telltale eyepatch from view.

After escaping from Turk's dungeons, you studied with a stick-fighting master. In the past three years, you've learned to use the two short, wooden batons you carry as formidable weapons. Armed with these batons, the throwing blades you carry, and your expertise, you've come back to Vasivada to continue working for the oppressed.



PLAYING THE GAME

ESTABLISHING YOUR CHARACTER

YOUR Jadd Hachen 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 Jadd's character makeup. 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" × 5" card or a slip of paper.

You are now ready to round out Jadd's individual identity by establishing his strengths and weakness-

es. Your character's **name** and **character class** 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 three things—**hit points**, **skill points**, and **experience 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 Jadd Hachen, the Prince of Thieves, have a specific life strength, represented by **hit points**. Once your hit points are reduced to zero, Jadd ceases to exist, and you have come to the end of the adventure, whether the text has come to an end or not.

Jadd often loses hit points when 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.

Jadd 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 told how many hit points to subtract.

Jadd, as an experienced thief, starts out the adventure with 25 hit points, plus a random chance to improve this score. Roll one six-sided die (creating a number between 1 and 6) and add the result to 25 for his total hit points. If you are dissatisfied with the result of the first roll, you may make one additional roll, but you *must* accept the second total whether or

not it is better than the first.

Guard Jadd's hit points carefully. Don't be afraid to spend them when the goal seems worthwhile, but note that Jadd has few chances to recover lost hit points during this adventure. Be wary of combat and danger. Jadd is a formidable fighter, but his luck and hit points won't last forever.



SKILL POINTS

Your adventures have given you formidable skills as a thief. In this adventure, your skills have been divided into three categories: **Fighting**, **Agility**, and **Cunning**. These skills, and how to use them, are explained below.

A number, called your **skill score**, represents your ability in a given skill. The higher the number, the better your skill. You must help determine what your strengths are. Your base skill scores are already printed on your Character Stats Card, but in addition, you have 5 more skill points to add to your scores. You may divide up the 5 points any way you wish, as long as you add at least 1 skill point to each of the three skills. There is no right or wrong way to divide up your skill points. Study the explanations of the skills that follow before deciding, then fill in your final skill scores for Jadd on your Character Stats Card.

Note that each time you start this adventure anew, you may experiment with different strengths and weaknesses.



Fighting

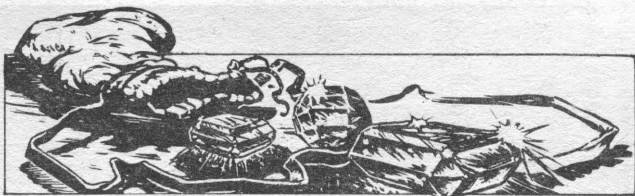
Fighting is your ability to battle with weapons or with your hands. Jadd carries several throwing blades and two short, wooden sticks, or batons. He is able to use both types of weapons with deadly precision.

You will be told in the text when you must use your fighting skill score. When you do use it, roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, you are successful.

Agility

Agility measures physical speed and dexterity—running, balancing, dodging, and so forth. Obviously, for the Prince of Thieves, agility will be very important.

The text will tell you when to make an agility skill check. To make the check, roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is equal to, or larger than, the number given, you have succeeded.



Cunning

Jadd's cunning skill score measures his chance of success in using his intelligence to solve problems. His cunning skill will be used when looking for hidden objects or traps, noticing important details about his surroundings, or simply trying to solve a problem through reason.

To use your cunning skill, roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. The book will note when this roll is appropriate. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, you have succeeded.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

As in real life, experience increases chances of success in a given situation because you have encountered a similar situation before and understand the possibilities that may occur. You, as Jadd, begin this adventure with a base of **6 experience points**, plus a random chance to improve your score. Roll one die and add the result to your base score of 6 to determine your total number of experience points. Record this score on your Character Stats Card. If you are dissatisfied with your die roll, you may have one, and

only one, chance to improve your score. Roll one die a second time, but you *must* accept this second roll, even if the total is lower than before.

Experience points may also be spent on any die roll to improve your chances of success, but once they are used up, they are gone and must be deducted from your total.

In this book, you may use only 1 experience point on any given dice roll. Simply add it to the overall total, remembering to deduct it from your experience point total.

PLAYING WITHOUT DICE

Should you ever wish to play this 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 up the numbers and draw a second time. Each draw represents one roll of a die. If only one die is called for, draw only one number.

Your character—Jadd Hachen, the Prince of Thieves—is now complete, and you are ready to begin your adventure. Start on page 13—and good luck!

You stalk through the evening streets of Vasivada like a shadow, your cloak and hood pulled close around you, one hand cradling the fat purse at your belt. Your eye keeps flitting back to the row of gaudy temples whose heaping coffers you just looted, but you've noticed no soldiers hounding your flight. *So far, so good*, you think, though you almost wish you could see the face of Hadrian Turk, the captain of the Royal Guard, when he finds out that you're back in his city, wreaking havoc under his very nose. That would be sweet revenge indeed. *But*, you remind yourself, *this is a mission of mercy, not vengeance. Revenge can wait for another day.*

With your purse now full to bursting, you leave the opulent heart of the city behind and head into the darker fringes known as the Thieves' Quarter.

It has been three years since you escaped the tortures of Captain Turk's dungeons, barely alive and with one eye blinded. Three years since you fled into the countryside, and many things have changed in that time. You have once again grown strong of mind and body, and your improved thieving skills have gained you a considerable reputation among the other nine kingdoms of the coast. But Vasivada has changed little in your absence. The slums are still as crowded, the people still as poor. Derelicts and beggars line the streets, and the wails of hungry children echo in the night. In no other kingdom have you seen such appalling contrast between wealth and poverty. To think that only a few blocks away, pampered nobles feast on fine wines and meats and hoard enough gold to feed a hundred such families or more. Where is the justice in that?

There is none, you think ruefully. Not in Vasivada. And that is why you have returned.

You loosen the cord on your bulging purse as you approach a ragtag line of beggars crouched along the street. The first, an almond-eyed young girl, holds out a dented cup. "Spare a coin, sire?" she asks listlessly, her voice containing no glimmer of hope. The last thing she expects is a whole handful of gold to fall into her cup. The sound of it alarms her, and the sight leaves her speechless.

The other beggars react in kind, staring numbly as you dole out coins to them hand over fist until nearly all of your night's spoils are gone. "Share it with your brethren," you whisper. "There is enough to go around, and there is more to come."

A hand tugs at your cloak as you turn to leave. It's a grizzled old woman, clutching the coins to her bosom and weeping. "Bless you, m'lord," she says through tears of gratitude. "But . . . who are you?"

"A friend, good mother," you say with a smile, pulling back your hood just enough to allow her a glimpse of your face and, more importantly, the telltale patch over your left eye. It is enough.

"Jadd Hachen!" she gasps as you slip away into the night. "The Prince of Thieves has returned!"

Satisfied with your night's work, you make your way through the quarter in search of safe lodging. You check your purse, your hand feeling one by one the three egg-shaped gemstones you stole from as many temple altars. Each is of a separate hue—blue, green, and red—but rather unremarkable in other respects. They lack the inner fire that marks a truly fine jewel. *Still*, you think, *they should fetch a fair price, more than enough for a flagon of ale and a place to lie down for the—*

You halt suddenly, your senses all but screaming an alarm. Anxiously you eye the shadowy street around you. It seems deserted, but you're certain you can feel someone's presence. . . . "Enough games!" you call aloud. "Show yourself!"

Turn to 34.



You are ushered into the camp of the man-rats and presented with a sumptuous meal at the home of Weejax and his family. During the festivities, you notice that everyone in the camp seems to look exactly like the man-rats' sworn enemies, the rat-men. What is the difference?

"Isn't it obvious?" Weejax explains later when you ask him about it. "We were once men, just like any others on the levels above. We were miners, searching for the great gold vein that had eluded our fathers before us. At first we weren't even aware of the subtle changes that were affecting us, but before long, it was obvious. Some say it was caused by seepage of sorcerous refuse from the kingdom's dumping ground on the surface world, but no one knows for sure. We became like the rats—man-rats, you could say. But the rats themselves changed, too, becoming more man-like. It was they who became the rat-men. Now do you see why we hate them so? They aren't like us at all!"

You shrug. You want to say, "You are more alike than you know," but it is not your place to judge.

"Now," says Weejax, pouring you a cup of tea, "tell me what brings you to the Down-Below."

Before you can answer, a frightened sentry stumbles into the dwelling. "Weejax!" he gasps. "Monster approaching!"

You rush outside. There, just outside the compound, stands at least eight hundred pounds of burrowing muscle. The umber hulk is eight feet tall and nearly as wide, and its mandibles clack and grind hungrily. "My master has sent me for Jadd Hachen," the creature croaks. "Give me Jadd Hachen and the Triad!"

"You have me, then, beast," you say, going out to meet it.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **199**. If it's less than 15, go to **123**.

The ancient saurian slices through the water straight toward you at unbelievable speed, its open jaws like those of Doom itself. But you are determined not to die. You jam your baton into the creature's gaping maw as you duck

beneath the leviathan's charge, then plunge two knives into its soft underbelly. The alligator's momentum does the rest, dragging its great bulk across the blades and opening its stomach from front to back. The water turns a deep scarlet as you quickly swim for the gem, pick it from the river bed, and head for the shallows.

"Zane!" you call as you break the surface. "I've got it!"

She rushes to your side, takes the gem, and shoves you away. "At last, we have it!" Her voice sounds different somehow. Huskier. Inhuman.

You suddenly freeze with the realization. The Murai!

"Oh, no, you don't!" screams another Zane, the real Zane. She climbs from the shallows where the Murai attacked her and renews the battle, leaping onto the imposter's back. They tumble into the water, thrashing wildly. You can only look on in confusion, wanting to help . . . but which one?

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to 117. If it's less, turn to 167.



4

Someone grabs your shoulder, and you barely recognize Zane in time to keep from taking her head off. She pulls you into a dark cell, where she has dragged two of the dead guards. "Quick!" she says, pulling the bloody uniform from one of the men and throwing it to you. "It's the only way out."

The two of you slip into your uniforms quickly. You are careful to hide your eyepatch behind the visor of your battle helmet. "Now let's get out of here!" she hisses, leading the way back toward the door of the dungeon.

Someone steps into your path. "What's going on here!"

demands Hadrian Turk.

You lean on your partner as if you are wounded, and the blood on your borrowed uniform gives credence to your ruse. "A monster!" you say breathlessly. "Back there!" and then you nearly collapse. Zane can barely keep you on your feet.

"Monster indeed!" Turk glowers. "Take him above. I'll see to this myself!" He stalks into the dungeon, and the two of you waste no time making good your escape. Before long, you are in a back alley not far from the royal grounds, discarding your disguises. "I wonder if Kaviani escaped," Zane muses.

"You can bet on it," you reply. "This isn't over yet—not by a long shot."

Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "green gem" and turn to 64.

5

You draw a throwing blade from your gauntlet cuff, but will it be enough to pierce the towering man-brute's thick hide? You can't shake your doubts. *If only I'd a heavier weapon*, you think. . . .

And then your eyes fall on the lethal hook swords that Okediji carries. *That's it*, you think, hurling the small knife in your hand, but you hurl it at the gargoyle instead of Kaviani.

Changing targets catches them by surprise. Okediji tries to evade the missile, but the creature's massive wings impair its movement. The blade sinks deep into its side. The monster no more than begins to fall when you bolt forward and seize one of the fallen hook swords. "Now, monster," you growl, turning on Kaviani and slashing with the great curved blade, "you die!"

But Kaviani proves agile for such a large creature. To your dismay, it sidesteps the attack and knocks the sword from your grasp with one monstrous fist. The other fist is not long in following; it descends on you like a fiery comet, and you don't even have time to cry out. The force of it hammers you straight into the ground, snuffing your brief life forever. . . . ✕

6

In abbreviated sentences, Boggle informs you that the area you are entering is called the Witching Woods, and you soon have no doubt why. Down this far, whether by sorcery or natural means gone awry, the undergrowth is out of control. Simple mushrooms reach the size of trees, and ordinary fungus sprouting from the cracks in the rocks grows hedge thick. It is like a strange forest far beneath the surface of the earth.

You travel for what must be an entire day, though you've no way of telling down here. You keep moving until both you and Zane are bone weary, and then you agree to camp for "the night" in a grove of towering toadstools. Boggle, seemingly tireless, volunteers to stand watch.

Within minutes his piercing cry alerts you. "What is it?" you call out, bleary-eyed. "I don't see anything."

"Danger!" Boggle cries anxiously. "Invisible stalker near! Must find, before it attacks!"

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **27**. If it's less than 12, turn to **131**.

7

"Where do you think the gem is?" Zane asks.

You shrug. "Anywhere. We'll just have to turn this place upside down until we find it. I'll start with the shelves while you search the witch's body."

Zane makes a sour face. "Why me?"

"Because you're a woman."

"Well, thanks for noticing."

You search through the shelves and piles of accumulated wares—trinkets, antiques, a few relics that might still possess some latent magical properties, but mostly just junk. You accidentally kick over one of the many flasks littering the floor, and you're amazed when the ichor that dribbles out produces a puff of smoke and immediately eats through the floorboards. "This could prove useful," you muse, searching for another flask similar to the one you spilled. Check "flask" on your Character Stats Card unless it is already marked.



You continue your search, but there is no sign of the gem. "I give up," you sigh finally. "What about you?" "I'm not sure," she says. "Come here a minute." Turn to 95.



8

You ready yourself as Okediji flies nearer to the tower, bunching your muscles like coiled wire, bracing your feet against the struggling creature's stomach. When the high spire looms within range, you aim for a shallow ledge near the top and kick away with all your strength.

Fiery pain suddenly lances your lower leg as Okediji's talons rake deep into your calf muscle, and the flash of agony disrupts your balance and timing. You tumble through the air end over end, out of control. You strain to reach the ledge . . . but it flashes past in an eyeblink, and you continue to plummet toward the earth far below.

The gargoyle screeches and dives after you, wailing about the Triad. Finally it catches up and clutches at your arm, but by now your momentum is too much even for those great bat wings to slow. At the last moment, it tries to pull away, but you clamp onto its talons and hold on, dragging it to its doom along with you. ✕

9

You slip your grapple line from your belt, tie it into a loop, move forward, and toss the loop around the harpy's neck, intent on dragging it to the ground.

The creature's wings continue to beat frantically, and a gasp escapes your lips as you feel your feet leave the ground! The harpy rises to the cavern's ceiling, trailing you

after her, then begins flying wildly around the chamber. You clench your teeth as she pounds you against the stone wall once, twice, but you refuse to let go. Finally you see a stalactite looming into your path. The impact rattles your bones and sends you crashing to the chamber floor. Subtract 3 hit points from your total.

Slowly your vision clears, only to see the harpy flying off with its prize. "I can't give up," you vow as Zane returns to your side. "Not yet!"

Turn to 83.



10

Hopelessly you slide into the tunnel farthest to the right, and almost immediately you notice a gradual change in the incline of the shaft. It grows less severe with each passing second, until it is all but horizontal and your descent comes to a halt. "There's some kind of a light just ahead," Zane whispers and begins to crawl toward it, with you close behind.

The tunnel soon intersects another passage, though it is unlike any you have ever seen before. The rock walls are dotted with an unusual form of lichen that seems to glow, producing enough ambient light to cast the tunnel in constant soft light. You won't be needing the torch. "The Down-Below, you say?"

"An old wives' tale—I think," Zane says softly, sounding less and less certain. "Have you seen any sign of Vermin?"

You kneel in the passage and observe the fungus that coats the floor in spots. "It looks like there are tracks here, some older than others. Let's follow them."

The tracks lead off into the network of tunnels, and as you walk, Zane wrinkles her nose at the pungent air. "It smells terrible down here," she says, pointing out a greasy residue that seeps like tar from cracks in the walls and ceiling. There are pools of seepage farther on, some of them

giving off an eerie glow of their own. "The smell of sorcery, I'll bet," Zane conjectures. "I've smelled it once before, when I was looting an alchemist's chamber. This doesn't look good, Jadd."

"Look, there's a chamber up ahead," you cry.

You enter a large cavern with a ceiling fully thirty feet above your head, marked by stalactites and other lime formations and, to your surprise, a settlement of sorts. There are tents and yurts and lean-tos, all constructed from materials either cast off or stolen from the surface and laid out in a circular, fortified formation. Someone actually lives down here!

You point to the makeshift village. "Someone's coming."

A ragtag squad of men, about ten in all, are approaching you. At least they appear to be men, but closer examination reveals them to be some sort of subhuman species, with sallow flesh and mutated, twisted features. Most brandish spears, except for the bearded leader, who carries only a long wand in his hand. "Up-Worlders!" he exclaims. "Take them!"

If you choose to fight, turn to 115. If you offer no resistance, turn to 20.



11

You lead Zane around the grounds of the palace, searching for a way inside. As you do so, you are mystified by the apparently shoddy security of the Royal Guards. "How did the castle ever get the reputation of being hard to rob?" you ask incredulously. "Why, a child could break into this place! Come, I'll show you."

You climb to a low balcony, slip over the rail, and pry open the doors with the blade of a knife. Then, once you're cer-

tain that the corridor beyond is empty, you signal Zane. "It's just as I expected," you say to her as she climbs into the room and follows you out into the hall. "It's almost as if they wanted us . . . to . . ." You halt. It's suddenly so obvious—breaking in *was* too easy. "Zane," you whisper, "back out slowly. This could be a—"

"Trap?" finishes the voice of Hadrian Turk, suddenly stepping into view at the end of the corridor. He is smiling, but the knife scar you gave him three years ago alters it into an evil grin. In moments, you see soldiers emerging from hiding with weapons drawn. "I knew you'd try the palace sooner or later," your archenemy taunts as the soldiers begin to advance.

"Stay close to me," you tell Zane softly as you prepare to make your move.

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **45**. If it's less, go to **209**.

12

Your lungs are nearly bursting as you face the great spider, fending off its groping legs as best as you can. Your batons are useless underwater, so you draw two of your throwing knives and brandish them instead.

When the spider attacks again, you swim inside its defenses and drive both blades deep into the creature's thorax. You hear its death cry even through the water. But at the same time, it comes down on your back with its long incisors, and you can feel the creature's venom pumping into you. The poison acts instantly, and your limbs go numb with paralysis.

Fighting back the numbness, you reach back to Zane and spear the bubble with another knife, freeing her and Vermin. Even as your limbs freeze and she drags you to the surface, you know you are beyond help. The venom has reached your heart, and its beating abruptly . . . stops. ✕

13

You know you can never reach the Triad in time, so a head-on approach is your only chance. "Kaviani!" you

shout, stepping farther into the courtyard. "Champion of the Murai! I challenge you to a duel!"

The pit fiend barely turns to look at you. "Yes?"

"If I win, you will cease this invasion and leave our world."

"And if you lose?" the friend asks. "What will I gain?"

It's a good question. "You can say you defeated the Prince of Thieves."

The entire Murai army roars with laughter. "An honor, surely," jests the monster, "but one that I will have to forego."

"Why, 'great' Kaviani?" you ask, your words as venomous as you can muster. "Are the Murai a race of cowards? Is their leader and champion afraid of a mere common thief?"

The laughter fades, and even Kaviani's troops look to their leader for a response. "Very well," the fiend growls. "Your death shall be my reward. Let the duel begin."

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to **36**. If it's less, turn to **107**.



14

The girl has less of a head start, you decide, and perhaps if you recapture her, she can lead you to the others. You set out after her at a dead run.

She's a nimble little minx, and by the time you clear the corner, slowing to check for soldiers first, you spot Zane Nazzari almost two whole blocks ahead. You'll need to throw caution to the wind and run full out to make up the distance. After several blocks, you've made up much of her lead. Glancing back at you, she turns into a darkened side alley, and you do the same several strides behind her, then quickly skid to a halt.

Before you, in the murky alleyway, stands a tall regal-looking man clad in the robes of a noble, his beard and moustache neatly trimmed and his hair combed back into a queue. At his side is a lethal-looking Oriental who stands no taller than you and carries a pair of razor-sharp hook swords across his back. You see quickly that the two aren't alone in the alley; the thief called Zane is with them as well. The mysterious nobleman holds her out at arm's length, a good foot above the ground, though how he manages it, you cannot decide. He barely seems to be making an effort.

"Lord Kaviani!" the Oriental whispers in a grating, unnatural tone. "It's him! Jadd Hachen—the thief we've been looking for!"

The nobleman turns a baleful eye toward you, and his gaze seems to freeze your blood with its malevolence. There is something unnatural and unholy about that man. "Were you perhaps looking for this pretty lass, Jadd Hachen?" he says as he holds Zane out for your inspection. "She is yours—provided you return what is ours, that is."

"And what may that be?" you ask.

"The Triad," the nobleman says. "The three gems you stole from altars this evening."

"Sorry, my friend, but I no longer have them. I was robbed back there."

"*You lie!*" thunders Kaviani, and as anger turns his gaze red-hot upon you, so, too, does he himself begin to change. His form begins to shift and shimmer like a reflection on rippling water.

"What madness is this?" you stammer, blinking uncertainly. But then you realize that it is not madness but sorcery, for as the illusion fades, you see the real Kaviani. Only the Black Arts could create such a monstrosity. It still stands upright, but now it towers eight feet in height, with a chest and torso so grotesquely large it seems impossible for its spindly legs to carry it. Its arms are the entire length and width of you, great muscular things that look as if they could uproot a tree. The creature's dark skin has a sleek, almost reptilian gleam to it, and vestigial wings sprout from its great shoulders. Its musculature is so exaggerated

that its small head, with its long elfin ears, seems to sprout forward from the shoulders instead of sitting on top of them. But most startling of all is that it is faceless! There are no features to speak of, only two blazing eyes and a jagged-toothed smile that runs from ear to ear. Now you can see how such a creature was able to hold Zane so effortlessly.

"The Triad," Kaviani growls, "or she dies!"

Run! your common sense urges. Run hard and leave this place, this city. Forget the stones, forget the girl—she's nothing to you. She tried to rob you—remember? You can still get away. . . .

Instead, you stand frozen to the spot in indecision.

Zane can lead me to the bandits, you rationalize, and help me get those stones back. They must be worth considerably more than I thought.

Your mind is made up. You must rescue the girl from this creature. The trouble is, how can you get the two of you out of here?

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **189**. If it is lower, turn to **23**.



15

You start after Gibbon, but you can't get Zane's frightened look out of your mind. "You're not going anywhere, Jadd Hachen," you tell yourself firmly. "Friendship is the one thing you can't steal. You have to earn it, and that makes it all the more valuable—perhaps even more valuable than the Triad. You know you can't leave here without her. The question is, how do you get through the entire

Thieves' Guild to free her?"

Your eye catches a speck of movement against the pale glow of the moon. It is one of Kaviani's winged lieutenants scouring the city for the Triad. It's hard to tell from this distance, but this one looks like a man-dragon of legend called an abishai. It swoops toward the rooftops, watching, searching. For you.

And that gives you an idea.

Turn to 150.

16

You miss the lip of the pit but manage to catch hold of a shallow ledge just below that. For a moment, you just hang there, hoping against hope that the ogre does not stay to gloat over his handiwork.

Inch by inch, hand over hand, you pull yourself back to the top of the Eternity Pit and peer out. The ogre has gone. You pull yourself up the rest of the way and flee toward the woods that flank the pit. There is an open field on the other side of the black trees. You see the army amassed there, gathered before the ritual altar that marks the rift. "At least I know where I am," you whisper to yourself. "Now the problem is, how do I get back through that accursed rift and home?"

If you decide upon a direct assault on the rift, turn to 191. If you want to try to pass through it in disguise, turn to 94.



17

You move in on your archenemy, your anger fueled by events of the past, and the battle begins with the clang of steel against wood. Not only do you manage to ward off each of his attacks, but you counter as well, attacking the hands that hold his knives. A quick blow to his left wrist sends one of the blades spinning away. He slashes with the

other knife but strikes only wood, and your other baton then snaps the blade of his last knife, completely disarming him. A blurringly fast two-stick combination drops him in his tracks, unconscious.

"Get the crown!" you tell Gibbon. "We've got to—" Just then you hear hurried footsteps echoing up the tower stairs, growing louder. "Guards coming! Quick, out onto the ledge!"

Turn to 152.



18

You land astraddle the behir's wide back with two knives at the ready, but you know better than to attack its main body. Its long, sinewy coils are like those of a snake, and the chances of hitting a major artery or organ with your small blades are slim at best. Instead, you leap immediately to your feet and climb along the creature's undulating back until you reach its thrashing head. It's there, at the base of the skull, that you drive your blades deep.

The great body tenses and then begins to spasm. You leap to safety as the creature's death throes take it closer to the lip of the ledge and then over, into the depths of the chasm.

"You've got guts, Hachen, I'll say that," Zane says as she drops to the ledge. She turns to the cloaked figure pressed up against the wall a few feet away. "Who's your friend?"

"I don't know yet." You approach the figure, extending a hand. "My name is Jadd Hachen. I come in peace."

The hand that issues from beneath that cloak is taloned and furry. "I am Weejax," he says in greeting, then pulls back his hood. The face beneath is smiling and friendly-looking but not entirely human. Instead, it is furry, and a



snout extends outward, like a rat.

"Jadd," Zane says, alert. She moves closer to the tunnel the man-rat came from. "Someone is coming! I hear footsteps . . . more than one."

"It's them!" Weejax whispers urgently. "We must hide! Quickly!"

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **142**. If it's less, turn to **211**.

19

"There's still a slim chance!" you shout as you race back through the maze of tunnels you have just traversed, trying your best to remember where each is in relation to the next. If your hunch is right, there's a shortcut that just might intercept the path of the harpy's flight.

You hurry up a slanted passageway and come out on a high ledge overlooking a yawning chasm. Flying just beneath you, apparently oblivious to your presence, is the harpy. The gem is still clutched in its talons.

Without a second thought, you leap from the precipice. Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **37**. If it's less, turn to **187**.

20

"Stop!" you call to the strange-looking, oncoming men. "We come in peace. We mean no harm."

"We do not believe you," the leader of the group says, waving his small wand at you. "We know your kind. We have welcomed Up-Worlders before, only to be cheated and robbed of what little we have. No longer. Now we fight!" He waves his wand, and a bolt of lightning leaps from its tip, biting into the ground at your feet.

You know better than to panic. If you raise your hand against them, it will make your previous words appear lies. You see Zane secretively draw a knife from her forearm sheath, but you touch her wrist and whisper, "Put it away. We may need their help if we're ever going to find Vermin down here." Then you address the bearded leader. "We will offer you no resistance." You hold out your batons. "I told you, we come in peace." They look suspicious and confused by your surrender of your weapons, but finally accept them and herd you to their settlement.

"You will be put on trial for thievery," says the leader.

"But we haven't taken anything of yours!"

"You are thieves, aren't you? I can tell from your dress. It would only be a matter of time before you took what was not yours."

"But you don't understand. We've come seeking another thief, one called Verm—"

The leader puts up a hand to silence you as a sentry comes rushing into the settlement. "Lorkt," he calls to the leader, "we are being invaded by monsters!"

"You mean the wizard-spawn from the caverns below?"

"No," the frightened man replies. "These creatures are different. I have not seen them before. And they are almost here!"

You and Zane look at one another knowingly. "The Murai," you say. "They know we're here."

Turn to **151**.



21

You leap away from the fiery specter, barely avoiding a slash from its spear. The salamander's eldritch blade misses your head by a fraction of an inch, instead hitting the bars behind you and, in a shower of sparks, slicing straight through them. "By the gods!" you mutter, scrambling in the limited space to avoid a second blow.

"Ho, fireworm!" calls Zane, and you see that she has picked up the only other furnishing in the cell, a bucket of stagnant water for washing. She hurls it full in the salamander's face. The creature backs away, cursing, as the water hisses and turns immediately to a cloud of steam.

Now is your chance, you realize. You launch yourself at the creature, driving a vicious kick into its back that smashes it into the wall and knocks the spear from its grasp. Immediately you go for the monster's weapon, wrapping rags around your hands to keep from touching the red-hot metal. The salamander recovers and charges you, not seeing the lance until it has already impaled itself on the ebon blade. It sinks to the floor, dead.

"Let's get out of here!" you shout, throwing down the weapon, now too hot to handle. The cell door is still open, the lock melted by the salamander's entrance. You check the corridor, then slink forward to the guard station. The sentry is dead, killed by the Murai agent. You recover your weapons and Zane's, then rejoin her. "Let's find Iron Jaw," you say. "If there's one Murai here, there could be others."

Turn to 109.

22

"Don't I know you from somewhere?" Vermin asks. A split second later, you slam him into the side of the pit.

"Oh, it's you. Long time no see."

"All right, Vermin. Where did you put it?" you snarl.

"Put what?" You slam him hard into the wall again by way of explanation. "Oh, your gem? I hid it just before those filthy beasts caught me."

"Where did you hide it?" you ask quickly.

The weasely thief laughs, and this time roughing him up fails to loosen his tongue. "Not so fast, my friend," he says finally. "First you must get us out of here. Then we'll strike our bargain."

"He's right, Jadd," Zane says. "First things first. Let's get out of here now and worry about the gem later."

If you choose to find some way to escape, turn to **194**. If you try to appeal to the rat-men to release you, go to **53**.



23

"Give me a minute to consider your offer," you stall, turning slightly so they don't see your hand slip into the pouch at your side where you carry your thieves' gear. You grope past the lockpicks and climbing rope and collapsible grappling hook until you locate the vial of alchemist's powder you always carry in case you get cornered. "Take a deep breath, Zane!" you call as you hurl the vial directly at the feet of Kaviani and the creature's weird accomplice. As soon as the vial shatters, the powder erupts into plumes of white smoke, blinding and choking and enveloping the beasts like a living thing. Zane suddenly comes staggering from the fog, still holding her breath. You sigh with relief; the sleeping powder obviously works on monsters as well as men.

"Run!" she gasps as she reaches your side. "It's right behind me!"

"Don't worry," you try to calm her. "There was enough powder there to knock out twenty men."

"Just look for yourself!" she yells, fleeing the alley. You look back through the billowing whiteness and feel your heart shrink at the sight of a faintly outlined massive shadow lumbering toward you.

You race from the alley, then head down one street and up another, mindless of the direction so long as it's away from that . . . that thing. *The sleeping powder must have slowed the creature down*, you rationalize, trying to calm your jangled nerves. *I can still outdistance it if I just—*

The steady thrum of wings on the night air startles you. *Okediji!* you think suddenly, realizing that the gargoyle could have simply flown out of your sleep cloud and followed you. You reach for a throwing blade, but at that moment, something hits you from behind, sinking powerful talons deep into your shoulders and lifting you off the ground. Subtract 2 hit points from your total.

"Give me the Triad!" screeches Okediji as the creature carries you ever higher into the midnight sky, till the kingdom is far below. "Give the gems to me or you die!"

You try to control the mounting panic within you, but there is no stopping it. It envelops you like a wave and forces an anguished cry from your lips. But it also gives you a near maniacal strength, enough to fight back against your attacker, to kick and scratch and pummel it until it is taken aback by the ferocity of your attack. Okediji tries to let go of you, but you cling to the creature with spiderlike tenacity and refuse to be thrown off. Faced with such a battle, the monster's flying becomes erratic and it is all it can do to stay aloft.

From the corner of your eye, you see a towering structure looming in your path, silhouetted against the moon. An anxious glance downward confirms that you are indeed over the wealthy side of the kingdom now, heading straight for the tower of the royal palace. *This is my chance*, you think. *If I can just steer this creature close enough to the tower for one desperate leap. . .*

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to 177. If it's less, turn to 8.



24

You somersault over the first three Murai creatures you come to and take down the next two with hastily thrown daggers. You duck beneath slashing talons and attack their feet and ankles with your batons until finally the way to the scepter is clear, except for one last figure—Kaviani.

You run right at the monster, ignoring the lightning that singes the air all around you. You hurl your batons at the fiend's face, distracting it just long enough to dart past and wrench the Triad scepter from the ground. Immediately a loud rumble fills the air as the Reckoning spell is broken. The portal to the realm of the Murai closes and disappears, leaving only a smattering of Murai soldiers behind.

"It's over!" you sigh as fatigue catches up and engulfs you. But then you feel an icy glare burning into your back, and you know that the battle has only just begun. You turn to face Kaviani's rage head-on.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **141**. If it's less, turn to **212**.

25

You reach out desperately for Zane's hand, straining with all your might, but there is simply too much distance between you. You continue to fall, spinning end over end into the uncharted depths of the yawning chasm. ✕

26

You lunge for the gem in Kaviani's hand, but the pit fiend senses your movement and gives you the back of a fist instead. The blow knocks you halfway up the corridor, leaving starbursts of pain before your eyes. Subtract 3 hit points from your total.

“Fool!” the creature laughs, discarding Iron Jaw like a limp rag. “Now you will die!” Kaviani takes a step toward you, eyes flashing yellow and crackling with arcane power.

Just then hurried footsteps sound at the end of the hall. An entire squad of armed jailers and Royal Guards appear in moments, cutting off any escape. “My luck’s run out,” you moan, expecting both enemies to converge on you at once. Instead, the soldiers rush right past you, intent on the more obvious threat of the monster. Kaviani merely laughs at their insolence as bolts of lightning leap from its eyes and halve their numbers, but more warriors rush to take their place. The battle is joined.

Someone grabs you from behind and pulls you toward an open cell door. “Trust me,” Zane says, locking the both of you inside and then hiding in the deep shadows at the rear of the cell. “There are too many soldiers about,” she says. “Our only chance is to just wait it out.”

You can’t see the battle from your hiding place, but you can hear it raging for long minutes. Finally it ends, leaving only sounds of confusion. “Where did the monster go?” asks a guard you see walking with his wounded comrades. “The thing was there one minute, and suddenly it wasn’t. It simply vanished!” The soldier behind him smiles, and as he does, you see a faint flash of yellow in his eyes.

“Kaviani!” you whisper to yourself.

You wait until all the soldiers have gone and the silence returns before daring to move. Then you slip from the cell, disable the jailer at the door, and escape from the royal dungeon, but without the gemstone. Check “lost” on your Character Stats Card beneath “green gem,” then turn to 64.

27

You cast your trained eye on the area directly around you. How do you find something that isn’t visible to the eye? you wonder. Unless . . . unless you discount the sense that is betraying you. “Both of you, stay completely silent,” you order as you close your eyes and concentrate. You identify all extraneous sounds and close them out: the drip of seeping water, the skittering of insects, even the beating of

your own heart. And when you are finished, there is only one sound that you cannot identify. It is a soft swooshing noise, like dragging steps, just barely a meter off to your right.

You whirl suddenly, with three throwing blades already in your hand, and hurl them in the direction of the sound. Two of the blades seem to sink hilt-deep into the very air. A howl of pain accompanies their strike, followed by the thrashing of a creature in its death throes. Spots of blood appear on the floor. Then the struggling finally ceases.

"What if it was a Murai agent?" you wonder aloud. "What if it was sent to find us, or if there are others down here? Boggle, can you tell which direction this thing came from?"

The apish creature scratches his head, then points a long arm down the passageway.

"C'mon, then," you say. "Let's see if there are any other surprises awaiting us."

Turn to 67.

28

The man-rats divide into squads to check out such unusually named sections of the Down-Below as the Dark Waters and the Witchy Woods. Weejax commands a reconnaissance patrol that heads back to rat-man territory. He takes you and Zane with him.

You renavigate the treacherous complex of tunnels that leads to the rat-man compound and sneak past the sleeping wyvern once again.

"There it is," Weejax whispers finally, pointing to the tunnel opening just ahead. You move forward and peer out at the rodent stronghold.

The cavern beyond is huge. In the face of the far wall, you see a honeycomb of caves and chambers where Weejax's enemies dwell. "How will we ever find out if Vermin is there?" you whisper to yourself, but at that very instant, you see a flash of unfurred skin among the rat-men. Vermin is being marched from one ground-level cave to another, bound, with a sword held at his back.

"I'd rather leave the wretch there," you whisper, "but we have to get that gem!" Turn to 176.

"We've won, Zane!" you exclaim, pulling her into your arms. "We've got all three gems. Now all we have to do . . ." You push her away suddenly, revulsed by her touch. She did not feel like Zane in your arms. She did not even feel human.

"You shouldn't have taken your eyes off Pretty," the figure squeals as the illusion fades, revealing a chattering Murai goblin. "Follow me with the stones to the courtyard, or you will never see Pretty again."

You want to attack the creature in rage, but you know it would be futile. Zane would still be the prisoner of the Murai. You remove the gems from your belt pouch and weigh them against your friendship with Zane. In the end, there is no comparison. "Lead the way," you tell the goblin.

You are taken to a dark courtyard, empty save for the pit fiend and its monstrous minions. The creature holds Zane at its side with one hand and gestures for the gems with the other. "Take them," you say, flinging them across the courtyard floor, "and let her go!"

Kaviani releases her as soon as the goblin has gathered up the three stones. "Enjoy your freedom," the fiend says to both of you. "It will only last a few more minutes!"

Turn to 80.

You ask around the streets of the Thieves' Quarter, but few people have seen Iron Jaw Joner this night. Still, each one who has had dealings with the brawny female in the past gives you the same advice. "Look for trouble. That's where you'll find her."

You are passing a row of closed shops when Zane abruptly pushes you into a darkened doorway and presses herself against you, a finger raised to her lips. Half an instant later, you hear it, too—the clomp of running feet. A squad of Royal Guards hurries past and continues down the next street, never even sparing you a glance. Your partner peeks out to make sure there aren't more. "Where do you suppose they were headed?"

"Hard telling," you reply. "But wherever it is, there's bound to be—" You exchange glances. "Trouble!" you

exclaim, and the two of you set out after the departed soldiers, trying to remain as unobtrusive as possible.

There is some kind of a brawl going on several blocks away; the sound of it reaches your ears long before you see it. And, as expected, a drunken Iron Jaw is directly in the center of it, hurling soldiers this way and that and apparently having a fine old time. Three guards already lie unconscious at her feet, and one more seems about to join them. But the reinforcements who passed you are too numerous even for Iron Jaw. They charge as one into the fray and drag her down. Finally a battered officer is able to force shackles around her thick wrists. "Let the cow rot in the dungeon for a while!" he says with a sneer, motioning for the others to drag her away.

Keeping a discreet distance behind them, you and Zane follow them all the way to the royal palace, and through an iron door that leads to the dungeon, according to Zane. Iron Jaw is hauled inside.

"Well, there goes one stone," Zane says with a sigh. "Who should we go after now, Gibbon or—"

"Hold on," you interrupt. "This isn't some game we're playing here. We can't just give up. We've got to get that stone."

"But how? By now they'll have found it and taken it to the king's treasure store." She stares up at the tall tower before you. It seems to disappear into the night sky. "The treasure room is near the top, Jadd. Do you think we should climb it?"

"Possibly. But there's a chance they didn't find the gem at all. I've been in dungeons like this, and it's an old thief's trick to conceal a bit of gold somewhere in your clothing for bribing the guards. She may still have the stone with her."

Zane sighs. "So which is it? The tower or the dungeon?"

If you choose to investigate the treasure room, turn to **71**.
If you want to check out the dungeon, turn to **121**.

31

Your leap into the wyvern's nest is too hurried. Instead of landing astride the beast's back, you fall into the nest itself, right beside the mother wyvern—and her hatchlings.



And the hatchlings are hungry!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **50**. If it's less, turn to **157**.



32

"Back out into the corridor!" you order your friends as the tarrasque lumbers toward you. "I think I know how to stop it!"

You taunt the beast with your throwing knives, luring it after you, just as you did the barrow wight earlier. And as it closes in for the kill, you turn and shout into the nearest tunnel-worm hole, "Come and get me!" Then you quickly duck.

At first nothing happens. The tarrasque makes a rumbling sound in its throat that sounds like laughter and looms over you, opening its slavering jaws. Then suddenly the tunnel-worms burst from their lairs in a feeding frenzy, enveloping the great beast in worm coils, and try to pull it into their nest.

You rush past the struggling creatures into the chamber, where the red gem still pulses, keeping the rift open. You know better than to test the vortex again.

This time you pull your grapple line from your belt and lasso the pedestal, pull it toward you, and pluck the gem from the top. Immediately the pulsating ceases, and the rift closes. Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem."

You turn toward the archway, only to leap back immediately, your heart in your throat. A gibbous arm floats before you in midair, reaching out toward you—nothing else, just an arm! Suddenly Boggle's head peeks through the arch as well, and you understand. Boggle is using the arch as a dimensional door. "Boggle have Zane," he tells you. "Help Jadd out, too?"

You grab Boggle's outstretched hand and step through the chamber archway into another world entirely.

Turn to 153.

33

You peer out from the cave, half-expecting a contingent of rats to have discovered your presence. But those in the main cavern are rushing about frantically, mustering the troops, hiding the rat-women and children. "It looks as if they're being invaded," you say. "Could it be Weejax and his men?"

"No—it isn't me," the man-rat says as he and his soldiers slip into the cave. In the confusion outside, they were able to pass as rat-men, and their presence went unnoticed. "There's a small army of orcs and ogres storming the cavern arch!"

You and Zane exchange glances. "The Murai!"

"It's fortunate for us," Weejax says. "We can sneak out unnoticed while they're occupied."

"But you've got to help them!" you say. "The rat-men won't stand a chance against Kaviani's creatures without your help!"

"Are you crazy?" he exclaims. "Have you forgotten? We are man-rats, and they're—"

"Man-rats, rat-men," you growl. "What's the difference what you once were? It's what you are *now* that counts. You walk alike, talk alike. You *are* alike. You're all rat people, pure and simple. And against a common foe, you've got to either stand together or fall separately."

Weejax shrugs, then kicks at the dirt. "Perhaps just this once . . ." he says, drawing his sword. "Besides, I've been aching for a good battle for weeks! C'mon, men! Let's show them how a rat really fights!" The entire squad lets loose a war-cry and rushes off to the fight, leaving you and Zane behind with Vermin.

"Aren't we going to help?" Zane asks.

"Certainly," you say, "but I'm not sure just how yet."

If you decide to try to find the Triad stone, turn to 130. If you choose to lure the Murai away while Zane searches for the gem, go to 55.



34

In answer to your challenge, four figures emerge from the shadows—one from an alleyway just ahead, and three more from around a corner behind you. *Strike me for a fool!* you curse yourself bitterly. *I should have sensed that someone was following me.*

The four figures are thieves, like yourself—their leather mail and dark clothing tell you that much. They wear black hoods to hide their faces. The man before you is a short, weasel-like figure who constantly fingers the blade of his drawn dagger. Of the remaining three, a backward glance tells you that one is tall and wiry, while another is just the opposite, squat and muscular and, you note much to your surprise, female. You can't tell much about the fourth robber, who hangs back behind the others and keeps a cloak wrapped tightly around him. Each, like his apparent leader, wields a wicked-looking blade.

"Prince of Thieves!" sneers the Weasel in a mocking tone. "Somehow I expected more. Now, kindly hand over that purse."

"Whatever happened to the idea of honor among thieves?" you ask.

The Weasel snickers and shrugs indifferently. "Not in Vasivada, friend. Stealing is stealing, whether it's from a wealthy nobleman or a fellow thief. We saw you passing out the gold back there. If you're so determined to give away your spoils, we'll just do you the favor of taking the rest of it off your hands, eh?"

Lazy thieves have always incensed you, and your anger begins to boil. "And if I refuse?"

"Then we'll see how much you bleed. Now, hand over what's left in that purse!"

"Ah ah," you warn, turning your back to a nearby wall so you can keep your eye on all four of them. "You didn't say please."

"Fool!" the Weasel spits, then motions to the others. "Take him!"

You start to reach for the small dirklike throwing blades you keep secreted in your gauntlet and boot cuffs, but obviously there's no time. Instead, you draw two short wooden batons from their sheaths on either thigh. You've trained with a stick-fighting master for the last three years. Here is where you put your learning to the test.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **87**. If it's less than 15, turn to **38**.



35

You launch yourself at the head hobgoblin and land on the middle of its back like some kind of a wild monkey, wrapping your legs around the creature's thick middle. The hobgoblin tries to buck you off, but you hang on tenaciously. You quickly discover that the small knives in your hands are useless against its thick armor, so instead you slip the blades beneath the edges of its armor and quickly slice through the binding straps of the hobgoblin's breast plate. The heavy steel falls away, and you waste no time in plunging the knives into the creature's bared torso. The monster gives a strangled cry and collapses.

The other hobgoblins cease their fighting and stare in shock at their fallen leader. You hold your knives out defiantly. "I have killed your best warrior," you warn them. "Who will be next?"

Your bluff has the desired effect. The creatures gape at you, and their boldness is lost. They retreat quickly, with the spear-armed cave dwellers right at their heels.

"Well done, young sir," says Lorkt, flashing a gap-toothed smile. "It seems we judged you too quickly. Come, sit at our fire and tell us what brings you to the Down-Below."

Turn to 169.

36

You square off against Kaviani, the Murai champion, warily searching for a weakness in the brute's defenses. But Kaviani grows impatient. "Enough of this dancing!" the creature growls as its yellow eyes flash and send shards of lightning leaping at you. Only your acrobatic skills save you from the crackling bolts.

In a fluid movement, you pull four knives from your boot tops and hold two in each hand. As you dodge another magical attack, you somersault and fling all four blades at the same time. All four find their target—Kaviani's massive chest—but they have no visible effect! The pit fiend continues to lumber toward you relentlessly. You hit it with two, three, four more knives, all on target, but the creature hardly notices. You start to reach for more blades, then you realize frantically that you've used your last ones.

Kaviani seizes you by the throat, lifts you into the air so that you stare into the monster's fiery eyes, and then . . . The pit fiend's expression slackens, and pain creeps into its terrifying gaze. "No!" it stammers, dropping you and sinking to its knees. "It can't be . . . I am Kaviani . . . I am . . ." And the giant fiend slumps to the ground, dead.

There is an eerie silence as you stand over the fallen Murai leader. You fully expect the gathered army of the Murai to mob you and exact their vengeance upon you, but they do nothing, not even when you stride over to the Triad scepter and wrench it from the ground. There is a loud clap of thunder as the Reckoning spell is broken, and the gateway begins to fade. "Go home!" you shout to the Murai who stand and stare at Kaviani's limp form. The creatures lift the body onto their shoulders and carry it through the diminishing portal and back to their realm. Then the gate closes behind them and disappears.

"It's over, Zane," you sigh, the burden finally gone from your shoulders.

"Is it?" she says quickly. "Jadd . . . I think we have company."

Materializing behind you and reaching off into the depths of the night is another army, this one lawful in nature and dwarfing even the Murai forces. There are lammasus, serpentlike nagas, feathery couatls, even the horse-like ki-rin. "You're a bit late," you say, laughing, "but thanks for showing up just the same."

"We will take the Triad," says a gentle-faced lammasu, landing its lion-eagle body next to you. "Kaviani's followers will never find the wishstones again." You hand the scepter to the lammasu, and the creature smiles. "Thank you, Jadd Hachen. This world owes you a great deal." Then the lawful army fades as well, like ghosts in the moonlight, leaving you and Zane alone in the courtyard. ✕



37

Amazingly, your aim is perfect. You land astride the she-vulture's back and immediately pin her talons to her sides.

"Get off!" she screeches, but there is little she can do to dislodge you. Her flight becomes erratic.

The harpy climbs and dips and loops, trying to throw you off, but in her distracted state, she flies right into a stalactite hanging from the cave ceiling, breaking her neck on impact.

You fall some forty feet to the floor of the cavern, but fortunately you land in a pool of water. You emerge, dripping, from the pool, locate the harpy's lifeless body, and pry the gem from the creature's hand.

You slip the gem into your belt pouch. Check “found” on your Character Stats Card beneath “red gem,” then turn to 91.

38

The tall, wiry thief comes in first, slicing the air menacingly but staying just beyond your range. You quickly tire of his feints and mount an attack yourself. A sharp blow to the wrist knocks the knife from his hand, and a second to the collarbone drops him to the ground. One more strike should—

Whap! A massive fist collides with the back of your head, and dancing colors fill your vision as you stagger and fall. How you manage to stay conscious is a mystery; a blow such as that would have left most men in a state of unconsciousness for some time. But you fight to stay alert, and almost make it to your knees before a great female shadow falls over you and a second blow makes the world go black.

You float in a numbing void, for how long you can’t tell, but from somewhere, as if a great distance away, you can still make out voices.

“Get his purse.”

“What’s inside?”

“Three gems. But . . . there’s four of us. How do we split this up?”

The weasely thief’s voice. “I’ll show you how.” *Whap!* Someone falls hard. “Sorry, Zane Nazzari, but those are the risks you take.” Laughter, and then the sound of fading footsteps. And silence.

You force your way back to consciousness, accepting the pain that comes with it. The back of your head feels swollen, and bells are still ringing in your ears. But at least your vision is clearing. You look around groggily. The thieves are long gone—all save one. The fourth thief, the one you could barely see earlier, lies crumpled on the ground beside you, having suffered the indignity of betrayal and a hard right to the jaw. The concealing hood has fallen away, and you see that the face beneath, framed in long, raven tresses, is not only female but also strikingly beautiful. . . and just starting to stir, from the looks of it.

"What . . ." she stammers tentatively.

"Nice to meet you, Zane Nazzari," you grunt, holding your head. "Looks like we're both in the same boat, eh?"

"You could say that," comes a man's voice from behind you, deep and resonant and utterly familiar. You look over your shoulder to find a small squad of Royal Guards at the head of the street, and despite your absence, you have no trouble recognizing the captain in the lead. It is not his stern, threatening features that give him away, but rather the knife scar that divides them from hair to chin and renders a permanent sneer on his lips. It was your gift to him on the night you escaped his dungeon.

"Same old Jadd Hachen," says Hadrian Turk with a serpent's smirk. "When my spies told me there was someone giving away money in the Thieves' Quarter, I knew it had to be you. Some things never change, eh?"

Your first impulse is to fight. You've dreamed of facing Turk again, but not when you're outnumbered and groggy from a fight, at that. Better to live to fight another day. But what about the girl? She's the only link you have to the other robbers. You've got to take her with you.

The bells are still ringing in your ears. *Yes, we must escape, you think. But it's going to be a lot easier said than done.*

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **47**. If it's less, turn to **208**.



39

With Kaviani hot on your trail, you head straight for the secret guildhouse.

A window stands open, and you waste no time in diving straight through it, taking the fifteen thieves within completely by surprise. "Well, if it isn't the Prince of Thieves!"

mocks Gibbon—the real Gibbon this time—as knives are unsheathed and men gather around you, glaring. “Have you come back to get your girlfriend?” The Leaper motions at the door to their rear. “She’s right back there, but you’ll have to get past us first.”

Suddenly the wall behind you explodes in a flash of lightning, spraying rubble everywhere and sending the others scrambling for cover. With the pit fiend right behind you now, you know you’ll never make it across the room to free Zane, not unless you can distract Kaviani somehow. *But how do I do that? you wonder. Give him the gem?*

Exactly!

You grab the gangly thief called the Leaper and shove him toward your monstrous pursuer. “He has one of your precious stones!” you shout. “Make him admit it!” Then you rush toward the rear door as Kaviani’s attention switches to Gibbon, who starts to scream.

The door ahead of you is locked and the key missing from the hole. Dismayed, you pull out your lockpicks and set to work, praying that you have enough time.

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **75**. If it’s less, turn to **154**.



40

It's the gem that's causing this, you guess as you try to fight the pull of the rift's vortex. If I could just destroy it...

You remember the lightning rod in your belt sash and draw it out, unsure just how such a magical implement works. There are no switches or triggers. *What do I do?* You try desperately to remember. *Just think "lightning"...*

Your arm jolts as a bolt of crackling white energy leaps from the tip of the stick and arcs across the chamber. Instead of striking the gemstone, it hits the pedestal, exploding the rock and sending the Triad jewel into the far corner of the room. When it comes to rest, its pulsing appears to have slowed somewhat, and to your surprise, the pull of the vortex is not nearly as strong now. As the pulsing continues to decrease, so, too, the shimmer of the rift behind you diminishes, until finally the gem stops pulsing completely and the Murai doorway fades from view. The spell is broken. The chamber is silent.

Turn to 181.

41

You grab the nearest man by the collar and raise your baton, but as soon as you touch him, you realize that you're mistaken—he's no overmuscled giant. "Sorry," you say, letting the frightened man continue on.

Zane stumbles dizzily from the shop, rubbing her chin. "Did you find him?"

"No," you mutter. "He got away."

Check "lost" on your Character Stats Card beneath "blue gem" and turn to 64.

42

You race across the rooftop right behind Zane, but the *whump-whump* of the creature's wings is growing louder. When you feel the Oriental's attack coming, you shove Zane aside and try to evade it as well.

Searing pain lances through your side as the hook sword strikes home. You topple over the roof's edge and barely manage to catch the edge of the roof before falling to the street below. Warmth spreads across your chest. You poke one hand through your sliced shirt and it comes back bright crimson.

"Jadd, get up!" Zane screams. "It's coming back!"

You struggle to your feet, then blink the haze from your eyes to see the flying Oriental bank on a night breeze and swoop toward you for another attack. Only he isn't an Oriental anymore. Okediji has sloughed off his illusory dis-

guise to reveal a gray-scaled nightmare with the body of a hound and the wings of a dragon. "Good heavens!" gasps Zane. "It's a gargoyle! Run, Jadd. Run!"

It's too late for that, you know, for a creeping chill has replaced the pain in your side. The wound you received was mortal, and there's nothing you can do about it. "Run, Zane," you gasp, drawing out a handful of throwing daggers as you watch the monster approach. "I'll make my stand here!"

When the gargoyle is within range, you put all of your strength into one last throw. And from the small storm of steel you loose, one shard strikes home. Okediji shrieks, grabs his throat, and falls to the rooftop, dead.

"We're even," you whisper as you sink to your knees and the darkness overcomes you. ✕

43

The rat champion slashes the air in front of you with his great sword, menacing you with its size. When the blade descends in attack, it is all you can do to raise your spear fast enough to block it.

Pain immediately sears through your ribs. You look down to see a knife sticking in your side. The rat-man's ploy worked; you concentrated so hard on his great sword that you didn't keep his other hand in sight.

You sag to the ground, taking your hard-learned lesson with you to the grave. ✕

44

You try to will your legs to move, but your muscles are paralyzed with fear. Never in your worst dreams could you have imagined this . . .

Suddenly a mace flashes through the air and lands at the base of your skull, and you collapse instantly. Mercifully, you feel none of the blows that follow. Subtract 3 hit points from your total.

Through a dim haze, you realize that you are being held aloft by a brutish ogre with too many teeth for its mouth to hold. "See how weak our opponents are, brothers?" it yells as the army cheers. "We will conquer!"

Your senses swim as you feel yourself being carried away. When you rouse once more, you are overlooking a great yawning fissure in the ground. "Welcome to Eternity Pit," laughs your ogre captor. "It called that because it takes eternity to hit bottom." The ogre lifts you high overhead, mutters, "Good-bye, worm," and hurls you into the pit.

As you fall, you twist in midair and make a desperate grab for the edge.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. Then subtract 1 because of your injuries from the beating. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **16**. If it's less, turn to **143**.



45

Zane starts to back away, expecting you to flee back the way you came, but that's what Turk will expect as well, you reason, so you do just the opposite. Instead, you attack.

You run straight for your archenemy, with Zane, puzzled, following close behind. The move takes the guards by surprise. They are slow to react, and you make it to the head of the corridor virtually unopposed. Hadrian Turk stands ready before you with his sword poised. You vault into the air as he slashes, then somersault completely over him. Turk is distracted, and as Zane passes him, she can't resist the opportunity to stick a fist in the side of his face. The blow catches him totally unaware. "Nothing personal!" she taunts the captain as he falls on his backside, dazed.

You round a corner into a deserted hallway, then pull Zane into a curtained alcove and wait. Soon you hear the guards go rushing by. "Where's the dungeon?" you ask Zane.

"Back the way we came. Why? Wait—let me answer that. They'll never think to look there—right?"

"Exactly."

Turn to **158**.

You launch a flying kick, landing both feet in the middle of the abishai's back and knocking it forward, past Gibbon and into a shelf full of beakers and vials. Most of the containers smash, and several splash the creature with their viscous liquids.

Immediately the Murai agent's scaly flesh begins to smoke, and the monster's screams of pain are not long in following. It is still burning when it finally can't stand it any longer and dives through the window.

"Many thanks to you, Jadd Hachen," the Leaper says sheepishly. "I thought that evil beast had me for sure. If there's anything I can do—"

"Just give me the gem."

Gibbon acts reluctant to give it to you at first, then finally shrugs. "I would if I could. You saw Tegrat take it from me. He wants to keep the gem—and the girl—for himself. That's why he assigned us this fool's errand. He hoped we'd be caught or, better yet, killed. No, the only way to regain the gem is to complete the trial. But I'll help you to win, Jadd, on one condition—that I get to keep the royal crown."

"Agreed," you say quickly.

You pause to look over the broken shelf and shattered flasks, many still smoking. You hadn't realized just where you are until now—it's the chamber of Dadkhah, the court sorcerer himself. "Perhaps these will be of use," you say, choosing a few unbroken flasks at random and slipping them into your pack.

Check "flasks" on your Character Stats Card and turn to 195.

As Turk and his men move in, you realize you are still too groggy to outrun them, especially dragging the girl along with you. There's nowhere else to go, you decide, but up. "Zane," you whisper, "stay close to me and follow my lead." Quickly you run across the street toward a line of small shops with canopies stretched across the cobbled walkway. You seize the edge of the heaviest awning and swing yourself on top of it, then reach to pull Zane up after you.



"Stop them!" yells Hadrian Turk once he realizes your plan. "Don't let them get away!" But by the time the soldiers reach the awning, you have pulled yourself and Zane up to a balcony and out of sword reach. From there, it's onto the balcony rail and then up to the rooftop of the building. You boost Zane up first, then pause just long enough to thumb your nose at Turk before making your escape.

"What now?" Zane asks as you pull yourself up beside her. "They'll be here in a few minutes."

"Yes, but we won't be." You nod, starting out across the rooftops of the Thieves' Quarter at a brisk pace. You make better time here than at ground level, leaping alleys and swinging on clotheslines and climbing the drainpipes of the higher buildings and cramped slum tenements. You cover nearly two miles before pausing to rest on a roof overlooking a dark, deserted back street.

"No sign of the soldiers," you wheeze, "though we'll have to keep alert. Hadrian Turk won't leave a stone unturned till he finds us."

"Don't worry," she says, panting as well. "We lost them. They'll never find us."

Suddenly both of you freeze as a voice sounds from the street below. "There, master. On the roof!"

You peer down from your vantage point but are surprised to find not a soldier in sight. Instead, two figures stand in the center of the street. The taller of the two is the more unusual. He is tall and refined-looking, dressed in the robes of a nobleman, something seldom seen this deep in the quarter. But his gaze . . . even from this distance, it seems to burn into you. The other figure with him is a short, lethal-looking Oriental who wears two razored hook swords strapped across his back. It is he who points at you and speaks in the same grating tone you heard before. "See, Lord Kaviani? It is indeed him—Jadd Hachen, the thief we've been searching for!"

Zane grabs your arm. "Let's get out of here—"

"No . . . wait. I'm curious." You step closer to the roof parapet and call down, "You know me?"

The one called Kaviani laughs, but it sounds hollow and utterly humorless. "Indeed we do. You stole something

from us earlier this evening—a Triad of colored gemstones. You will return them to us—now!”

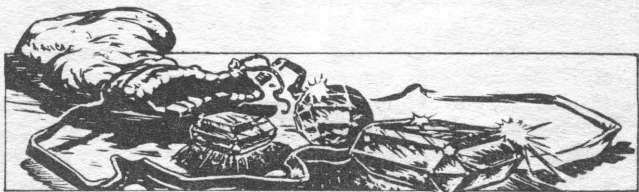
“Sorry, friend,” you say with a shrug. “I don’t have them anymore.”

“*Do not lie!*” roars Kaviani, his eyes flashing with a sudden volcanic anger. And in that instant, his control appears to slip. The carefully maintained image of a nobleman ripples and fades for just a moment, but it’s enough for you to see past it and glimpse the real Kaviani—nearly eight feet of inhuman muscle and sinew, a great humanoid beast with hulking shoulders and tree-thick arms and eyes like glowing embers. The illusion returns immediately, but it can never erase that monstrous image from your mind. “Okediji,” the “nobleman” says, motioning to his accomplice. “Get the Triad . . . and destroy them!”

The Oriental nods, draws his hook swords, and hurries toward the building. After three steps, his feet suddenly leave the ground and he flies straight up at you, accompanied by the steady drumbeat of wings.

“*Now we run!*” you yell, just as the Oriental clears the roof parapet and swoops toward you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **99**. If it’s less, turn to **42**.



48

You draw the battered lightning rod from your belt, trying to remember how the thing is triggered and wondering if it even has any charges left after all these years. Suddenly you remember. *Lightning!* you think, and a crackling bolt streaks across the courtyard, destroying two of the Murai underlings before it strikes Kaviani full in the chest.

But the pit fiend merely chuckles! “Your wand is losing its power,” Kaviani chortles. “It won’t help you!”

You fire again and again, but each bolt is less powerful than the last. Kaviani sidesteps each one easily, but as he does, the last bolt hits the Triad scepter.

The bolt’s energy is transferred from stone to stone, multiplying two-, then ten-, then twenty-fold, till it’s released again as a super bolt a thousand times more powerful than before. It arcs straight through the portal and into the Murai realm. There is a sudden, eye-searing flash, and when your vision clears, you see half of the entire invading army lying dead. The rest are fleeing in confusion and fear.

Kaviani is stunned. You rush past the fiend and wrench the scepter from the ground, breaking the Reckoning spell. The gateway caves in upon itself and vanishes. The invasion is over!

But you feel Kaviani’s gaze burning into your back, and you know that the final battle is just beginning.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **141**. If it’s less, turn to **212**.

49

“The shallows would be safer,” Zane says. “We’d have a better chance to avoid anything that might come after us.” You agree quickly.

You step down into the inky water up to your knees. “Be careful,” you warn as you help Zane in. “These shallows could drop off at any time, so we’ll have to watch our foot—”

A splash of water surges into the air as something breaks the surface beside you. A tooth-lined snout opens and closes on your leg, not biting but holding you in a steely grip. As Zane screams, the giant alligator backs into deeper water and pulls you in after it.

Roll two dice to save versus drowning. If the result is 6 or higher, turn to **155**. If it’s less, turn to **102**.

50

One of the hatchlings immediately lunges at you, its jaws snapping and stingered tail already coiling. You dodge its

first bite and beat back the second with a blow to its beak. While the greyhound-sized baby is stunned, you draw a knife and move in for the kill.

Just then the mother roars loudly. You look up to see her poised above you, wings spread and scorpion tail pointed directly at you. But it is not hatred or bestiality you see in those dragonlike eyes. It is the panic of motherly concern. It was you who invaded the nest. You are the monster here.

You quickly move away from the hatchling and back off, holding up your hands to show that you mean no harm. Then, with a dextrous leap, you clear the edge of the nest and run for your life. Zane beckons you to a small tunnel that a beast the size of a wyvern could not possibly fit through.

Turn to 182.

51

Helplessly you tumble into the shaft at the left and continue your descent, deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth. You're forced to swallow repeatedly to relieve the pressure on your ears.

Then, suddenly, the shaft's incline levels out slightly, but not enough to slow your descent. You see an opening appear, and you speed right through it, out into an open cavern . . . and over the precipice of a subterranean ravine. "Jadd!" Zane calls as she catches the lip of a ledge and reaches out for you with her other hand.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to 149. If it's less, turn to 25.



52

The abishai swoops directly at you in a last-ditch attack. You push Gibbon back, draw your batons, and put all of your strength into one mighty blow. The wooden shaft

strikes the creature's head with tremendous force, and the creature's skull shatters on impact. But the force of the blow also causes you to lose your balance and topple off the ledge.

"Jadd!" Gibbon shouts, reaching for you, but you've already fallen beyond his grasp. Screaming in disbelief, you follow the abishai to the courtyard far below and to certain death. . . . ☩

53

"Guard!" you yell. "Summon Captain Vix! I must speak with him!"

It is several minutes before the rodentlike head of the captain peers down into the pit. "Well, what is it?" he snaps.

"Your people are in great danger, as are we all. There is an invading army just beyond here, waiting to sweep over the entire world, yours and mine both. We might be able to stop them if you release us from here."

The rat-man laughs. "You must take me for a fool! I have never heard a more ridiculous story. Besides, even if there were an army lurking about, I would welcome a good fight." He turns to leave.

Think fast, Jadd, your mind races.

"Captain," you call aloud. "You say you are a race of warriors?"

The rat turns back to face you and nods. "Of course."

"Then I issue a challenge to you. Pit me against your greatest warrior."

"Why should I do that? I have nothing to gain."

"Ah, but a true warrior needs no reason beyond the fact that he has been challenged."

Vix dwells on your words. Then he turns to the sentry and barks, "Take them to the compound!"

Within minutes, you are standing in the center of a large cavern, armed with a spear and facing the rat-man champion. He is at least two feet taller than you. And wider. And stronger.

But he is fighting only for honor. You are fighting for your life.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to 137. If it's less, turn to 43.

54

You wait in shocked silence, and the creature abruptly darts right at you. Your first impulse is to go for your batons and defend yourself, but you don't want to scare the beast and so you remain perfectly still.

The creature attacks low, diving between your legs, and disappears. "Where did it go?" you ask, peering beneath you. Then, just as suddenly, the creature reappears, but this time from one of the worm tunnels. It is carrying your grapples and other pilfered items and drops them on the ground at your feet.

"Who, or what, are you?" Zane asks incredulously.

The creature puffs out its chest with pride and says, "Boggle I am, and Boggle I be."

Turn to 147.

55

You watch as the united rat people defend against the orc and ogre invaders, and you feel a pang of guilt. "The Murai are after me, you know—me and the Triad. I can't just stand by and watch innocent beings suffer in my stead." You turn to Zane. "Take Vermin and find the gem. I'm going to lead the Murai away."

"You're *what*?"

You don't give Zane time to argue. Instead, you slip out into the open and shout to the masses, "Who among you dares to fight the Prince of Thieves?"

A massively built figure rears above the others, even the ogres, with yellow eyes flashing. You recognize the figure as Kaviani! "There's the thief!" the pit fiend shouts to its Murai followers. "After him!" The tide of troops ignores the rat people and starts after you.

You run from the large cavern and the rat stronghold, leaving through the first tunnel you come across. Then, as you begin to recognize passages you've been through before, you start a game of cat-and-mouse, darting through

cave after cave, hiding and waiting for the Murai to pass before you lead them back in the opposite direction. After a while, the creatures begin to grow confused.

Suddenly you hear a shrill scream. It's Zane!

The fading echo leads you to a chamber not far from the sleeping wyvern you saw earlier. There you find Vermin dead, his lifeblood pooling red on the chamber floor. His slayer hovers overhead on huge vulturelike wings. Her head and torso are that of a woman, but from there down, she is a bird of prey, her talons still wet with the weasely thief's blood.

Even now the harpy has another quarry cornered. She slashes out at Zane Nazzari and knocks her off her feet. You see the red Triad stone roll from her grasp and realize that Vermin must have found it before the she-bird attacked. You start forward to reclaim the gem, but the harpy beats you to it. "I have it!" she screeches, clutching the stone in her talons. "I have the Triad stone!"

"Not for long!" you mutter, charging the beast.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to 185. If it's less, go to 9.



56

"Please excuse my appearance," Dadkhah says as you climb through the window. "I am not really such a buffoon as these robes would suggest, but the king expects it of me, so . . . Please be seated."

The tower room is unbelievably cluttered, overflowing with parchments and tomes and tablets, flasks and beakers and all manner of magical equipment. Somehow the disarray seems to fit the frazzled old man. You brush a pile

of scrolls from a time-worn couch and sit down as the wizard comes closer, his bushy brow knitted with curiosity. "Tell me, young thief," he asks, "do you often travel in the company of gargoyles?"

You are hesitant at first to tell your story and thus confess your crimes, especially to a member of the king's own court, but something in the old man's gaze tells you that he can be trusted. Before you know it, you are telling him about each movement you've made since entering the city, even including the raid on the temples.

The old man glowers at you for a moment. "Don't you know that looting temples is sacrilegious, boy?" he asks, but there is a bemused twinkle in his eye. "Don't worry, my young friend. I'm only teasing you. I've no taste for the foreign temples myself—they have no place in Vasivada. I know those priestly orders to be chaotic at the core. Who knows what dark deities they worship?"

"I think I do," you tell him. "I might have met one tonight. You see, I took not only gold from the temples, but three gemstones as well, one from each altar. Later, two . . . things came after them. One was Okediji, the gargoyle you saw outside just now. The other was a huge hellish creature that called itself Kaviani."

The old man starts at your mention of the name. "If I remember correctly," he mutters, going to a wall shelf and thumbing along some book spines, "this does not bode well, not at all." He picks out an ancient tome and blows the dust from its cover, then leafs through it, concentrating intently. Finally he stops at one illustration and holds it out before you. "Is this your creature?"

"By the gods!" you mutter. The drawing is as ancient and crude as a cave painting from the distant past, but the subject is unmistakable, from its massive physique to its fiery gaze. "That's him!"

The wizard's expression becomes even more grave. "It is Kaviani, the pit fiend, king and champion of the Murai."

"The Murai?"

"You see, young man," he explains, his voice deadly serious, "we are not alone in our existence. There are many worlds out there, just beyond this thin veil we call reality.

And one of these dimensions of existence is the realm of the Murai, a race of fantastical creatures weaned on sorcery and other strong magicks. For centuries, they have been trying to break through the dimensional barrier that separates our worlds. At times they have almost succeeded. Some of our greatest legends, of dragons and hobgoblins and ogres, began when one of the Murai slipped through to our world. But these always concerned mere rifts in the fabric of time and space, rifts that could be easily sealed. What Kaviani seeks to do is to rip asunder that fabric, to destroy the barrier completely and open the floodgates to invasion . . . or worse."

"Worse?" you repeat.

The old man is solemn. "Doomsday," he murmurs. "That is where the stones you speak of, the Triad, come into play. Each is a wishstone, capable of opening a small rift all by itself, which is probably how Kaviani came to this world. But joined together in a ceremony called—" he consults the book—"ah, here it is. The Reckoning. If the stones were to be joined together, I fear there would be no stopping them." He smiles thinly. "It's a good thing you came along when you did, young thief. Taking those stones might have saved this entire world. May I see them?"

You hang your head. "I was . . . robbed. I don't have them anymore."

Dadkhah lets out a soft moan under his breath. "If the stones are still out there," he tells you, "then we are all in mortal peril."

"You're a wizard, old man. Can't you do something?"

"If only I could," the sorcerer says with a sigh. "But Kaviani would sense my magical movements. On the other hand, you are like the shadow. It is you who must get the gemstones back, Jadd Hachen. The fate of the world may rest in your hands!"

Turn to 79.

57

"How do we get out?" Zane asks. "The guard took all of our gear."

"O ye of little faith," you say with a chuckle, taking off

your eyepatch. There is a concealed pocket in its side, from which you extract a thin lockpick. "Allow me," you say, slipping the pick into the mechanism. A careful twist, and the lock snaps open.

Turn to 114.

58

Your reflexes are severely hampered by the water, and you miss grabbing the dragon's tail by scant inches. "Let her go!" you call after the beast. "Leave her alone!"

"Certainly," the dragon says, once it has wrested the gemstone from Zane's grasp. The female thief plummets back into the water, bruised and battered. You swim to her and manage to keep her afloat, but then you see the dragon inhaling deeply, swelling its chest. You drag your friend underwater just in time, as a cone of flame sears the surface. Two more blasts strike the water before you dare to come up again, and then only to see the creature flying off with your hard-earned prize. Check "lost" on your Character Stats Card underneath "red gem."

"Now what do we do?" Zane asks as she clings to you in the cold water.

"There isn't much we can do," you tell her, "except ride the river and see where it ends."

Turn to 138.



59

You try to defend yourself against Kaviani's fury, but you are like wheat before the reaper. The fiend's attack is unrelenting, and the creature bowls you over and hammers you time and again. Zane attacks and tries to turn Kaviani aside, but it simply shrugs her off and continues to pummel you. Your consciousness begins to ebb.

"Jadd!" Zane calls. You fight your way back to awareness and realize for the first time that the beating has finally stopped. You look up and see Kaviani hanging several feet above the ground, held fast in the clutches of two great lammasus, winged lions with human faces. And they are not alone. Massed in the night sky above them are ki-rins and dragon horses and feathery couatl serpents—an entire army of lawful creatures, gathered to fight the invading Murai forces. With the Reckoning aborted, they are eminently capable of handling the pit fiend.

"I hope you are uninjured, Jadd Hachen," says one of the lammasus, smiling. "We are grateful for your assistance in this time of need. And do not worry about Kaviani. We will take him far from here. Far indeed." With that, the awesome assemblage rises into the darkened sky and disappears.

"Well, it's finally over," Zane says as she pulls you to your feet. "And we're no better off for any of it."

"Not necessarily," you say to her, staggering over to what's left of the ruined scepter. The Triad explosion may have shattered one end of it and charred the remainder a bit, but the majority is still in good shape—especially where the small jewels, hundreds of them, are inset into the shaft. "The poor will eat well tonight!" you laugh as the two of you walk toward the slums of Vasivada. ✕



60

The monster is too well armored for your batons or knives to be effective, except for those areas where flexibility is needed, around the elbows and knees, the shoulders, the throat . . .

"That's it!" you exclaim. You draw two of your daggers and attack, ducking beneath the umber hulk's sluggish reach and leaping up onto its shoulders. Its clacking mandibles tear through your tunic and slash at your abdomen, but you have to risk being that close to thrust the two knives deep into the soft flesh of the creature's throat. As you do, the hulk's single eye widens and a gurgling sound escapes from its maw. Then it teeters forward, falling before you have time to leap clear. The umber hulk collapses on top of you, its massive weight driving you into the solid rock. Your adventure, and your life, has ended. ✖

61

"It's a bit hard to believe," Zane says of the story as you make your way through the Thieves' Quarter, wary of either soldier or monster. "But I've seen too many strange things this night to doubt it."

"The question is how can I get these gems before Kaviani does? He has powerful magic on his side, not to mention agents like Okediji. What do I have?"

Zane smiles and taps her chest. "You have me, Jadd Hachen. And I know who took the Triad, remember? The tall, thin thief was Gibbon the Leaper, so named for his agility. The brawny female was Iron Jaw Joner, more of a brawler than most men I know."

"And the Weasel?"

"That was Vermin."

"How appropriate," you say. "They'll have split the gems between them, one each. That means we'll have to track down each of them in turn."

Zane throws up her arms. "So where do you want to start?"

If you choose to track Gibbon, turn to **163**. If you want to follow Iron Jaw Joner, turn to **30**. If you'd rather track Vermin, go to **106**.

62

You can't get across the room in time to stop the gargoyle from severing Zane's lifeline, so instead you grope for the closest thing, a beaker from one of the many shelves

around you, and hurl it at Okediji to distract the creature.

The earthen jar shatters against Okediji's skull, and the viscous fluid within splatters the gargoyle from head to toe. Okediji stands still a moment, uncertain, but then its eyes widen and the gargoyle begins to scream. It thrashes about the chamber as the smoke billows from its skin and the smell of singed scales fills the room. Finally the monster bursts into supernatural flame and is engulfed as it dives out the tower window.

You hurry to the rope and pull Zane up. "What—what did you do to that thing, anyway?" she wants to know, looking at you curiously.

You return to the shelves with renewed interest. "I'm not really sure," you say, sorting through the bottles and beakers and wishing you could remember which kind you threw. You pick two earthen jars on a hunch and put them in your belt pouch. Check "flasks" on your Character Stats Card.

"C'mon," Zane says, standing on the windowsill with the rope and grapple. "That tussle is bound to attract someone's attention. Let's get up to the treasure room before they come to investigate." She tosses the hook to the final ledge and pulls it taut, then swings out into space. You grab the rope and follow close behind.

Turn to 101.

63

The deeper into the Down-Below you travel, the stranger it becomes.

You walk down a narrow passageway, the walls on either side of you honeycombed with small tunnels about the size of a warrior's shield. You have heard legends of how voracious tunnel-worms burrow through solid rock in search of food, but you've never seen evidence of their existence until now. It leaves you with a decidedly uneasy feeling, and you would like to get past these dark, staring sockets as soon as possible.

"Wait," Zane says, coming to a sudden stop. "My knife is missing. And so is my grappling hook!"

You look at your own supplies. Everything seems to be in

order . . . no, wait. Where is your own grapple? "My grapple and line as well! What is going on here?"

Zane's eyes widen. "Look!" she whispers.



Slowly a hand snakes out of one of the worm tunnels and gently tries to pick the baton from your belt. You grab the thin wrist and give it a jerk, and the thief comes tumbling out of his hiding place.

"What is it?" Zane wants to know.

The creature is like nothing you have seen before. It's not much larger than a child, and its proportions are grossly ill matched. Its head is bulbous, with prominent brow and nose, and its arms are much too long, nearly dragging on the ground when it stands upright. Whatever it is, the creature suddenly looks afraid, and you can feel it tensing to spring. But does it intend to attack or flee?

If you attack the thing first, turn to 104. If you watch silently instead, turn to 54.

64

Add 1 hit point to your total for getting this far.

If you have found *or* lost precisely one gem, choose a different one to pursue from the table below:

Blue Gem (Gibbon) Go to **163**.

Green Gem (Iron Jaw) Go to **30**.

Red Gem (Vermin) Go to **106**.

If you have found any two gems, roll one die. If the result is 1-5, choose the third gem to search for from the table above. If the result is 6, go to **184**.

If you have lost any two gems, turn to **116**.

If you have found all three gems, go to **29**.

65

You race after the three thieves who have the gemstones, running to overcome their head start. You clear the corner of the street just as their shadows disappear around the next one. When you get to the next corner, you find the same thing once again. Your sides heaving, you continue the pursuit, not so much for the stones as the principle of the thing. It wouldn't do for word to get out that the Prince of Thieves had been robbed!

Up ahead, you see that this street intersects with another, giving three possible avenues of escape. To your exasperation, you see a fleeing shadow disappear down each one. "Blast!" you curse, almost quitting in disgust, but your tenaciousness won't let them escape so easily. You turn right down the next street and pick up speed, hoping against hope that you're on the trail of the weasel-like leader. *Just wait till I get my hands on him!* you think.

After a few more minutes, you slow to a wheezing halt in the middle of the road. The street is deserted. There is no sign of your quarry whatsoever, or anyone else, for that matter. "Face it," you sigh with disgust, "those stones are as good as—"

Suddenly there's a sound behind you, a movement you sense even before turning. With your batons held at the ready, you whirl about and find yourself no longer alone.

Two men stand before you, but it is the taller of the two who commands your immediate attention. He is regal in

appearance, with classical features and a neatly trimmed beard. His hair is pulled into a queue, and he's clothed in the robes of a nobleman, making his presence in the Thieves' Quarter strange indeed. But it isn't his noble appearance that strikes you most. It's his eyes—they smolder with a malevolence that you find quite unsettling. At his side is an Oriental no taller than you are, slight of frame but stern of feature. He fingers the hilt of one of the two hook swords strapped across his back. "It's him, Lord Kaviani!" whispers the Oriental in a grating, sandpaper tone. "Jadd Hachen—the thief we've been searching for."

"You know me?" you ask.

The force of the noble's gaze intensifies, all but burning into you. "Oh, yes," he says, his voice a lethal whisper. "We know you, Jadd Hachen. We also know you looted three chaotic temples this evening and took a Triad of gemstones from their altars. We have come to retrieve them."

"Then we're both out of luck," you say matter-of-factly, "for I was just robbed myself a few minutes ago, and—"

"*Do not lie!*" thunders the one called Kaviani, and as his anger flares, he loses control. His image begins to change before your very eyes. The illusory disguise of the nobleman shimmers and begins to fade from view, revealing his true appearance, which freezes your blood. The creature stands nearly eight feet tall, with an upper torso so grossly overmuscled that it seems top-heavy. Its chest is massive, and its arms are veritable tree trunks, ending in hands large enough to crush your skull like a grape. Small, unevolved wings sprout from its back like forgotten remnants of an earlier species. You realize there is no way they could lift such bulk from the ground. Its shoulders are so muscular, in fact, that its squat neck is shunted forward toward the chest, giving it an almost hunchbacked appearance. The face is dark and nearly featureless, save for two smoldering eyes and a jagged sneer that stretches halfway around its head.

"What manner of sorcery is this?" you stammer as the Oriental begins to change as well. As you watch, its form becomes long and spindly, like a hound standing upright. But this hound is sheathed in gray, reptilian scales and

unfolds long leathern wings from across its back.

"Okediji," the larger beast addresses the gargoyle, "take back the Triad . . . and shred him to pieces!"

The winged creature hisses in anticipation as it draws the hook swords from its back. Then, with a flap of its great bat wings, it rises several feet above the ground and swoops directly at you. There is no time to run; your only chance is to meet the attack head on.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to 74. If it's less, turn to 108.



66

You attack the rat-men without hesitation, throwing them off balance from the start. Four baton blows in rapid succession dispense with two of the warriors, and Zane's blade fells another. In the face of your attack, the rat-men quickly retreat back down the cavern where they came from. All save one.

The leader of the rat-men slashes angrily at you, but you block his sword once, twice, three times. Then, with a two-stick combination, you succeed in disarming him. The rat-man is so enraged by his defeat that he charges, catching you full in the gut and carrying both of you back toward the edge.

"Jadd, watch out!" Zane cries out.

But too late. You sense the danger and try to stop, but you both tumble over the edge. The leader continues to struggle all the way to the bottom, where your adventure comes to a tragic end. . . . ☒

67

The passage ahead is flanked on either side with yet another gallery of tunnel-worm holes. This time Boggle is

along to caution you. "New holes," he whispers. "Move careful. Worm home."

"Oh great," you sigh.

Quietly the three of you slip past, first Boggle, then Zane, then you. The passageway bends in the center, and just around the corner, you spy a body lying limp against the wall. It's Vermin. He is shrunken and pale and very close to death. You approach him cautiously. "Did the worms get him?" Zane asks.

You kneel next to him, and he seems to stare right through you. He has no injuries you can see; instead, he looks as if he has somehow been drained of life. The thought sends a shiver down your spine. You check his pockets for the gem, but it's not there. "Vermin, where is the gemstone? Where?" you cry.

"Sshhh!" Zane whispers. "I hear something. It's coming from just ahead."

Cautiously you edge closer to the end of the passage. There is a chamber there, and an eerie crimson light from within throws a shadow across the wall. The shadow belongs to a tall, gaunt figure, its hair a greasy tangle, its flesh as sallow as Vermin's. "It's a barrow wight!" Zane whispers over your shoulder. "They steal your life-force with their touch. It must have attacked Vermin."

The wight stands in the center of the chamber with its back to you, but you finally get to see past it to where the crimson light comes from. The red Triad gem is perched on an upright stone, glowing, beginning to pulsate. The wight mutters something over it, an incantation or spell of some kind, and the pulsing increases. The air become thick with the smell of sorcery. When the pulsating reaches its zenith, a split appears in the very air of the chamber, hovering, a shimmering hole in space and time. Just as suddenly, a doubled-over form spills through the hole and collapses on the stone floor. It's curled up and barely moving, but you can tell what it is. It's another wight.

"Jadd, they've opened a door from their realm!" Zane whispers urgently. "We've got to stop them!"

You rush out into the chamber with your batons at the ready.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **198**. If it's less, turn to **84**.

68

The gargoyle carcass lands unsteadily on the ledge. Its bones are still smoking from the corrosive substance you splashed on it, which is still eating away at Okediji's very existence. The creature's hook swords flash outward, barely giving you time to deflect them. You counter by bashing the creature's skull again and again, finally cracking one of its empty eye sockets. The creature reels, looking stunned. *One more blow should do it*, you think quickly.

A hook sword slashes wildly, missing by inches but forcing you backward. Suddenly your foot slips from the ledge, and you balance there for what seems an eternity, teetering between life and death. Your weight is extended too far over the edge—there's no way to recover it. With a scream, you topple into space, even as Zane reaches to stop you. At least you manage to grab is Okediji's leg as you go, dragging the creature along with you.

It is little comfort, but the gargoyle's bones finally shatter when they reach the ground—along with your own. ✖

69

A cone of raw energy explodes from the crone's hand, and only a reflexive leap saves you from it. Still, the fringe of the powerful force is enough to spin you across the shop into a pile of curios and other junk. Subtract 1 hit point from your total.

"Do you see now?" the witch cackles as she chases the nimble Zane about the room with another sorcerous attack. "Yes, it's true. I'm a witch, all right. But with that blue wishstone, I'll be even more powerful!" Zane falters momentarily, and the hag immediately moves in for the kill.

You leap up from the wreckage, searching for some weapon that might stop her, but there are no mirrors in sight, as you'd hoped. Finally you spot a silver tray in the pile at your feet, its surface stained and pitted but at least partial-

ly reflective. "This has got to do!" you mutter, launching yourself across the room and diving between Zane and the witch just as the hag fires her force beam again. This time the energy strikes the surface of the tray and ricochets right back at its originator.

You hear the witch scream horribly. When you peer cautiously around the tray, you find her sprawled out against the far wall, dead, her body still smoking from her own magic.

Turn to 7.



70

Vermin races around corners at breakneck speed. Each time he disappears from the glow of your torchlight, you pump your legs all the harder until he's back in sight. Gradually the thief begins to tire, and slowly you gain on him. Finally, he's almost within your reach. You stretch out your fingers and graze the back of his tunic, but the Weasel puts on a last burst of speed and ducks into a low side passage. "Hurry, Zane!" you call back. "I think we have him cornered!"

As you turn into the passage, your jaw drops. There are at least eight tunnels branching out before you, and there is no sign of Vermin. You have no way of knowing which path he took.

"We could spend days searching all those passages," Zane says with a sigh. "He's long gone, Jadd. We might as well turn back."

You hate to agree, but you must. There are still other gems to be found. Check "lost" on your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem" and turn to 64.



71

"I know Turk's men," Zane tells you. "There's no way Iron Jaw will ever get that gem past them. My guess is that the gem has already been taken to the tower. And the tower is sure to be heavily guarded."

"From the inside," you say, "but not from outside." You remove the thin, extra-strong line from your belt, along with the small grappling hook, then set off through the undergrowth toward the palace.

You and Zane hide in the shrubbery till a patrol goes past, then survey the tower. There is a narrow ledge on every third floor, where various stone gargoyles squat. You hurl your hook and snag a statue on your first try, then pull the rope taut. "Ladies first," you say, holding the line out to Zane.

The two of you climb the tower quickly. When you reach the second ledge from the top, you make another successful throw with the grapple, then lean against one of the stone gargoyles to rest a moment. "Are you all right?" you ask Zane.

She smirks. "I can hold my own with anyone, thank you very much. Even the Prince of Thieves. Now let's stop talking and get back to—" Her eyes suddenly grow wide, and her mouth continues to move wordlessly.

"Zane? What—"

"That statue! It moved!" she finally blurts out.

You whirl toward the nearest of the stone gargoyles and see it smiling back at you. "Give me the Triad!" Okediji demands, reaching out with long talons. You step back away from the gargoyle, but there is no ledge beneath your foot, only open air. Unable to recover, you topple helplessly

into space, and the safety line that connects you to Zane yanks her from the tower as well.

Turn to **96**.

72

As you leave, Lorkt offers you as a gift the same lightning rod he used earlier. "I have an extra," he explains. "They both fell down one of the shafts from the surface with the other garbage. I can't guarantee how many good charges are left, so use the rod wisely. Just hold it out and think 'Lightning.'"

"I'll do that, my friend," you tell him. Check "lightning rod" on your Character Stats Card.

Bidding Lorkt and his tribesmen farewell, you travel deeper into the Down-Below, following Lorkt's directions. Soon you find the fork in the passage, one leading to the Dark Waters and the other to the Witching Woods. "Which way do we go?" Zane asks.

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total equals 15 or more, turn to **203**. If it's less than 15, turn to **172**.

73

You draw one of the small flasks you picked up earlier from your pouch and weigh it in your hands, then hurl it at Kaviani with all your might.

The earthen-jar shatters on the pit fiend's hard skull, and the black ichor within splatters all over the creature. You watch expectantly, but it does nothing more. You pull out another flask, open it, and sniff the contents. "Paint?" you wonder. Then it dawns on you. "I grabbed the wrong bottles!" You hurl it anyway, then draw out your batons in preparation for your final battle.

The flask sails past Kaviani and shatters against the scepter instead, coating the pulsing Triad stones with thick black paint. Immediately the scepter begins to sway and shake; the stones' energy can't be dispelled because of the paint coating! The energy builds upon itself, and the ground beneath your feet begins to shake. The rumbling sound grows louder, filling the courtyard, and all at once,

the Triad scepter explodes. When the smoke finally clears, the Murai gateway is gone as well as the scepter. The Reckoning has failed!

But the battle isn't over yet.

"You will pay for this, insect!" bellows Kaviani, and even the fiend's remaining minions scatter in the face of their master's rage.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **207**. If it's less, turn to **59**.



74

Drawing your batons, you await the gargoyle's attack with a sense of calm, recalling in that split second before battle the teachings of your stick-fighting master: React to the attack. Deflect its power. Turn it back on itself.

The flying beast is on you in an instant, hook swords flashing. You meet the blades with your simple shafts of wood, yet the steel fails to split them in two as one would expect. Instead, you swing the sticks at subtle angles that deflect the blades past you. Then, in an eyeblink, you drop the sticks and concentrate on Okediji, grabbing the gargoyle by the arm and turning with the creature so that you add to its momentum. You whirl the monster completely around in a half circle, then release it, so that its aerial charge is turned right back in the direction it came from, toward its master.

"Watch out, you fool!" Kaviani bellows as the flying beast collides with it, and both go down in a heap.

You don't wait around for the outcome. You are already moving, out of the alley and down the street, anywhere to get away from the nightmare back there. . . .

Suddenly a gloved hand snakes from the darkened door-

way of a market stall and catches your shoulder. Before you realize it, you are pulled into the shadows. "What the . . ." you stammer, trying to reach a weapon, but a hand on your chest stops you and a finger is pressed to your lips. Whoever is concealed there in the shadows appears to be waiting for something. . . .

Several long moments pass before you hear it—the steady *whump-whump* of Okediji's wings beating the air above the shop. The monster is searching for you and likely would have spotted you by now had not your mysterious benefactor pulled you to safety. You wait for what seems an eternity as the wingbeats come and go, but finally they fade and do not return.

The hands now grasp your arm and pull you to your feet. "Are you all right?" asks Zane Nazzari, the same raven-tressed thief who helped rob you earlier.

"What concern is it of yours? Weren't you just trying to stick a knife in me a few minutes ago, or have you forgotten a little thing like that?"

"I haven't forgotten," she says, "nor was I trying very hard, or believe me, you'd be dead right now. Ambushing people has never had any appeal to me. But my partners are always looking for easy money. That's why they came after you, figuring four to one are pretty good odds."

"That doesn't tell me what you're doing here."

"Isn't it obvious, Jadd?" she asks. "I'm here for revenge. Nobody deserts Zane Nazzari, least of all a pack of dimwits like them. I followed you to offer a bargain, to show you where they hide out so you could teach 'em a thing or two about how to treat a lady, but then I came across you and those things in the alley. What's Jadd Hachen gotten himself into now?"

"Even I can't answer that," you answer with a shrug. "They seem to be after the gems your partners took."

"Are they worth something?"

"I didn't think so at first, but now I'm not so sure." You hold out a hand to her. "I'll accept your bargain, Zane. If you can be trusted, I may even cut you in for a percentage of whatever the stones are worth. Agreed?"

"Agreed," she says, shaking your hand. Then she cau-

tiously surveys the street outside and the moonlit sky above. "But first, we'd better find a place to hide out until we're sure it's safe to move. Follow me." Still holding your hand, she leads you down the empty street, deeper into the grimy heart of the Thieves' Quarter.

Turn to 82.

75

You twist the first lockpick, hoping against hope, and breathe a sigh of relief when the bolt retracts on the first try. Quickly you jerk the door open and pull Zane from the room. "Let's get out of here!" you yell, heading for the door even as Kaviani finishes with Gibbon and throws him the length of the room.

You make it outside and hide in a darkened doorway just as Kaviani bursts into the street after you. "You tricked me, Hachen!" the pit fiend roars. "I'll have your bones to pick my teeth with, I swear!"

After a brief search in the alley, the Murai leader stalks off down the street, assuming a new illusion as easily as a man puts on a cloak. Once again Kaviani takes on the image of the Leaper.

"What does he mean, I tricked him?" you whisper. "I gave him Gibbon. He should have the gem."

Zane grins and holds up the blue stone proudly. "I picked a pocket or two when they were locking me up."

Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "blue gem," then turn to 64.



76

The first of the subhumans charges, but you evade his spear and give him a ringing shot to the chin with one of

your batons. To your amazement, the blow has little effect. The caveman simply shrugs it off and comes at you again. *They're certainly a hearty bunch*, you think, shifting strategies.

When the attack comes again, you limit your blows to pressure points such as the ankle bone, the inner elbow, and the hinge of the jaw. They are not meant to incapacitate but, taken all together, they begin to wear down your attacker. The subhuman finally cries out from frustration and retreats to join his comrades.

The cavemen are wary now that you have proven yourself a worthy adversary. Finally, the leader steps forward, with his lightning rod at the ready. "We do not want you here," he says. Go back and nev—" His voice trails off as his eyes widen, and he sends an arc of lightning right at you. There is no time to escape it. You can only raise your arms in defense and wait for it to strike. . . .

But the crackling energy doesn't strike you after all. Instead, it sails over your shoulder and strikes something behind you, something that lets loose an inhuman wail. You whirl about to see a squad of four hobgoblins advancing; their mottled flesh and bestial faces seem somehow incongruous with the heavy metal armor and helmets they wear. A fifth lies dead at their feet.

The hobgoblin leader notices your thief's garb. "It's Jadd Hachen," he tells the others in a grunting voice. "Take him to Kaviani. Destroy the rest of them."

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to **92**. If it is less than 16, turn to **206**.

77

You have seen Weejax's reaction to the rat-men, and you've noted their garb as well. They are obviously a warrior race, and you have no reason to expect leniency from them.

You spin your batons menacingly. The rat-men and Weejax are impressed with your apparent mastery of the unusual weapons. "If it's battle you seek," you warn, "we'll be glad to oblige you."

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to 111. If it's less, turn to 66.

78

You reach out in desperation, trying to grab the next ledge down, and your fingers actually catch on the stone lip, but the momentum swings you into the wall with jarring force, and your numbed fingers can't maintain the slight hold any longer. You fall again, and this time it's all the way down. ✕

79

You stand there before the court sorcerer of Vasivada, struck numb by his words. The entire world threatened with invasion from some magical realm? Could it be possible? "And how am I, a mere thief, supposed to find these Triad gemstones before Kaviani, armed with his powerful magic?"

The wizard nods knowingly. "You are not without powers of your own, young one. Courage, cunning, strength of body and mind. These will be your magicks. Now go."

He waves an arm casually, as if to say good-bye, and in the blink of an eye, you find yourself somewhere else entirely. The lamplight of the palace chamber is replaced by the glow of the moon and deep shadows. You struggle to get your bearings as you inspect the street around you. You're somewhere in the Thieves' Quarter, and the scene looks awfully familiar. . . . "Wait a minute!" you stammer suddenly. "This is where I was robbed earlier. The cagey old bird—he sent me back here to pick up the trail of the gems."

"Hey, Hachen!" someone calls to you out of the darkness. "Who're you talking to?"

You whirl about to see a shadowy figure standing near the street corner, its cloak pulled tight around its shoulders. "Who . . ." you start to ask before you see the familiar raven hair of Zane Nazzari, one of the very thieves who robbed you. "What—what are you doing here?"

"Looking for you, of course. I saw that gargoyle thing,

whatever it was, carry you off. Are you all right? What's going on here, anyway?"

"It's—it's a long story," you say tentatively. "Answer my question first. What do you want with me?"

"I've a bargain to offer you," she says. "I'll help you track down my former partners, the three who took your purse."

"And what do you get out of this?"

"Revenge," she says flatly. "Nobody abandons Zane Nazari. They owe me, understand? Well, do we have a deal?" She holds out her hand.

Reluctantly, knowing that you may well regret it later, you shake hands with Zane.

Turn to 61.

80

The pit fiend produces an ornate scepter, into which it inserts the red, green, and blue gems. Then the base of the scepter is plunged into the cobblestones so it will stand straight up in the center of the courtyard. The Murai warriors form a semicircle around it, and their muttered incantations soon drone in your ears. The Triad stones react mysteriously, flashing in alternating sequence.

Suddenly there is a great ripping sound all around you, as if the fabric of time and space were being rent asunder, and the very air begins to change. A portal snaps open, gaping and immense, large enough to convey legions. Through it, you can clearly see the red-skied realm of the Murai. An army of monsters waiting beyond stretches clear to the horizon.

"Come, my people!" Kaviani rants in triumph. "This world is ours!"

"I've got to stop them!" you say to Zane. "But how?"

If you decide to attempt to steal back the Triad, turn to 174. If you want to challenge Kaviani to a duel, turn to 13.



After you've made your way past several guards, the tarrasque is the only thing that lies between you and the rift.

The huge creature rears up and slashes at you, but you manage to slip beneath its great clawed hands and then somersault over its thrashing tail. Then it's one last dive for the rift and through . . .

There is a blinding flash of colors that burns into your vision. You fall to the ground, weak and disoriented, but your ears bring joyous welcome. "Jadd?" you hear Zane say, and blink your eyes open and pull her into your arms. "What—what happened over there?" she asks.

Suddenly Boggle's high-pitched voice pierces the air. "Something coming!" he says, pointing to the rift. "Something coming!"

You gasp. "The tarrasque!"

At that moment, the monstrous beast bursts through the rift into the chamber. It's small for the species, but it's still about thirty feet of snarling supernatural fury. And you have to fight it.

But how?

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to 32. If it's less, turn to 196.

82

Zane leads you to a section of the Thieves' Quarter that you've never been to before, a row of nondescript shops at the end of a dingy back street. The sign above one of the shops proclaims, "MADAME YASHIN: SEER, SOOTH-SAYER. PREDICTIONS, PROGNOSTICATIONS, PALMS READ WHILE U WAIT"

You laugh. "Is this for real?"

"She's a friend," Zane replies. "Besides, in the quarter, you make a profit the best way you can." She knocks on the door. "Madame Yashin? It's me, Zane. I need your help."

The door opens a mere crack, enough for a single jaundiced eye to peek out at Zane. Then it shifts to you. Your eyepatch is a giveaway; you can see that in the way the eye widens with recognition. The door abruptly swings wide,



and there stands an old woman even shorter than yourself, wrapped in a gaudy robe and shimmering veils. "Come in, come in," she says quickly, ushering you inside and then checking the street suspiciously before closing the door.

"This is Madame Yashin," your partner says. "Madame Yashin, this is—"

"Jadd Hachen," the old woman interjects almost reverently. "What an unexpected pleasure. I suppose you're looking for a place to lie low for a while."

"I'm impressed," you reply. "Did you read that in your crystal ball?"

"I didn't have to. Hadrian Turk and his men were already here, searching house-to-house. It sounds like you're in a peck of trouble."

You sigh with exhaustion. "If only Hadrian Turk *was* my worst problem. Now I'm being chased by a creature called Kaviani and his pet gargoyles, and—"

"Did you say Kaviani?" Yashin's brow suddenly grows serious with apprehension, even dread. She shuffles across the small shop to a bookcase filled with dusty tomes. "I remember that name from my research . . ." She pulls a volume from the collection and flips through the pages till she finds what she's looking for. Then she holds out a picture in front of you. "Is this your Kaviani?"

Your jaw drops. Despite the obvious age and primitive nature of the drawing, the subject is unmistakably Kaviani—from the oversized torso and exaggerated musculature to the deep-set burning eyes. "That's him!" you breathe. "But . . . what is he?"

"A pit fiend," she answers solemnly, "and the ruler of a race of magical creatures called the Murai. Their realm exists in a dimension separate from ours, just beyond the veil of time and space, but it has always been the Murai goal to infiltrate that barrier, to break through into our world and conquer it."

"Surely this must be some kind of old joke," you say.

"It is no joke, Jadd hachen," Yashin snaps. "There were times in the past when the Murai almost succeeded. Small tears in the fabric of the veil permitted a few of the Murai through, and that is where our legends of dragons and hob-

goblins and other such creatures began. But such tears are easily found and patched. If Kaviani has his way, the barrier will be completely torn asunder, and then pity to this world indeed!"

"Can he succeed?" you ask.

She shrugs gravely. "His mere presence in this world is a bad omen. He must have gotten through using one of the Triad—three different colored wishstones. By themselves, they can be used to make a small breach in the barrier, even a small doorway. But together, through a ritual called the Reckoning, they could bring his invasion plans to fruition." She leans forward. "You never told me why Kaviani is after you."

"I stole the Triad earlier tonight without realizing what it was."

Her face lights up. "Wonderful! Excellent! You just may have saved the day, Jadd Hachen! If we can scatter those jewels to the ends of the earth, so the Murai or their followers can't find them . . ."

"We lost them later, though," Zane interjects. "Temporarily, I hope. It's time we got them back. Come, Jadd." She pulls you toward the door. "We have some people to see."

"Be careful, children," says Madame Yashin fretfully. "Dark forces are all around you. Be careful!"

Go to 61.



83

"There's no way we can keep up with it, Jadd," Zane says. "It can fly faster than we can ever run. We might as well kiss the red gem good-bye."

"You give up too easily," you say, eyeing the sleeping wyvern and its great silken wings folded along its back.

Then, with a sudden whoop, you run straight at the nest and leap toward the sleeping creature's back.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to 103. If it's less, go to 31.

84

You catch the first wight by surprise and strike it with your hardest blow just above the temple, but the creature simply flinches and glares malignly at you. "Blast!" you curse, remembering that nonmagical weapons can't hurt such creatures. You start to backpedal, but the wight seizes you and wrings a scream from your throat. Its touch is ice cold, like a wind from the nether realms, and it steals all the warmth from your body, all the life . . .

You reach out for the pedestal and grasp the gem, then hurl it back to your comrades with the last of your ebbing strength. Zane catches it. "Boggle," you whisper, "get her out of here—now!"

Zane tries to get to you, but Boggle does as he's told. The little creature grabs her wrist and pulls her through the passage archway, straight into another world, and they disappear from sight.

You sigh weakly. There is still a glimmer of hope for the world, if not for you. Then your life dims and goes out. ✕

85

You lunge for the gem, but you fail to see Kaviani's plummeting fist until it is too late. The blow knocks you a dozen feet up the block, straight into a squad of soldiers just rounding the street corner. You bowl them over and bodies go sprawling everywhere. Deduct 3 hit points from your total.

"Jadd Hachen!" Hadrian Turk gloats, seizing you by the collar. "I've been looking for you!"

"Don't bother with me, idiot!" you bark. "Deal with that monster over there!"

The soldiers look where you point, but Kaviani is no longer there. He has faded back into the crowd again, taking the Triad stone with him. Check "lost" on your Character Stats Card beneath "blue gem."

While Hadrian Turk is distracted, you catch his arm and push him into his own men, then turn to flee.

"Jadd!" Zane calls from the opening to an alley up the street. You race to join her, and as you clear the corner, she kicks over a pyramid of overflowing trash canisters. "That should hold them!" she says as you rush down the alley, out the other end, and into the depths of the city.

Turn to 64.

86

Vermin leads you to a side passage, then heads away from the rat stronghold, straight to the wyvern's nest that you passed earlier. The great feathery lizard is still asleep, curled up into a ball with its huge silken wings folded over it like a blanket.

"I buried it here when it looked as if I would be captured," he whispers, careful not to alarm the sleeping monster. He kneels down beside the nest and begins to search through the branches that line the outside of the nest. Suddenly his hand comes away with the gem.

"I'll take that!" comes a piercing screech from overhead. There is a mighty thrashing of wings as an inhuman form descends on the thief and snatches the gem, slashing Vermin's throat from ear to ear in the process. The thief dies horribly at the talons of the harpy, a horrible flying creature, half-woman, half-vulture. "I have it, Master!" the harpy screeches as it flies off to rejoin Kaviani.

You have to move quickly or the gem will be lost!

If you want to try to stop the harpy, turn to 19. If you decide to follow her instead, go to 83.



The tall, wiry thief advances first, waving his knife threateningly. You attack his weapon hand with a stinging blow, flush across the knuckles, and the knife spins away in an eyeblink. You move in just as quickly, landing three lightninglike blows to his hooded face, and your adversary crumples like a limp rag. You hear a snort of rage from directly behind you. Turning, you barely have time to evade the bull-like female's charge. Your raised baton deflects her slashing knife, while the other stick swoops low and whacks her solidly across her kneecap. She howls in pain, grabs her leg, and falls flat on her face.

You recover quickly, hoping to get your chance at the weasel-like leader, but he is still standing several feet away, looking none too anxious. Instead, it is the fourth bandit who suddenly leaps onto your back and wields a threatening blade against your throat. You bend forward sharply, and the thief topples over your shoulders, landing with such force that the knife spins away and the thief's concealing hood falls loose, revealing long raven tresses. You are taken by surprise—your assailant is not only female, but also a fetching lass at that—but then you remember your dire circumstances and move quickly to gain the advantage. You catch the girl's arm and pin it behind her back. "Don't move!" you warn the others. "I don't want to hurt her, but I will if I must!"

The other three are not even listening to you, nor do they renew their attack. They are too busy inspecting the contents of something. . . .

"My purse!" you exclaim, grabbing at your belt. But it is not there—you must have lost it during the fight! The Weasel and his recovering henchmen empty the gemstones into their hands and laugh at their success, seemingly oblivious to you or your prisoner. "Give them back if you want your accomplice back in one piece!" you demand.

"Keep her," the Weasel replies, shrugging. "You can't split three stones four ways anyway." He casts an unsympathetic eye on the girl. "Sorry, Zane Nazzari, but those are the risks you take." Then the trio suddenly dash off down the street, turn the corner, and disappear into the

night before you can even raise your voice in protest.

You don't quite know what to do next—whether to keep your prisoner or chase after your gems. Suddenly the female thief adds to your dilemma. Seeing that your attention is diverted, she slips your grasp and takes flight herself, in the opposite direction her companions took.

You look one way and then the other, trying to decide which thieves to chase.

If you decide to chase Weasel and the other two thieves, turn to 65. If you want to chase Zane, turn to 14.



88

You hurl a baton at the oncoming Kaviani, hitting it square in the eye and stunning it. "Now's our chance!" you cry, grabbing Zane and leading her past the staggered pit fiend. "Run with the gem and keep running, no matter what! Don't stop for—"

You see the lightning flash on the walls an instant before it burns into your back, lighting you up from the inside like a human lantern. "Run, Zane!" is all you can manage to murmur before the energy engulfs you and snuffs out your life. ☒

89

Zane and Boggle race across the chamber after you, but they can't reach you in time and the strange force pulls you through the rift.

The journey takes only an instant, but the flashing colors and sensations leave you dizzy and disoriented. It takes you several moments just to regain your senses and rise to your feet. Subtract 1 hit point from your total.

You look around you with horror. You stand atop an alien altar before the dimensional rift and look out on a dark-

hued landscape, its sky cast a burnt shade of orange, its grasses brown, its sun an angry red. But such things hardly bear notice in comparison to Kaviani's invading army of Murai. The strange army is made up of every horror dreamed of by man, from gargoyles to harpies, from hobgoblins to trolls to creatures men have yet to conjure names for. And their numbers are legion. They stretch all the way to the horizon and beyond, obviously far too many to squeeze through the small rift you just passed through. It must be used primarily for reconnaissance, you decide. The main force awaits the Reckoning itself.

You look out over the nightmare army, and the throng looks back at you. But their eyes are alight with dark intentions.

Roll two dice to save versus shock. If the total is 9 or more, turn to 110. If it's less than 9, turn to 44.

90

You and Gibbon enter the Thieves' Guild together, much to the astonishment of the thieves and brigands gathered there. You carry King Jostary's crown under your arm. You take it straight to the incredulous Tegrat and lay it on his lap. "The trial is over. I win."

The local thieflord looks hesitantly from you to the crown and back, then slowly his confident smirk returns. "Very well," he says, nodding. "Bring him his prize." In a few moments, Zane is brought before you. "There is your girl. Take her and go."

"What about the gemstone?"

Tegrat's smirk grows. "Gemstone? I don't remember any gemstone. Does anyone else remember some such nonsense?" The rest of the thieves smile and shrug their shoulders in mock innocence.

"Now, just a minute—" Gibbon begins, but the sound of knives being drawn silences him.

Your anger boils as you reach for your batons. Quickly Zane steps between you and Tegrat and stays your hand. "Leave it alone," she whispers, nudging you toward the door. Gibbon follows on your heels as you reluctantly leave the guildhouse.

"I'm sorry, my friend," the Leaper says, once you are in the street beyond. "I wish I could undo my disservice to you, but at least it has shown me the error of my ways. Thieves must have honor, or we are no better than Turk and his thugs." He shakes your hand. "My thanks, Jadd Hachen, and farewell." With that, the Leaper turns and disappears into the night.

"Well," you sigh, "the question now is how do we get back into the guildhouse and find that gem? We—" You stop suddenly, speechless, as Zane holds up the blue Triad stone before your eye.

"I managed to pick a few pockets in there," she says simply, flashing a coy smile, "just to keep in practice."

Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "blue gem," then turn to 64.



91

Retracing your steps, you find Zane in a side passage, peering out at the battle between the rat people and the Murai. The rodents appear to be winning, you notice to your great satisfaction. You also notice that Kaviani has disappeared. You see Weejax and Captain Vix, fighting back to back as if they were born comrades. "I think they have the situation well in hand," you say. "Let's see if we can find a way out of here."

You wander aimlessly in the endless tunnels of the Down-Below at first, until your trained eye catches sight of an unusual notch on one wall and a symbol on another. "Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle!" you exclaim, laughing out loud.

"Someone has explored all the tunnels and marked the way. All you have to know is what to look for." You point to a crude picture of the sun chipped into the rock. "This must be the way to the surface." You follow the signs, and it is almost three hours before you see cold moonlight staring in through the shaft before you. You emerge from a cave no more than a mile from Vasivada's very walls.

After a short rest, you head for the city. Turn to 64.

92

The subterranean settlers face off against the hobgoblins, with you and Zane in the middle. But there is little doubt as to whom you will side with. Even a subhuman is preferable to no human at all.

You rush at the hobgoblin leader, deflecting its mace with the shaft of one baton and driving the other into its mouth with all the force you can muster. It staggers backward, stunned and spitting broken teeth, and you press the advantage with a flying kick to its chest. The blow pitches the beast back into the cavern wall, where it sags to the ground, unconscious. The other hobgoblins, now leaderless and faced with the unrelenting settlers and their leader's lightning rod, have no choice but to flee into one of the cavern's side passages and disappear.

The leader of the cave dwellers glares at you for some time. Finally his features break into a gap-toothed grin. "I am Lorkt," he says, clasping your hand. "It seems we misjudged you. Please, come to our fire. We will talk."

Turn to 169.

93

"I've got an idea," you say. "Follow me."

You make your way to the very same temples you looted earlier this evening and slip around the back to where the trash is piled. "What are you up to?" Zane asks, perplexed.

You spot what you hoped to find and fish a torn and tattered priest's robe from the discards there. "Disguises," you tell her, digging one out for her as well. "You'll have to cover your hair with the hood if you want to pass for a priest."

"I realize that," she says, slipping the frayed old garment over her own. "But what about your eyepatch? It's a dead giveaway."

"I've thought of that." You tear a strip of cloth from the tail of your robe and tie it around both eyes. "I am now Brother Euclid, a poor, sightless priest, come to bless the unfortunate sinners in the dungeon. Will you lead me to the palace, my son?"

Zane grimaces. "This'll never work," she mutters, but she leads you back to the gate to the palace grounds just the same. The sentry steps out to challenge you. "We've come to bless the prisoners," she says, sounding remarkably sincere.

To your immense relief, the guard unlocks the gate without argument. "Enter, priests," he says, "but be quick about it!" Quickly you hurry on toward the palace unescorted.

"How did we do that?"

You shrug. "Apparently these priests of Kaviani's have some influence with the royal court. They certainly had enough gold in their coffers to buy off as many officials as they care to, at least until I relieved them of some of the burden. Come on. Let's hurry before someone gets wise."

"Someone is already wise," says a familiar, hated voice from behind you, a split second before a hard cudgel explodes against the back of your head. A few moments later, you look up from the ground to see two grinning faces above you, one with a knife scar running from hair to chin. "I knew you'd try the palace sooner or later," Hadrian Turk taunts you. Then he turns to the guardsmen nearby. "Take them both to the dungeon! I'll see to them later."

The dungeon, you think. Precisely where we wanted to go, though I would have preferred to make it a bit less painful.

Turn to 197.

94

Something moves near the edge of the black woods. You hear voices and the sounds of an argument. Taking care not to be seen, you creep closer.

From the edge of the trees, you see a vampire, garbed in

flowing cape and high collar, and he is hissing in rage at another of the Murai, a heavily armored hobgoblin who stands nearly a foot taller than he. "When we catch the thief," says the vampire, "he must be brought to me. I want his blood!"

"No!" croaks the hobgoblin, brandishing a spiked mace at the undead vampire. "Thief make fine sandwich. Blood-sucker can have leftovers."

The vampire attacks the hobgoblin in rage and, despite his opponent's imposing size, manages to snap the hobgoblin's neck. "The thief is mine!" he barks over his dead foe. "Mine!"

You grab a fallen branch and spring from your hiding place before the vampire can turn. Running full tilt, you drive the ragged end of the branch into the bloodsucker's back. The creature gasps and turns to ashes before your very eyes.

Suddenly a horn sounds across the fields, apparently a signal for the next Murai agent to approach the rift. "I don't have much time," you realize. You turn back to the two dead Murai and wonder which one would make a better disguise.

If you choose to disguise yourself as the hobgoblin, turn to 122. If you select the vampire, turn to 186.



95

Zane uses her knife point to prod at a lump beneath the dead witch's shawl. Her curiosity aroused, she slits the seam of the wrap, and the much-sought blue gemstone spills from a hidden inner pocket. "At last!" she sighs, holding it up so that the light penetrates its azure depths.

Suddenly you both start at a sound. There is someone in the shop with you! You spin around with weapons ready to face the dirty beggar boy who tried to warn you outside.

Zane approaches him and puts one hand on his shoulder. "You were right, my young friend," she begins, but the boy doesn't let her finish. Instead, he strikes her backhanded and, despite his diminutive size, knocks her at least ten feet. Then he smiles and picks up the blue gem that she's dropped.

"Kaviani!" you yell.

The boy smiles at you as his illusory image begins to shift to someone else, even as he rushes from the shop. You chase after him, but when you reach the street, your heart sinks. There are several dozen people out there: beggars, drunks, fellow thieves. And any one of them could be your foe.

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to 146. If it's less, turn to 41.

96

You clutch the rope tightly as you fall, the kingdom spinning out of control below you.

Suddenly talons snag your cloak, halting your descent, and the rope in your hand goes taut, with Zane dangling at the very end. Okediji circles the tower on leathery wings, threatening you with a drawn hook sword. "So we meet again, eh, thief?" the living gargoyle laughs icily. "Now, where is the Triad?"

"Take this instead," you say, snapping a baton into the gargoyle's face. Immediately the creature's long, languid spiral becomes erratic, and the three of you begin to fall. Okediji recovers enough to turn the fall into a glide and veers drunkenly toward the tower and its sheer stone walls.

"Over there!" you yell to the stunned creature, pointing to an open window a few feet to the left. Okediji banks at the last possible moment, and you hurtle into the tower chamber, crashing to the floor in a heap.

You instantly take in your surroundings—beakers, scrolls, obscure symbols painted on the floor beneath you.

“A wizard’s chamber!” you exclaim. Then you feel a tug at your middle and remember that the safety line is still attached to you. Your eye follows it across the room and out the window. “Zane’s still out there! Hold on, Zane!” you yell, tying the line to a heavy oaken table. “I’m coming!” But when you turn back, you find Okediji standing over the taut line, grinning evilly, hook sword upraised.

“No!” you shout frantically, but the blade has already begun to descend.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to 62. If it’s less, turn to 178.



97

The soldiers surround you and the girl quickly. There are ten of them against the two of you—hardly fair odds, you note as you draw your fighting batons. “Be ready, girl,” you whisper to Zane as the guardsmen move in. “No sense in both of us rotting in jail. When the fighting begins, make a run for it. I’ll try to keep them busy.” You wait for the soldiers to edge a little closer before yelling, “Now!”

Zane bolts for an alley as you launch yourself at the first soldier, parrying his sword with one baton as you drive the other into his unguarded throat. Two more lightninglike blows drop a second soldier, and a powerful kick sends three more reeling. Seeing this, the others back off warily. *Well, you note with surprise, I’m doing better than I expected.*

At that moment, a sword pommel collides with the back of your skull. Stars seem to burst before your eyes as you stagger and fall to one knee. Another blow follows, and others after that, until you crumple beneath the beating. It

stops only at Hadrian Turk's shouted command. Deduct 3 hit points from your total.

Through a haze of pain, you see your hated enemy standing over you. "Welcome back, Jadd," he taunts. "Just like old times, eh?" He looks around the street. "Where is the girl, you fools? You let her escape! Imbeciles! Go and find her!" The soldiers salute and most of them trudge off into the night.

"Get him up," Turk directs the three remaining guardsmen, who move to seize you. Suddenly there is an eye-searing flash from nowhere, like a bolt of errant lightning, and the soldiers abruptly fall unconscious, including Hadrian Turk.

"What madness is this?" you wonder aloud.

A lone man approaches—from where you cannot say. His elegant robes and dignified mien suggest a nobleman, though what one of the gentry would be doing in the slums at night is beyond you. The stranger simply stands there and looks at you. His eyes seem to flicker and spark with subdued power. . . .

The same kind of power that laid the soldiers low? And then you sense the answer: sorcery! You wrinkle your nose with disdain at the thought.

The man remains silent until the arrival of a second figure. A lethal-looking Oriental stalks out of the night, brandishing two wicked hook swords. "Okediji," says the nobleman, "did you find the girl?"

"No, Lord Kaviani," replies the Oriental in a grating, nasal tone. "But I took care of the soldiers." He smiles as he wipes a trickle of blood from his twin blades. Then he looks at you. "It is him, m'lord. Jadd Hachen—the thief we've been searching for."

"Searching—for me?" you say in wonder. "What do you want from me?"

"The Triad," replies the nobleman. "Three colored gemstones. You stole them from their altars earlier this evening. We want them back—now!"

"I don't have them. I was robbed."

Kaviani's eyes flash with anger, and you suddenly realize, that somehow you are seeing through him, that his flicker-

ing image is no more than an illusion. Beyond the illusion, if only for a moment, you can see a manlike beast standing nearly eight feet tall and with an impossibly large torso and massive arms. The head, shunted forward from over-muscled shoulders, bears long elfin ears and blazing eyes and a mouth overflowing with jagged, saw-edged teeth. "The face of destruction, boy," Kaviani whispers, mimicking your thoughts. "Do not be such a fool as to lie to me again. Give me the Triad!"

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **156**. If it's less, turn to **183**.



98

You lunge at the abishai, pummeling it from behind with your batons, but its crocodilian tail lashes out and knocks you off your feet. Then the creature turns on you, and you can barely keep its needlelike teeth away from your throat with your forearm, which suffers repeated bites. Subtract 3 hit points from your total.

You see Gibbon in the chamber doorway, agonizing over whether to help you or flee. Finally he seizes a stool and hammers the creature from behind over and over again, forcing it back toward the window. There it makes a stand and fends its attacker off. You hurl one of your daggers and drive it up to the hilt in the monsters's side. It squeals in pain and topples from the window.

Gibbon helps you to your feet. "I appreciate your help, Hachen, although I'm sure I could have taken that thing alone if you'd given me the chance," he says.

"Sure you could."

He smiles. "I propose a bargain. Why don't we work together from here on? Then we won't get in each other's

way. It could be mutually beneficial."

"How so?"

"You get your gemstone back when we complete the trial, and I keep the royal crown. Fair enough?"

You know better than to trust the thief completely, but you know it will be much easier to get the crown if you don't have to look out for Gibbon at every step. "Agreed. A limited partnership, then. But don't even consider crossing me, Leaper."

The tall thief's smile grows even wider. "Now, would I do something like that?"

Turn to 195.

99

You leap at Zane and knock her aside just as Okediji swoops past. His hooked swords slash the air mere inches above your heads. "Now, move!" you urge as the Oriental banks on the wind to renew the attack.

As you flee, you notice with a shock that he isn't an Oriental anymore. Like Kaviani, your attacker has discarded his illusory disguise, and you now see his true nature. His frame is long and streamlined, like a greyhound, and sheathed in gray, reptilian scales that glisten in the moonlight. And sprouting from his back are great bat wings with a span of at least ten feet.

Okediji is a living gargoyle, and it's swooping in for the kill!

"Stay down while I attract its attention," you shout at Zane. You leap to your feet and run for the edge of the roof, where an alley separates it from the next building. Your ears tell you that Okediji is right behind you and gaining quickly, coming within range, readying its swords for another blow . . .

You reach the edge and keep running, straight off the roof, but you turn as you fall and catch the parapet. It was a risky move, but the gargoyle didn't expect it. It sails right over you and into the brick wall of the taller adjoining building. The impact knocks Okediji cold, and the unconscious gargoyle plummets into the darkness of the alley.

Zane helps pull you back up over the parapet. "Let's get

out of here," she advises, "before something else comes after us!" She removes a grapple and line from her pack and hooks the slightly higher neighboring building on her second try. In minutes, you are up and over it, climbing down the far side to continue your flight across the rooftops of the Thieves' Quarter. "I know a place where we'll be safe," she tells you. "Follow me."

Turn to 82.



100

From the corner of your eye, you examine the walls of the alley. They are ill-constructed and uneven, with deep cracks between the large stones—perfect for climbing.

"Zane, follow me!" you whisper urgently, starting up the wall with spiderlike agility. You can hear the rushing footsteps of the thieves, but you concentrate only on climbing and make it to the rooftop before they reach the center of the alley. "Quick, give me your hand!" you say, turning to help Zane, but she is not behind you!

"Run, Jadd!" she calls from below.

The other thieves have caught up with her and now hold her prisoner. "Take her to the guildhouse," one of them commands. You want to help Zane somehow, but there are others clambering up the wall after you even now. You have no choice but to flee. You run, leaping from rooftop to rooftop, quickly outdistancing your pursuers. Once you are out of their sight, you immediately backtrack to the alley to keep a watchful eye on Zane and her captors.

She is bound and taken to the meeting house of the Thieves' Guild. You lurk in the shadows outside, wondering what your next move should be, when you notice Gibbon leaving an alley just behind the guildhouse. "He must

have come out a back door," you surmise. "So do I go after him, or should I try to help Zane?"

If you choose to follow Gibbon, turn to 140. If you decide to help Zane, turn to 15.

101

By the time you reach the uppermost window of the tower, Zane is already through the casement and standing at the treasury door. A sentry, apparently taken off guard, lies unconscious at her feet. "I'm not very good at this," she says, motioning to the door lock. "It's all yours, Jadd."

Slipping the thin metal picks from beneath your headband, you kneel before the door and go to work. The third and thickest pick fits the lock; a bit of probing and a few careful twists bring a satisfactory click as the heavy bolt retracts.

"I'm impressed," Zane says as you open the door. Then the sight of the gold hits you both. "No, *now* I'm impressed," she gasps. "Look at all this!"

"Get hold of yourself," you say, barely controlling your own excitement. "Remember what we're here for."

The gold lies in sacks on the treasury floor, though some have split and spilled their gleaming contents everywhere. There are racks of gold- and ruby-encrusted armor and helmets, as well as ceremonial weaponry. "One of these golden daggers could buy enough food to feed an entire village," you say, disgusted by the excess. You spy a purse on a wooden table, not yet catalogued by the royal auditor. The embroidered initials read "LJ." "Well, it isn't Iron Jaw's."

"Yes, it is. Her real name is Lavinia Joner."

You laugh. "Lavinia? I never would have guessed." You empty the purse onto the table and sift through the worthless baubles and wallets she must have filched earlier tonight. But there is no gem.

"Darn!" Zane fumes. "You were right, Jadd. She must have taken it into the dungeon with her. Now what do we do?"

You start toward the door but stop suddenly when you hear voices coming from below and footsteps on the stairs. "Back to the ledge!" you order Zane, meanwhile stooping



to grab a handful of coins.

Just as you climb back through the window, Zane screams a warning. A hook sword flashes by your head, missing by scant inches. *No, you think. It can't be . . .*

"Thief!" hisses Okediji, with what is more a mere exhalation of air than a voice. The hovering gargoyle is now powered only by supernatural hatred, for there can be little life remaining in its ravaged carcass. Most of its flesh has been burned away, leaving only a spindly skeleton in its place. Yet the skeleton still flies, and its eye sockets burn with an unholy fire. "Die!" it screams and swoops toward you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **170**. If it's less, turn to **68**.

102

Your chest is almost bursting as you are dragged down to the bottom by the great alligator, its ironlike jaws still locked around your leg. Panic-driven, you draw one of your throwing knives from your boot, lock your arm around the creature's great saurian head, and plunge the knife into the soft throat below, again and again, ripping at the tissue until the water flows red and the pressure on your leg eases. But as you break away and head for the surface, your limbs grow leaden and your vision clouds, and you begin to sink, deeper and deeper, until you lose consciousness and the water comes rushing in. ✕

103

You land directly in the center of the wyvern's back, and the dragonlike beast awakens with a start. Immediately its wings spread, and a tail stinger you hadn't noticed before arches over its back, ready to strike. You manage to keep the stinger at bay with a baton. Suddenly the wyvern takes to the air. With the beat of its great wings, it rises up over the nest and starts after Zane, but then it catches the scent of the harpy and roars in fury.

Thank the gods, you sigh, for you'd given little thought to how you would control such a beast. Now it looks as if it will follow the harpy's path all by itself. "I'll be back soon,"

you yell to Zane before spurring your steed into pursuit.

The caverns go streaking by as the wyvern follows after the harpy, picking up speed as the scent grows stronger. *It seems I have an ally after all*, you decide, for the creature stops trying to sting you as well.

The harpy soon draws into sight up ahead, and in moments the wyvern is upon it. Screeches and roars reverberate through the Down-Below as the monsters attack each other. The battle is so fierce that you barely get off the wyvern's back in one piece.

As you drop to the ground, your foot strikes some kind of stone, apparently lost during the melee. You smile to yourself, pick up the Triad gemstone, and run like mad.

Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem," then turn to 91.



104

As the ill-proportioned creature springs for the nearest worm tunnel, you leap and catch hold of its long, gibbonous wrist. But you are unprepared for the strength in that limb. It not only pulls you off your feet, but into the worm tunnel as well. .

"What madness is this?" you suddenly exclaim, for you don't find yourself in a tunnel at all. Instead, you emerge from the cave into a world of arctic whiteness, where glacial winds freeze your bones and snow reaches to the horizon. You are only there for the briefest instant before the strange creature jumps back into the cave, and you are just as quickly someplace else, a place where buildings reach to the clouds and the roadways are endless ribbons across the countryside, filled with great honking dragons with

wheels instead of legs. On to yet another world, this one even more frightening than the last, where monsters gather to form an army that reaches to the horizon.

You close your eyes tightly and hold on to the creature's wrist and pray that you are not losing your mind.

"Jadd? Are you all right?" a voice says.

You look up finally to see Zane standing over you. You are back in the Down-Below, back in—or at least near—your own world.

"Where did you go?" Zane wants to know. "You were jerked into that tunnel over there, but the next thing I knew, you came out of an entirely different one. What happened?"

You look around you. Sitting but a few feet away is the odd creature that took you on your wild ride. Piled at his feet are the things he stole from your belts. "Who, or what, are you?" you stammer.

The creature smiles. "Boggle I am," he says simply, "and Boggle I be."

Turn to 147.

105

The batons are in your hands even before you realize it, and you launch yourself at the pit fiend without a second thought. Your blows, though hard ones, barely register on the beast, but the speed and sheer number of them seem to irritate and confuse it. It lunges at you blindly, but you dive from its path and it crashes into the front of a curio shop instead, destroying the facade of the building and bringing hundreds of pounds of stone and mortar down on top of it.

Your heart soars. "Kaviani is dead!" you want to shout. "The Murai champion is dead!" But then you hear growls of anger and the clatter of shifting stones, and the dread returns. *Get out of here!* your common sense decrees, and you quickly obey it.

"After him!" you hear Kaviani shout in the distance. The fiend's words echo in your ears long after you are out of the creature's sight. You look about for signs of other Murai and spot one sailing overhead, outlined against the pale moon. The winged creature resembles the man-dragons of

legend called abishai, and it is scouring the city, looking for you.

"Will I never be free of this curse?" you wail aloud, but then a plan pops full-blown into your mind. "Perhaps I can turn this to my advantage after all," you murmur.

Turn to 150.



106

Zane leads you to the oldest section of the Thieves' Quarter, where the buildings seem to be crumbling from age. "Does Vermin live down here somewhere?" you ask.

"You see that building over there?" She points to a long-fallen structure. It looks like the skeleton of some ancient serpent. "Long ago, when Vasivada was founded by miners, that building was the grand market and bazaar. Merchants came from all around the area to sell their wares to the miners. Well, in a way, the bazaar is still going strong, but these days it's a black market. The structure is riddled with underground passages and sub-basements, where thieves and smugglers barter their wares. And if I know Vermin, he's trying to pawn your gemstone there already. Follow me."

You enter the crumbling building and pass two suspicious thief sentries. As you do, you keep your eyepatch covered so word of your arrival won't reach Vermin. Then Zane takes you to an aged stairway that leads into the basement of the bazaar. There, in the dim flicker of torches, thieves have set up tables with their stolen goods and are trying to hawk them to interested buyers. You note that the pickings are slim. The local thieves have grown fearful of the dungeon and Hadrian Turk's brand of justice.

"This way," Zane says. "I think Vermin will be on the lowest level."

You remove a torch from a wall sconce and go down two

more flights of crumbling steps to a dank cellar. As you descend, each step brings a squeal of complaint from one or more rats. A fitting place to find the Weasel, you think as you make your way toward the glow of a torch ahead.

As you near the light, you see that Vermin is bartering feverishly with two other thieves, trying his hardest to wring a higher price from the dull-red stone he holds in his hand. In the torchlight, you see that Vermin is aptly named. His features are pinched and sneering, and his eyes are as beady as any rodent's.

"I want my stone, Vermin!" you bark suddenly.

When the thief sees you, his eyes nearly bulge from their sockets. Pocketing the stone, he starts to race toward the rear of the cellar.

"After him!" Zane calls. "If he reaches the mining tunnels, he might get away!"

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **139**. If it's less than 13, turn to **70**.



107

Kaviani's attack begins even before you've closed the distance between you and the fiend. Lightning bolts emanate from the creature's glowing eye sockets; you elude the first two, but the third catches you full in the chest. Waves of energy course through you, overloading and burning out your nerve endings, leaving you limp and smoking on the floor of the courtyard.

"Fool!" says Kaviani, looming over you. "This world is ours!"

"Not yet!" Zane calls back. You twist enough to see her astride a lammasu's lionlike back, rising into the air, where they join an army of lawful creatures that is just materializing in the night sky. The forces amassed there appear even larger than the Murai, and they have gathered to stop this very invasion. "We fight for you, Jadd!" Zane calls as she leads the army against the invaders, waging battle such as the world has never seen before.

You lose consciousness without ever knowing the outcome. ✕

108

You draw your batons in the face of the onrushing gargoyle and deflect the slash of its fearsome hook swords, managing to knock one from its grasp. But you can't deflect the momentum of the gargoyle's attack. Its shoulder catches you full in the stomach and carries you backward, farther and farther, until the creature suddenly changes its trajectory and you feel yourself leaving the ground!

"Put me down!" you curse, trying to push away from the creature, but its talons are locked around you firmly, biting into your skin. Subtract 2 hit points from your total.

"Give me the Triad," the gargoyle demands, holding you by one wrist and letting you dangle over the kingdom far below, "or I'll let you go!"

Terror grips you, freezing your heart and choking off the scream in your throat. You turn toward your grinning captor and, with your free hand, drive a sharp blow into its snout. Then, while the creature is disoriented and fighting to stay aloft, you clamber back up its arm and cling to its midsection with both legs, pummeling it mercilessly. Your maniacal attack takes the creature off guard. Its flight becomes erratic, and for a moment, you fear you might be thrown off in the struggle. All you can do is hang on tight and pray.

Suddenly a shape looms up behind you, and at first glance, you fear it might be some new monster to fight. But instead it is a building—the spire of the royal palace. In the heat of battle, Okediji has drifted beyond the Thieves'

Quarter to the more affluent section of the kingdom. You watch the tower from the corner of your eye as it comes closer and closer. Perhaps if you get in close enough, you can leap to safety.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **177**. If it's less, turn to **8**.

109

A scream rings through the dungeon. "Iron Jaw?" you wonder aloud.

Zane shakes her head. "It can't be. She's more warrior than woman. No man could ever make her scream, not even Hadrian Turk."

"Maybe it isn't a man she faces," you say grimly. You follow after the fading echoes, racing into the lowest levels of the dungeon. In your haste, you round a corner and almost collide with a hulking shadow in the middle of the hall.

Kaviani holds the stout Iron Jaw by the throat, dangling her several inches above the ground. In the fiend's other hand, it holds the green gemstone. "I have it!" the monstrous creature bellows in triumph.

"Not for long!" you vow.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **180**. If it's less, turn to **26**.



110

You don't waste an instant, despite the fear you feel. While the Murai are still in a state of shock at your sudden appearance, you bolt from the altar and flee for your life.

You take in your surroundings as you run. The army has been amassed in a great field that is flanked by a forest of black trees, where you quickly take sanctuary. The harpies and other flying monsters can't track you there, and you

are well hidden from the rest, at least for now.

"I've got to get back through that rift," you say softly to yourself, "but how can I get close enough to try it?"

If you want to attempt a direct assault on the rift, turn to **191**. If you want to attempt to pass through it in disguise, turn to **94**.

111

"I presume from your dress that you are warriors," you say, a mocking tone to your voice. "Therefore I challenge you, one warrior to another. The best among you against myself, your sword against my sticks." You hold up your batons. "Which of you will it be?"

The leader of the rat-men laughs. "I am Captain Vix," he says. "You would pit simple sticks against sharp steel?" He motions the other rats aside. "Stand back. The dolt is mine!"

You circle each other warily. Finally Vix leads with a broad slash. You deflect it and crack him across the collarbone, then slip by his next thrust and land a flurry of blows with both batons. Vix staggers, then backs away to collect himself before he tries one more attack. You merely sidestep his lunge and let him fall on his face, unconscious.

One of the other rats sneaks up behind you, but Zane's thrown blade finds him first. He falls, gasping, and the rest of the rat-men flee like frightened rabbits down the passage from whence they came.

"We must hurry!" Weejax counsels. "They will summon reinforcements. Follow me!"

"I don't understand," you call after him as he leads you down the passageway, checking for ambushes at each bend. "Weren't those your people?"

"Please!" Weejax protests, acting offended. "Can't you tell the difference between a man-rat and a rat-man?"

"Well . . . frankly, no."

"I will explain later. Right now we must keep moving."

The man-rat obviously knows his way through this enemy territory. He leads you through a complex system of tunnels, past sentries, and even past the nest of a sleeping wyvern. Finally he seems to relax a bit, and you know you

are out of danger. "Just around the bend ahead is my home," he says. "Come. We have much to talk about."

Turn to 2.



112

You and Turk circle one another warily, gauging each other, waiting for an opening. Then, in an eyeblink, steel and wood clash together as you strike and block and counter again and again. Turk's skill has improved considerably since you last squared off with him. His blades slice the air all around you, and you are hard pressed to stave them off. One slash sneaks through your defenses and lays open your forearm. "I'm disappointed," the captain says. "I meant that stroke for your black heart!" He attacks in earnest this time and pricks your shoulder before you can drive him back with a kick to the stomach. Subtract 1 hit point from your total.

"Surrender now. You're wounded; you can't possibly win. I promise you a quick death," Turk taunts you as he circles around before the open window.

Outside the window behind him, you see the moon eclipsed by an amorphous shadow, growing larger, getting closer . . .

Suddenly the wounded abishai hurtles through the window and collides with the captain, knocking him head over heels. Gibbon quickly picks up a stool and smashes it into the beast, forcing it back out the window, where it circles the tower, waiting, watching.

"Turk is out cold," you tell the tall thief. "Quick, grab the crown and we'll— Hold it!" You move closer to the door, listening. You hear footsteps coming up the stairs. "Guards coming! Quick, get out on the ledge!"

The Leaper grabs the crown, then gapes at you. "But the monster is out there!"

"Better than the dungeon," you say evenly, slipping through the window and out onto the ledge. "We'll have to work our way around to the other side, where my grapple is." As you speak, you see the abishai pass in front of the moon once more, and you know that you will never get there without a fight.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **134**. If it's less, turn to **52**.

113

You land on the behir's back, immediately driving two of your throwing daggers deep into its spongy flesh. It coils defensively, and you quickly find yourself trapped by constricting muscle and fighting for breath. Deduct 2 hit points from your total.

Suddenly a knife drives into the side of the creature's head, disorienting it and causing it to loosen its coils enough for you to squeeze free. "Jadd!" Zane yells, now on the lower ledge and waiting with another knife at the ready. She points to a smaller cave entrance. "The beast can't follow us in here! It's too big! Come on!" You follow her through the opening, with the behir right on your heels. It tries to follow you inside, but only its head can pass through the narrow portal. Frustrated, the creature finally retreats.

"Where did the robed stranger go?" you ask.

"He ran off just after you attacked," Zane says. "Some people just aren't very appreciative." She looks down the narrow passage you've both stumbled onto. "No telling where this one leads."

"Only one way to find out," you say, taking the lead.

Turn to **172**.

114

"I don't see any sign of Iron Jaw yet," Zane says as you prowl past the cell blocks of the royal dungeon.

"Keep looking," you reply. "She has to be here somewhere."

There is something very familiar about this dungeon,

you notice. It has Hadrian Turk's mark on it. Any other prison population would have been straining at their bars by now, begging for your help, for food, for anything at all. But here they merely sit in their cells and stare, their spirits completely broken.

"Jadd! Over here!" Zane interrupts your thoughts.

You follow Zane to a small cell that holds a single occupant. The thief, Iron Jaw, is pressing her broad face against the bars, looking uncharacteristically frightened. "Please!" she whispers, sobbing in near hysteria. "Help me, please!"

You kneel and quickly pick the lock. The cell door swings open, and Iron Jaw steps out toward you. "Thank you," she says, but there is a different glimmer in her eyes now—deceptive, calculating. Then she lunges at your throat with her big, knotty hands.

Zane breezes past you and drives a solid punch into the woman's nose, so hard that you hear the cartilage crunch, and Iron Jaw staggers and falls. Your partner stoops to search the groggy thief, and from the lining of Iron Jaw's grimy tunic, she pulls the green gemstone.

Turn to 173.



115

You stand your ground against the subhumans and draw your batons, prepared to meet their attack. "Come along, then," you taunt. "If you want a fight, I'll give you one you won't forget."

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **76**. If it's lower, turn to **133**.



116

"This isn't going well at all," you complain as you walk along the deserted street with Zane at your side. "We've lost two gems already. It does not bode well at all."

"Do not blame yourself," says a soft, lilting voice from above. You start. A small horselike being, a legendary ki-rin, floats just above the street. "You have tried hard, Jadd Hachen," it tells you. "We appreciate your effort. But you must remain strong, for we need your services still."

"We?"

"All creatures of lawfulness. There are many who have been called to stand against this invasion from beyond. We are marshaling our forces even now, but we may be too late. Kaviani has already found the entire Triad, and the Reckoning is about to begin. You must stop them, Jadd; you must stall them until our forces arrive."

"What!" you exclaim. "Just the two of us, stall a whole invading army? How?"

The ki-rin smiles. "We have faith in you, Prince of Thieves. Now go two streets to the east. The courtyard awaits there—and hurry!"

Despite the imminent danger and against your better judgment, you race to the dark courtyard. There you discover Kaviani, and the pit fiend's minions begin the strange ritual called the Reckoning.

Turn to 80.

117

You close your eyes, listening to the battle, trying to "feel" it instead of watching.

One of the two combatants is larger, more powerfully built, and its breathing is considerably raspier. That one has to be the Murai. You quickly draw a throwing blade from your boot and let fly.

The knife sinks deep into the Zane who is winning the battle, and almost immediately the illusion is gone. In her place slumps a lizard-scaled troglodyte, rasping for breath and trying to wrench the blade from its sternum. It dies before it can succeed.

Zane rushes into your arms, then holds up the gem for your approval. "Not a bad day's work, eh?" she says. Check "found" in your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem."

"It's not over yet," you say. "But first we've got to get out of here. We'll follow the river and let the current carry us." Zane shivers. "I hate swimming."

Turn to 124.

118

You want to go back to help Zane, but you have a duty to retrieve the Triad. And the best way to accomplish that is to win this contest of fools.

"I'll be back, Zane!" you vow as you run down the street in the direction of the royal palace.

Turn to 205.

119

The man-beast steps forward, and you have serious doubts whether batons or throwing knives will have any effect on such a massive foe as Kaviani. But the gargoyle is more your size, so you decide to attack it first.

You move in with lightning speed, before the winged beast can mount a proper defense. It brings up its hook sword to fend you off, but a quick blow to the wrist disarms it, and a kick to the stomach doubles it over in pain. Quickly you slip behind the spindly creature and lock a baton against its throat, using the gargoyle as a shield against Kaviani. "Back away, ugly one," you warn the man-beast, "before I wrench your lackey's head from his shoulders!"

The fury in Kaviani's eyes smolders like a newborn star, and you can all but feel the raw sorcerous power coruscating

ing around it. Still, the monster makes no move to advance on you. "As you wish, insect!" the fiend mutters. "Leave Okediji and flee for now—I will not stop you. But mark my words, boy. We will find you!"

Cautiously you back away with your prisoner until you reach the mouth of the alcove. The street beyond is still deserted. You can make your escape, but you know Okediji will be on your trail as soon as you release it, unless . . . You rap the gargoyle's head sharply, leaving the creature stunned while you flee for your life.

Stay away from open spaces, you caution yourself. Keep to the side of the street where there are market awnings to conceal you and doorways to take refuge in. That gargoyle will be after you before long, and—

Suddenly two hands reach out of a tenement vestibule as you pass and unceremoniously jerk you into the shadows. You reach for your batons, but a female voice says, "Relax, Jadd Hachen. I'm trying to help you."

You squint in the gloom of the vestibule. "Zane Nazzari?" you ask and almost see her smile.

"The one and only. I lost you after we ran away from Turk's men, and . . ." Her voice trails off as she looks past you, her eyes suddenly wide with horror. "Beard of the prophet!" she whispers. "What is *that*?"

You turn to see a dark shape pass across the moon, its wings beating furiously as it searches below. "It's—it's a long story," you tell her as Okediji circles the area three times before finally breaking off to look elsewhere.

"Well, you can tell me on the way," Zane says, taking your hand. "We need to find a safe haven, and I think I know just the place." You pull back hesitantly. "Look, Jadd," she urges, "you helped me back there with those soldiers. Now let me help you. Please?"

At least she sounds sincere, you note. "Very well. Lead on. I'm right behind you."

Turn to 82.

120

You move toward the pawnshop, but as you do, a young beggar boy steps up to block your way. "Don't go in there,

m'lord!" the smudge-faced lad warns you.

"Why not?"

"It's a magic shop," he explains, "and the hag who owns it is a witch. She'll cause no end of trouble for you."

"We'll be sure to be careful," you say, stepping past him to enter the shop. When you see the woman behind the counter, for a moment the boy's words appear to ring true. She seems ancient, shriveled and bent over from the years, but it is not just her advanced age that makes her appear witchlike. It is also the hooked nose with a ring through it and the thin, pursed lips and the wicked glare. "What do you want?" she snaps.



"That tall fellow who just left . . . what did he sell you?"

"Nothing!" she snaps once more, a little too quickly this time. "He sold me nothing!"

Zane stoops beside the counter and points to a discarded purse with your initials embroidered into the lower corner. Then the gem is here!

"No more of your foolishness, crone!" you say firmly. "Where is the gem?"

The old woman cackles and steps back from the counter. "Don't threaten me, pup!" she rasps, her hair and shawl blowing even though there is no breeze in the shop. "You have no idea what you are tampering with!" She extends a knotty hand and energy flashes around it.

The boy was right. She *is* a witch.

If you possess another Triad stone, turn to **166**. If you don't, go to **69**.

121

"If this Iron Jaw is as cagey a thief as you say, Zane, then there's no doubt she'll have sneaked the gem inside the dungeon with her. We'll just have to go after it."

Your partner groans. "I was afraid you'd say that."

You look at the only outer door to the dungeon. "It's clear we won't stand a chance of getting through there. It's solid steel, and besides, it's far too well guarded. But there should be an entrance from within the palace as well, and that shouldn't be guarded so heavily. After all, who would expect someone to break *into* a dungeon, and from within the king's own palace, at that?"

"Yes, but how do we get into the palace in the first place?" Zane asks logically.

You pinch her cheek and smile broadly. "We're thieves, my dear. We'll think of something."

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **93**. If it's less than 13, turn to **11**.



122

The hobgoblin's armor and helmet are much too big for you. You have to stuff them with wads of his clothing so they won't be loose and rattle loudly. "Well, here goes noth-

ing," you mutter as you start back across the field toward the armed masses gathered before the altar.

You make your way through the ranks of monsters, and at first no one notices you. You are almost to the altar before someone stops you. *Oh, no!* you curse silently. *Another hobgoblin!* You keep your head down and hope the helmet will shield your face.

"Me don't remember you, shorty," the towering beast snarls. "Get back with others at end of line." You salute awkwardly and start toward the rift again, hoping the hobgoblin won't notice, but the beast comes after you. "You not hear so good?" it growls. "Me said end of line!" It smacks your helmet so hard that it flies off and rattles on the ground.

The crowd gasps, "A human!" and immediately starts to surround you.

Turn to 165.

123

You face the umber hulk head on, advancing to meet it with batons at the ready and a throwing blade within easy reach. But upon closer inspection, you wonder if the weapons will do you any good at all. The creature is covered with a chitinous shell, like armor.

"Die!" growls the Murai beast, shambling toward you. You move in, striking your hardest with the batons, but they have no effect. You somersault back out of the hulk's range, then draw a throwing blade and let it fly, but the creature merely bats it aside. It moves in and catches you up in its massive arms. No matter how hard you hammer and kick at it, the creature feels nothing. Zane rushes to your side, as do Weejax and the other man-rats, but none of them can prevent those great mandibles from biting deep into you, crushing out your life. . . . ✕

124

You float downriver for hours, letting the current carry you, while Zane clings to you for support. You don't give voice to your concerns, but you are increasingly aware of something in the water with you, circling, bumping your

leg now and then as if testing you. There! It just passed again, a dark shadow beneath the surface. It turns again, coming back toward you. You clutch a knife and place yourself between the thing and Zane and hope you can fend it off.

A bolt of lightning appears from above, lancing down into the water and frightening the shadow away. You search for your rescuer, and for the first time you notice a shaft in the cavern ceiling immediately above you.

"Greetings, Prince of Thieves!" says the horselike creature hovering there in the shaft above you. It's a wondrous-looking thing, with a great silver mane and beard, and even from a distance, its eyes bespeak an ancient wisdom.

"Have you never seen a ki-rin before?" it asks. "I have been summoned by other lawful forces to help you in any way I can. Your struggle with the Murai is known to us, and we are marshaling our forces. But there is still much you must do if the Murai are to be stopped."

Suddenly both you and a stunned Zane are levitated out of the water, just long enough for the ki-rin to move beneath you and take you on its back. Then it rises straight upward into the shaft. Your heart cheers at the sight of starlight in the opening above. In an eyeblink, you are above the ground once more, soaring across the night sky toward Vasivada. The ki-rin leaves you on a deserted street in the Thieves' Quarter, then vanishes as if it had never appeared.

Turn to 64.

125

You leap away just as the spear descends, piercing the cot clear through. "Insect!" the salamander curses, backhanding you across the cell, not only slamming you into the bars but also leaving a hot welt across your side. Then it turns to Zane. "Come here, pretty one," it says, smiling and edging toward her with a worm's undulating gait.

A bestial rage possesses you at the sight of Zane in danger, and you hurl yourself in fury at the monstrosity. Your arm clamps around its throat in a merciless stranglehold, even as the creature's smoldering flesh sears your skin.

The salamander laughs at your agony, but you refuse to let go, and the laughter soon fades. The creature starts to struggle for breath, bucking and thrashing, trying to throw you off. You hang on tenaciously, enduring the pain, fighting it back.

Slowly the salamander goes limp, then drops to the ground, unconscious and near death. You roll aside, knowing full well that your wounds are mortal. "Kill it," you whisper, pointing to the fallen spear. Zane obeys, finishing the job even as the light fades—forever. ✕



126

You dive to break through the Murai forces and reach the Triad, but Kaviani is even faster. The pit fiend's huge fist meets you in midair and knocks you at least ten feet, end over end. Subtract 3 hit points from your total.

"You'll never stop us!" Kaviani laughs. "Never!"

If you have a fire-stick checked on your Character Stats Card, turn to **160**. If you have magic flasks, turn to **73**. If you have a lightning rod, turn to **48**. If you have more than one of these items, choose any one and turn to the number noted above. If you have none of them, turn to **13**.

127

You pass through the junction of tunnels and head straight down the middle shaft.

Suddenly heat strikes you like a physical blow, stealing your breath away. You try to slow your descent, to drag your feet and grab at the walls of the shaft with your hands and fingers, but the rock is too smooth and you have no way of stopping.

All of a sudden there is no shaft around you at all. You and Zane are pitched out into space, and in the instant

when you seem to hang suspended, you realize your plight. The slide has carried you into a tunnel that leads straight down to the fiery core of the world. As you fall, you look down and see the earth's molten life-blood bubbling far below.

"Jadd!" Zane screams and flashes you a look of utter despair as you plummet into the fiery heart of the world. ✕

128

"So this is how thieves act in Vasivada," you say as the mob closes in on you. "Like brigands and common thugs."

"We are just here to protect our own, stranger," says one of the thieves. "If you have a dispute with a local thief, you must settle it in the accepted way—before the master of the Thieves' Guild."

"Very well," you say, offering no resistance. "Take me to your leader."

You follow the thieves to a darkened back street, where, in the rear of a nondescript shop, you enter the secret guildhouse. Other thieves congregate there, too, as you are brought before Tegrat, the local thieflord and guildmaster. A subordinate steps close to whisper the charges in the dispute. "So this is the illustrious Prince of Thieves," the stocky bald man sneers mockingly. He looks at Gibbon. "So, Gibbon, stealing from brethren again, eh? Naughty, naughty. Give me the piece in question."

The Leaper hesitates, but at the prodding of his companions, he finally offers the guildmaster the blue Triad stone. "An interesting bauble," observes Tegrat, who then turns his attention to the fetching Zane. "Very interesting indeed. Both the gem and the girl will remain here until you have completed the Trial by Thief."

"Trial by Thief? What is that?" you ask.

"Accused and accuser both attempt to steal the same prize. The winner gets all."

"And just what are we supposed to steal?" Gibbon asks. Tegrat smirks. "King Jostary's crown."

You can't stifle a laugh. "Surely you must be joking!"

"Hardly." The guildmaster motions for the other thieves to return your weapons and confiscated gear. "Now, go!

The trial has begun!"

Gibbon races for the door, but you hesitate to leave Zane behind. Only at the prodding of half a dozen knives do you move along. Outside, you see the Leaper just as he disappears around the end of the street. You'll be hard-pressed to catch up.

"But do I really want to?" you ask yourself. "Should I compete in this trial, or should I concentrate on freeing Zane?"

If you choose to compete with Gibbon, turn to 118. If you try to save Zane instead, turn to 188.



129

You meet the great lizard head on, staving off its jaws with a baton while you stab at it with one of your throwing blades. But the creature's great tail thrashes through the water with irresistible force, and you can't get out of its way in time. The creature's great jaws close on your shoulder. The pain is blinding. As you scream, water immediately rushes into your lungs, and the watery world turns crimson as you lose consciousness . . . forever. ✕

130

"C'mon," Zane urges, drawing her knife. "We have to help them."

"We will," you say, "but not by fighting the Murai. Even if we won, it would only be a temporary victory, a single battle in a much larger war. The only way to stop Kaviani once and for all is to get the Triad before he does." You notice Vermin trying to slip away and stop him with a knife at his throat. "Show us the gem, wretch, or back in the pit you go!"

He gulps. "Whatever you say, Prince. Right this way . . ." Turn to 86.

131

You scour the cavern, but there is nothing there. "Boggle, are you sure there's—" At that moment, the stalker attacks, lifting you off the ground as if you were a child and dashing you against the cavern floor. You are half beaten to death before Zane even realizes what is going on. She sinks her knife into the air, hitting the invisible stalker purely by luck, and stabs again and again. Unfortunately, her efforts come too late for you. If she survives, Zane will have to carry on alone. ✕

132

You try to lunge past the thieves, but they are better prepared than you expected. They tackle you and pin you to the ground. While you struggle with them, a scaly nightmare sails through the open window behind you.

As soon as they see the creature, the other thieves scatter, allowing the abishai to seize you first and fling you across the room, right into the rear door. The wood shatters from the impact, as do most of the bones in your body.

Through a haze of pain, you see Zane leaning over you with a frantic expression. "Jadd, come on," she cries, "while they're busy with the monster!" She holds out the blue gem for you to see. "I picked their pockets before they locked me up. Come on, Jadd! Don't die on me now!"

"Hurry . . . run," is all you can manage to say before the blackness completely engulfs you and your adventure ends. ✕

133

The first man charges with his spear outthrust, but his movements are slow and clumsy. You brush the javelin aside and rap him solidly across the bridge of his nose. The blow is hard enough to lay him out cold on the ground, but he continues to stand! You move in on him again, hitting him with both batons this time, but the man only backs up a step or two. Then he actually smiles. You back away in disbelief. "They're a hearty breed down here," you whisper over your shoulder to Zane. "I suggest a change in strategy. *Run!*"

Your sudden flight catches the subhumans by surprise. By the time they start to give chase, you and Zane are across the cavern. You duck into another passage and descend deeper still into the Down-Below, where you quickly lose your pursuers in the lower tunnels.

"This isn't going well," you say when you finally stop to rest. "What if Vermin is back there with those lunatics? What do we do then?"

"I don't think he is," Zane says. "You heard them. They dislike all Up-Worlders. I don't think he'd be any more welcome than we were—or weren't, I should say." She looks down the tunnel ahead. "It's not very likely that we're still on Vermin's trail, you know."

"But right now, it's the only game in town. Let's keep going."

Turn to 63.

134

The injured abishai swoops once, slashing at you with its talons, before circling around and diving full speed toward you in one last suicidal attack.

You slip a throwing dagger into your trembling hand and take careful aim, then hurl it with all the skill you can muster. The tiny dirk flies true and sinks into the creature's unprotected eye. The abishai's body folds in midflight, and it plunges toward the ground like a stone.

"Nice shot!" Gibbon exclaims. "From now on, we'll have to call you Prince of Knife-Throwers, too."

You grin. "I like the sound of that. Now, let's get that crown to the Thieves' Guild quickly, before another one of Kaviani's beasts happens by."

Turn to 90.



Though the spider must be able to swim to have abducted Zane, it tends to hang onto the riverbed vegetation for support. Perhaps it is not so formidable when it isn't anchored to the bottom, you decide.

You swim up and over the creature, taking out two daggers as you do so. To face you, the beast must relinquish its hold on the riverbed. As soon as it lets go, you swim inside its long-legged defenses and rip into its thorax with your blades. The insect quivers, then suddenly goes stiff and floats away, carried along by the current.

You swim back to the bubble. "Vermin is dead," Zane calls through the gauzy shell, pointing to the fang marks on his chest. Then she reaches into his pocket and takes out the red gem. "I have the gem. Now get me out of here!"

Quickly you slash open the bubble with your knives and pull her out, then together you kick upward to the surface above.

And to something else.

You break surface beneath a great shadow hovering above the river. "Give me the gem!" screeches a Murai dragon, fully twenty feet long from its serpentine neck to the tip of its tail. It spots the stone in Zane's hand and descends on her like a vulture, plucking her from the water with one huge talon.

"Will this never end?" you curse as you make a desperate grab for the creature's thrashing tail.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to 175. If it's less than 15, turn to 58.

136

You dodge the slashes of the first two thieves and leapfrog over the third. Then you catch the arm of the fourth thief and swing him into the next three. *Faster!* you think, glancing anxiously at the window behind you. Two nimble backflips and you are past the mob and running toward Zane's prison. "After him!" cries one of the guild members.

Suddenly a dark form sails through the window into their midst. Teeth flash like knife blades. Talons rend any-

thing within reach. The thieves who are still able scatter in terror.

You ignore the melee and launch yourself at the locked door, tearing it from the hinges with a fear-inspired kick. "Hurry!" you order, pulling Zane out of the room. But by now the man-dragon has finished with the others and is fast approaching you. "Uh-oh," you mutter. "Too late!"

Zane grabs an oil lantern from the wall and, with a desperate throw, shatters it on the abishai's skull, spraying it with fuel and flames. The beast begins to thrash wildly, spreading the flames to the furniture, and within minutes the Thieves' Guild is completely ablaze. You quickly skirt the fire, slip out a window, and flee into the night.

"That was close!" you sigh as you hide in a nearby alley and watch the inferno collapse some minutes later. "It's just a pity we couldn't get the gem."

Zane smiles, takes your hand, and lays something in it. It's the blue Triad stone! "I picked a pocket or two when they locked me up," she says.

Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "blue gem," then turn to 64.



137

The spear is not a familiar weapon to you, and its length is ungainly. You're still pondering how to use it when the rat champion moves in swinging his heavy sword. His blow slashes right through your feeble defense and knocks you backward, and when you roll to your feet, you're holding two sections of spear, sliced through cleanly.

Two sections. Just like two batons. You smile to yourself—this is more like it!

The next time the rat rushes at you, you are ready. You crouch and spin, striking at his ankle and knee, then farther up at the elbows, and finally at his face. The rat-man champion is unconscious before he even hits the ground.

You turn to the crowd and to Captain Vix. "As a warrior," you say, "are you going to keep your word and set us free?"

The captain smiles cagily. "I never promised you freedom. I only accepted your challenge."

"That's what I expected of you," says another voice. You turn to see several of the rat soldiers step away from the others with their weapons bared. The head of the rebellious group removes his helmet to reveal Weejax's familiar snout. "Just returning a favor," he says to you as his squad rallies to your defense. Man-rats face rat-men, and a battle appears inevitable. Until . . .

"Alert!" calls a rat sentry suddenly from a high ledge. "We are being invaded!"

"By who?" asks Vix. "More man-rats?"

"No!" shouts the sentry. "Monsters!"

Turn to 148.

138

You drift with the current for what seems like hours. From time to time, you can feel things under the water, nipping at your feet, and they seem to be getting bolder, but you don't give voice to your concern, and neither does Zane.

All of a sudden, Zane starts. "Jadd!" she says, jabbing you. "Do you see that, or am I dreaming?"

You peer down the tunnel. Some distance ahead, getting steadily larger, is a spot of light. It's not bright enough to be sunlight . . . perhaps it's the moon.

"It's a way out!" Zane cries with relief. "We'll finally be rid of this place!"

"But what is that roaring sound?" you ask, realizing that the current has doubled its pull on you just within the last few minutes. It dawns on you then. A waterfall! You shout a warning to Zane and try to swim backward against the current, but it's too late. The deadly pull has both of you firmly in its grasp.

When you burst through the cave opening, the starlight illuminates your plight readily enough. The river spews



from the side of a high cliff and plummets into a pool far below, at least a hundred feet. "Hang on!" you shout to Zane as the torrent of water bears you downward.

At that moment, something catches your shoulder. You can't see what it is because of the spray, but a large claw of some sort has you in its grasp. You're carried out of the waterfall and into the air, where the moonlight finally reveals your savior. The griffon is monstrous, large enough to carry you with one paw and Zane with the other. Before you can even fumble for a weapon, the creature speaks to you, though you can't tell if it's an actual voice or a voice inside your head.

"Greetings, Prince of Thieves," says the winged behemoth. "I have been summoned by other lawful entities to bear you back to the city. Your struggles against the Murai are familiar to us, and there is still much to do if they are to be stopped."

The great lion-eagle swoops in low over Vasivada and deposits you on a deserted back street of the Thieves' Quarter. Then it disappears back into the night sky.

Turn to 64.

139

"Stop, you fool!" you yell after the fleeing cutpurse. "You don't know what you've taken!" But Vermin does not listen. He runs even harder, darting through mining tunnels that are as familiar to him as they are alien to you. Nevertheless, you keep up with him doggedly, and he can't make a twist or turn that you don't repeat an instant later.

All at once, you see that the cave comes to a dead end up ahead. *Good, you think, now we've got him.* But to your dismay, the thief doesn't slow down at all. Instead, he heads for a narrow crevice in the wall and, with the pliability of a real weasel, squeezes through.

"Where does this lead?" you ask Zane breathlessly.

Zane looks blank. "I've never seen it before. It's probably a dead end." She takes your torch and squeezes through the opening, then casts you a backward glance. "Coming?"

You slip through the crevice and advance slowly, one careful step at a time. It's hard to tell for certain, but you

could swear that you are descending.

"I could be wrong, but this just might take us into the Down-Below," Zane says after several minutes.

"What's the Down-Below?"

"A haunted world beneath Vasivada. Some think it's just an old wives' tale, invented to frighten children into doing their chores." Suddenly she trips, catches herself, and slides several inches. "The floor of this passage seems almost crystalline," she says wonderingly.

"The walls are flaring out as well," you reply, "becoming more tunnel-like. Perhaps we should—"

Suddenly you are interrupted by a man's cry from up ahead somewhere, long and terrified but quickly fading. It spurs the both of you onward, down another crystalline passage in search of what caused Vermin's cry.

"Jadd!" Zane calls from ahead of you. "The floor's too slick. I'm beginning to slide!"

"Reach back for me!" you yell and grab for her hand, but she pulls you after her. The farther you go, the steeper the incline of the tunnel becomes and the faster you slide, until it feels as if you are racing straight down into the bowels of the earth.

You pull Zane tight against you to keep from being battered against one another, then hold out the torch in front of you as best you can to light the way.

You are sliding toward a junction where the shaft splits into three and you have no control over your destination.

Roll one die. If you roll a 1 or 2, turn to 10. If you roll 3 or 4, turn to 127. If it's 5 or 6, turn to 51.





140

Moving stealthily, you follow after Gibbon with a purpose. *If I can take him down, you think, I'll not only get the gem, but I can also trade him back to his friends for Zane.*

The Leaper turns down a deserted side street. *This is my chance, you think as you lunge at the man and catch him around the waist. Tackling him is like tackling a brick wall, however, and your arms won't even reach around his deceptively thick middle. But that's impossible, you think, unless . . .*

The thief begins to shimmer before your eyes, his image fading, becoming a hulking brute with yellow eyes and a jagged smile. "Now, thief," growls the pit fiend Kaviani, "where is the Triad?"

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **105**. If it's less, turn to **162**.

141

Kaviani swings a massive fist to pound you into the ground, and in desperation, you bring up the scepter to meet it. When the two collide, the kinetic force of the blow is multiplied over and over by the Triad stones and then turned back in on itself, shattering every bone in the pit fiend's hand. Kaviani stands there, staring at its useless limb, trying to cope with the pain, when you press the attack. An upward swing of the scepter connects with the Murai leader's chin, and its multiplicative impact lifts the brute completely off its feet. When the fiend hits the ground, it stays there.

You stand over the unconscious Murai leader and lift the

ornate scepter high, prepared to dash Kaviani's brains over the cobblestones, but you can't bring yourself to do it. "Kaviani's evil," you say to Zane as she approaches. "The fiend is everything I hate. So why can't I destroy it?"

"For precisely that reason," is the reply, though it is not Zane who offers it. A lammasu lands before you in the courtyard, folding its great eagle wings across its lionlike back. It is not alone. Every manner of lawful creature has gathered in the night sky overhead—ki-rins and dragon horses and many you have never even heard of.

"You could not destroy the defenseless pit fiend," says the lammasu, "because it would make you like him, like something you hate. We are proud of you, Jadd Hachen. And we are grateful."

The man-faced creature takes the scepter from you and nods to its brethren above, and two of them descend to pick up the Murai leader. Then the entire army of fantastic creatures rises back into the night sky and disappears.

"Isn't that something, Zane? . . . Zane?" You turn to look for her but find yourself alone in the courtyard. She is gone, along with everything in your pockets except for a note! The note reads, "I robbed the Prince of Thieves. Now who's best?"

You fling your hands up in resignation. "I concede," you sigh, and you are answered by bubbling laughter from the darkened streets. You smile and set off to find Zane. ✕

142

You waste no time asking the man-rat questions, even if you don't know who or what you are trying to elude. But there is nowhere on the ledge to hide. Unless . . .

"Quick!" you order, motioning them to the edge of the chasm. You scramble over the edge and hang by your hands as you inspect the underside of the ledge. "Just as I expected," you call back. "The ledge flares out from the wall. We can hang down under the precipice and they won't be able to see us. Hurry, swing down!" Zane and Weejax follow your instructions, and not a moment too soon. As you hang far above the floor of the chasm, you hear footsteps on the ledge above.

"I don't understand," says one raspy voice. "I was sure I heard something out here."

"You are a fool," berates another voice. "Gather the others and comb every inch of these tunnels. I want that spy found!"

You motion for the others to remain silent, then slowly lift your head over the edge and peer at the intruders. You catch a glimpse of them just as they are leaving the ledge. You see squat, muscular figures clad in makeshift armor but with unmistakable body fur and snouts. They're rat-things, just like Weejax!

"Not like me!" Weejax snorts later as you pull him back onto the ledge. "Those were rat-men! I am a man-rat. See?" You and Zane shrug. Weejax sighs with exasperation. "I will explain later. Right now, we have to get out of here while we have the chance."

You follow the man-rat back down the tunnel, watching for any sign of the rat-men, and then through a complex system of passages. You manage to elude several rat-man sentries along the way. You also pass the nest of a slumbering wyvern. Finally Weejax breathes a sigh of relief. "We're out of danger now," Weejax tells you. "Just beyond the next bend are my people. Come."

Go to 2.



143

You reach out desperately for the cliff's edge and manage to catch it with two fingers, but you can't sustain such a precarious grip. You continue to plummet into the eternal depths, clutching a few blades of brown grass in your fist.

As you fall, you notice that the pit walls are laced with holes and cave entrances. *If I could only catch the lip of one of those*, you think, reaching out in blind hope.

At that instant, a pair of gibbonous hands darts out from

one hole and seizes your wrist. Before you even realize it, you are dragged into the darkened maw of a cave.

Check "lost" beneath "red gem" on your Character Stats Card and turn to **153**.

144

"We'll wait for the guard," you whisper. "He can tell us exactly where they're holding Iron Jaw. We'll save time that way."

You lie down on the cot and wait. And wait. It's nearly two hours before you hear the guard shuffle down the hall and stop at your cell door. You don't even look up. The door creaks open, and you hear the scuff of feet, shuffling through the dirt, approaching your cot.

"Now!" you bark, leaping up and locking your arms around your captor's neck. But just as quickly you cry out and leap away, your arm and side still in pain from the burns you've suffered. Subtract 1 hit point from your total.

Burns? From touching the jailer?

The jailer laughs, and his tone is echoing and unearthly. "Puny human!" he says as his image shimmers to reveal a salamander, a smoldering merging of human and segmented worm. "Where is the Triad?" the creature demands, raising its great iron spear menacingly.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, go to **21**. If it's less, turn to **125**.

145

As the soldiers close in, you quickly survey the area, and your eyes fall on something you missed before, a narrow alleyway alongside one of the shops, barely wide enough for a person your size to traverse. "Move over there," you whisper to Zane. "As soon as the fighting starts, run your hardest. I'll be right behind you if I can."

There is a sudden movement off to your right, and a spear point grazes your shoulder. In reflex, you lash out, snapping the spear with one baton and bouncing the other one off your attacker's nose. Spinning, you catch the next soldier across both collarbones with your sticks, then drop to a

crouch and attack the ankles and knees of the remaining soldiers. They move back, puzzled by your unorthodox fighting style.

Hadrian Turk steps through their ranks. "I'm next, strip-ling," he growls, aiming a sword slash at your head. You deflect the blow and move in, your sticks a blur of motion as you hit him six, seven, eight times in rapid succession. Then, before he falls, you drive a kick into his side that propels him into his own men, giving you time to slip down the narrow passageway.

The alley empties onto a darker back street, where you find Zane waiting. She motions for you to remain silent, then disappears down a different alley. You aren't long in following; the clamor of the soldiers as they squeeze through the corridor after you is incentive enough. Ahead of you, Zane moves from one alley to another and another, until even you become confused. The sound of Turk's men has long faded when you call, "Slow down, Zane. We're clear now." But still she vanishes into yet another shadowy alcove.

When you turn the corner this time, you find her waiting for you, but she isn't alone. With her is a small, dangerous-looking oriental man, wearing two wicked hook swords strapped across his back. "Who's your friend?" you ask wryly. "You wouldn't be considering robbing me again . . . would you?"

The raven-haired thief steps toward you, but in that instant, she ceases to be Zane Nazzari. The girl's image ripples and changes, replaced at first by the illusion of a haughty nobleman clad in fine robes, but that disguise immediately changes, leaving a nightmare reality in its wake. The beast that stands before you towers nearly eight feet high and bears only a slight resemblance to humanity. The legs retain human proportion, but not the upper torso. It is huge and overmuscled, impossibly so. The arms are as wide as your body, and the shoulders are so massive that they crowd the head and neck almost onto the creature's chest. The face is flanked by long, pointed ears and appears almost featureless, save for the fiery eyes and an exaggerated mouth, full of jagged teeth. "I am Kaviani," the crea-

ture growls. "We have come for the Triad!"

"N-Never heard of it, friend—"

"Do not toy with the master, insect!" warns the Oriental as he is transformed into a long, lean figure with gray, reptilian scales and a ten-foot wingspan. You've seen gargoyles on buildings in the past, but this is the first one you've seen that can talk. "The gemstone you took from the temple, thief. Give it to us or die!"

You no longer have the gemstone to surrender, so you swallow your fear and reach for your weapons instead.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **119**. If it's less, turn to **5**.



146

You know better than to trust your eyes where Kaviani's illusions are concerned, so you close them and give your other senses free reign.

First you sense, almost feel, the difference in size between the people of the street, separating the small from the large from the gigantic. You move deeper into the crowd, and the sound of raspy, inhuman breathing reaches your sensitive ears, narrowing your choices down even more—down to one. You open your eyes and find yourself staring at a frail old woman on the street corner, holding out a tin cup. *Please let me be right!* you pray silently, launching yourself at the woman and aiming a powerful double kick at the empty air a foot above her head.

With satisfaction, you dig your heels into a massive unseen chest, and the woman vanishes as the Murai leader staggers and drops the blue Triad stone.

You are after it immediately, but so is Kaviani.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **210**. If it's less, go to **85**.



147

"I've never heard of a Boggle before," you say. "What is it?"

"That be me," the creature says simply. "Me a peeper, a hole-jumper. See many places, many worlds. Steal a little. Real good thief, me."

"I think I get it," Zane says, nodding. "He's able to Dimensional Door—a spell that makes any hole or frame into a portal to another world."

"That right," Boggle says. "I show you." He dives into the nearest hole, just a few inches off the ground, and almost immediately leaps out from a different hole nearly three feet higher on the cave wall. In his hands is an odd piece of bent metal. "I steal this for you. It magic, make fire." He holds it out away from him, and flame spits from the end, accompanied by a crack of deafening thunder. "See?" He hands the strange stick to you. "I good thief. Almost as good as Jadd Hachen." Check "fire-stick" on your Character Stats Card.

"I am Jadd Hachen," you say, surprised. "Do you know me?"

The creature's jaw drops. "Me know Prince of Thieves. Boggle peeped up-world, heard lots. Boggle honored meet Jadd Hachen." He immediately drops to the ground and proceeds to kiss your boots. It seems to take forever before you can make him stop.

"Boggle," Zane asks, "did another man come this way? With a red gem?"

Boggle's eyes furrow. "Yes, Boggle see man. Boggle try to filch gem, but meanie cut." He shows you an open nick on

his hand. "Can Boggle come with Jadd? Maybe help find meanie, maybe, yes?"

"Very well," you sigh, "but try not to get in the way."

Boggle chuckles like a child. "Boggle never in way," he says, jumping into a hole, only to reappear from another halfway down the passage. "You too slow. Hurry!"

Turn to 6.

148

You look to the mouth of the huge rat cavern, and there, as you half-expected, is a small army of Murai warriors, a mixture of pig-snouted orcs and fierce ogres. At their head stands Kaviani himself.

"Follow me!" calls Weejax to his squad. "We'll deal with these beasts."

"No!" protests Captain Vix. "The rat-men are fully capable of dealing with this threat!"

"Look," you interrupt. "Why can't you two just stand together and deal with them from strength?"

"Don't be absurd!" Weejax snaps. "The man-rats could never fight alongside such creatures. We were once men, but we were mutated over the years in these magic-steeped caverns. But they—they were mere rodents before they began to evolve. How can we possibly stand with them?"

"Speak for yourself," counters Captain Vix. "We rat-men were here first. It was you man-scum who invaded—"

"Stop it, both of you!" you shout. "Look at each other! You look alike. You speak alike. You live alike. No matter what you once were, you are now all rat people. And if you don't learn to stand together, that army of beasts will put an end to both of you, once and for all. Stand together or fall. It's that simple. What do you say?"

Vix and Weejax both look toward the oncoming horde of Murai, then glance at their own ranks. "Perhaps," Vix says, "just this once . . ."

"Aye," Weejax says, nodding and clapping the other's shoulder. "We will stand as one, for the mutual protection of the Down-Below!"

After a brief flurry of shouted commands, the combined rat army meets the Murai menace head on, and the battle

is joined. From the looks of things, the rat people are more than holding their own.

"Come on," you say, grabbing Vermin by the collar and pulling him after you. "We got you out. Now take us to the gem!" At first Vermin stalls, but then Zane places a knife up against his throat, and he suddenly becomes only too cooperative.

Turn to 86.

149

You barely manage to catch Zane's gloved hand, and she cries out from the strain on her shoulder, but she's strong for a female of her size. You get your other hand over to the lip of the ledge, and Zane helps you climb the rest of the way up.

"That was close," she sighs, massaging her shoulder. "Where do you think we are?"

"I haven't any idea. At least we don't need a torch anymore. Have you noticed how the lichen on the walls seem to generate a soft light of their own?" You peer into the chasm, which seems to stretch forever.

A sudden movement on a lower, wider ledge attracts your attention. A figure wearing a hood and cloak, much too large to be Vermin, runs out from a cave onto the ledge. It's being pursued by a great snakelike creature with a dozen legs and a crocodilian head. "A behir!" Zane gasps.

You don't wait for the creature to attack. Instead, you judge the distance between the lower ledge and your own, and then you launch yourself at the monstrous behir's back.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to 18. If it's less, turn to 113.



You move out into the middle of the street in plain view, trying to attract the beast's attention. And when those piercing eyes seek you out from on high, you feel a tremor of primordial fear deep in your heart and almost start to run. *No!* you tell yourself. *Think of Zane, only of Zane!* And that keeps your feet on the ground and the plan fresh in your mind.

The abishai banks on the night wind and dives toward the heart of the city, barely skimming the rooftops, its eyes riveted to you. *Steady*, you think. *Let it get a little closer . . . Now, run!* But not in just any direction. You run straight to the guildhouse and dive through the open window.

The thieves gathered there, at least ten of them, all leap to their feet at your sudden appearance and reach for their weapons. But your eye is on the door across the way, where they took Zane just before you left. You've got to make it across the room, through the gauntlet of thieves, to free her. And quickly, before the abishai arrives!

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **136**. If it's less, turn to **132**.

The Murai patrol falls on the encampment before they can even mount a defense. The creatures are hobgoblins, from what you can tell, each standing almost seven feet tall, with dark, mottled flesh and broad, muzzled faces. They are also well armed and armored. They wade into the tent homes with merciless glee but find stiff resistance from the hearty cave people.

"They're after me," you tell Zane. "I can feel it." You recover your batons and steal through the embattled settlement, picking out the hobgoblin leader as you go. If your plan is to work, it is him you must battle. Finally, when the timing seems right, you slip two throwing daggers from your gauntlet, clutch one in each hand, and launch yourself at the bestial warrior.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **35**. If it's less, turn to **206**.



152

You slip out onto the ledge with Gibbon right behind you, the crown tucked under one arm. "We'll have to work our way around to the other side," you say. "My grappling hook is there."

A screech from the heavens focuses your attention on the midnight sky. A black shadow passes over the moon, flying erratically. The wounded abishai is watching you as it circles, and you know that you'll never make it to your grapple without a fight.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to 134. If it's less, go to 52.

153

Boggle keeps a tight grip on both you and Zane as he dimension-hops from one world to another in the blink of an eye. You can barely keep track of them.

"We here now," says Boggle as he pulls you through yet another dimensional portal, only this time it is a window, and it opens into a back alley in the Thieves' Quarter of Vasivada. Your spindly friend has brought you all the way to the surface world! "No go Down-Below again," Boggle warns the two of you as he sits on the windowsill. "Too much danger. Don't want friends hurt." With that, he starts back through the window, disappearing as he crosses the threshold.

"Boggle, wait!" you call. "How can we repay you?"

The creature's bulbous head reappears, hanging suspended in the center of the window frame. "No repay," he says, chuckling. "You Boggle's friends!" Then he waves good-bye and is off to peep into a thousand new worlds.

Turn to 64.

You're still trying to choose the right lockpick when Gibbon suddenly bounces off the wall to your left and collapses to the floor like a broken doll. Kaviani is through with him, but the pit fiend is still not satisfied. "You lied!" the fiend howls, just before twin lightning bolts bite into your back. The force of the blast blows you not only through the door but the wall of the building as well.

You come to rest in the middle of the street, your body a twisted and broken thing that wrings a gasp from Zane as she kneels beside you. "Jadd!" she sobs, holding up the blue gemstone. "I have it, Jadd! I was able to pick their pockets earlier. Come on, Jadd! We've got to get out of here and—"

"No . . . time," you gasp weakly. "Take gem . . . run . . . hurry!"

You can hear Kaviani approaching even now, tearing through the ruined wall. Still sobbing, Zane runs off into the night, and you last just long enough to see a great brutish shadow fall over you. ✕

Your lungs are nearly bursting as you pry at the great lizard's jaws, but they are as strong as steel. The giant alligator hasn't the slightest intention of letting you go. You jab at it in desperation with your baton, and the stick catches the creature flush in the eye. It flinches, and its jaws part enough for you to free your leg and swim for safety.

Your vision is clouded from lack of oxygen, and colored lights flash before your eyes, especially an oval of bright red, but then you surge upward to break the surface and breathe precious air once again. Zane helps pull you back into the shallows. "Are you all right?"

"I—think so," you say, coughing out water. "For a minute there, I wasn't so sure, though. I was starting to see th—Hey! Wait a minute! That oval of red . . ." Suddenly the image that had danced before your eyes takes form. "The gemstone!" you exclaim, diving back into the deep water.

Turn to 193.

The look in Kaviani's gaze tells you everything. Whether you have the gems or not, the creature will destroy you. Unless you move *now*.

You bolt suddenly, catching Kaviani by surprise, and run for your life toward the nearest closed shop. You guess the door will be locked and bolted, but you gamble that the window clasps will be less secure. A flying kick proves you right. The shutters swing back and you sail inside, landing atop a cobbler's bench and scattering his tools all over the floor.

"So far, so good," you mutter to yourself. "Now if only this place has a back door." You feel your way toward the rear of the shop, hoping the cobbler has the sense to stay upstairs in his bed.

Your hand finds the latch of the back door, and you quickly discover that the door opens into an alley. At that same moment, the front doors of the shop explode inward in a flash of arcane lightning. "Jadd Hachen!" roars Kaviani. "You will not escape!"



Thinking quickly, you push the rear door wide open, then quickly duck back into the shadows of the cobbler shop and wait.

Kaviani rumbles through the shop like a summer storm, stooping beneath the low ceiling, and stalks out into the alley, with the Oriental trailing close behind. "Where is he?" the beast curses. "Okediji, look in that direction. I'll look this way . . ."

You move silently back the way you came, slip through the ruined front doors, and once more run for your life. You leave the street and put two more behind you without catching even a glimpse of Kaviani, but you still can't shake a feeling of unease. Your ears suddenly perk up. *What's that flapping sound?* you wonder, pausing near a darkened tenement doorway to survey the street.

But despite your alertness, you aren't prepared when a hand suddenly encircles your mouth from behind and pulls you back into the shadows. "Sssh!" whispers your assailant. Reluctantly you comply, and that's when you hear the flapping sounds growing louder, coming up the street.

Okediji, the Oriental, is out there, searching carefully for you. But your breath catches in your throat. His feet aren't even touching the ground! Instead, he glides along as if on unseen wings, and as he passes, he lets his guard down and his disguise falters. Behind the illusion of the Oriental, you see the real Okediji—a spindly creature sheathed in gray scales, with a dragon's leathern wings sprouting from its back. The gargoyle finishes its reconnaissance of this street and moves on to the next. Its wingbeats gradually fade into the distance.

"I saw that thing following you," reports your mysterious benefactor. Zane Nazzari steps into the moonlight and searches the midnight sky. "First soldiers, and now monsters. What have you gotten yourself into, Jadd Hachen?" You try to think of an answer but she waves it off. "Never mind. What we need right now is a safe haven. And I think I know just the place. Follow me."

She grabs your hand, and you slink cautiously away, deeper into the grimy heart of the Thieves' Quarter.

Turn to 82.



157

The wyvern tenses to attack, unfolding its huge wings and cocking its neck, coiling its scorpionlike tail and stinger. You waste not a moment. You slip a throwing dagger into your hand and heave it at the creature's head with all your strength.

Wyverns are not as well-armored as their cousins, the dragons. The dagger is able to pierce its feathered skin and plunge directly to the brain. Despite a thousand-to-one odds, you kill the great beast with but a single throw.

Suddenly your calf muscle feels as if it's on fire. You whirl toward the smallest of the wyvern hatchlings, barely as large as a dog. Its tail stinger is still embedded in your lower leg. And as you soon discover, a wyvern's venom is fully potent before it ever crawls from the shell. Your adventure ends as you become a meal for the hungry hatchlings. ✠

158

The sentries are busy combing the upper floors of the palace and the grounds outside, so there are few in the lower levels to complicate your search for the dungeon.

The door to the prison is a heavy oaken panel with a barred window inset at eye level. Craning your neck, you peer inside. A jailer sits at his station just beyond the door, slumped on his stool and snoozing fitfully, an empty wine bottle lying on the floor beside him.

"I think I can pick this lock," Zane says, but you wave her aside.

"We won't need to." You lean up against the bars and bark, "Jailer!" at the same time affecting the acid tone of Hadrian Turk. Even Zane is startled by the accuracy of your mimicry. "Wake up and open this gate, or I'll have you inside a cell instead of guarding them! Is that understood?"

The jailer leaps to his feet and staggers to the door, fumbling with his keys and slurring, "Yesh, shir; shorry, shir. It won't happen again . . ." As the door swings open, you deliver a lightning barrage of blows with your batons to the beefy man's head and shoulders. Pain finally registers in his wine-soaked brain, and he collapses to the floor, unconscious.

You close the door quietly, prop the jailer up on his stool, and head into the dungeon to search for Iron Jaw.

Turn to 114.

159

You dodge two piglike orc guards and batter another to its knees with your batons as you make your way across the altar. You are almost to the rift. You make a desperate dive for it . . .

Thwack! The huge tail of the tarrasque seems to come from nowhere and bats you through the air, back into the nightmare throng of Murai beasts. Claws and blows rain down on you in an assault that no mortal could ever hope to survive. . . . ✕

160

You slip your rope from your belt, hoping to lasso the scepter if you can't reach it yourself, but the rope isn't long enough. It falls just shy of its target.

A bulbous head suddenly pokes up through the loop of rope, seemingly from nowhere. "What this?" Boggle says, eyeing the scepter.

"Boggle!" you yell. "Grab the stick!"

He sees you and waves, and before Kaviani can even turn, Boggle reaches out one gangly arm, snatches the Triad scepter, and disappears back through his dimensional door. The Reckoning spell is broken, and the gateway to the

Murai realm immediately collapses in on itself and vanishes without a trace.

"Nooo!" roars Kaviani, and the pit fiend's remaining followers cower in the face of their master's rage. "You did this!" Kaviani screams, lumbering toward you. "You will die for this!"

Panic flashes through you at the sight of the oncoming behemoth. As you fumble for a weapon, you pull Boggle's odd metal "fire-stick" from your belt. "How does this work?" you wonder out loud, pointing the end of the stick with the hole in it and rubbing the side as you would a djinn's magic lamp, but nothing happens.

Kaviani is nearly upon you now, massive arms outstretched.

You pound the stick and shake it and are ready to throw the blasted thing at the pit fiend, when suddenly your finger touches a lever and the thing bucks fiercely in your hands once, twice, numbing your ears with its thunder. The plume of fire it belches is less than a foot long, far too short to reach Kaviani, yet the monster stops nonetheless.

"What . . . magic . . . is this?" the fiend stammers, clutching the crimson wounds in its chest. It sinks to its knees, shudders, and dies.

The Murai underlings flee in the face of such powerful magic as you stand wide-eyed, holding the metal stick away from you as if it might turn and bite you. Finally you notice the names of the wizards who conjured the fire-stick engraved there in the metal: "Smith and Wesson."

"Powerful magic indeed!" you whisper as you realize that your quest has come to an end. ✚



The dragon's scaly hide is nearly impervious to normal weapons, especially blades as small as your throwing daggers. So before the dragon's fiery breath can reach you, you aim for the only unprotected place on the lizard's body—the creature's eye—and hurl your dirk as hard as you can.

The knife flies with uncanny accuracy and sinks deep into the dragon's eye. Immediately the creature thrashes wildly, throwing you off its tail and dropping Zane at the same instant. You tumble through space, your eyes focused on the patchwork of farmland far below, but just as quickly you are seized by the shoulders and your fall is halted. You glance around and see the dragon spinning out of control toward the countryside below. "Then what has me?" you say, twisting to look up.

The lammasu looks down at you, its humanlike face smiling while its winged-lion body carries you to safety. Zane is not far behind, sitting astraddle a green-scaled dragon horse. "Greetings, Jadd Hachen," says the lammasu. "We lawful creatures have been summoned to help you in your struggle against the Murai. We know about your plight, and we are behind you, in spirit and in thought. If there is any way in which we can help you, we will do so. For now, we will take you back to Vasivada to continue your quest."

The flying creatures deposit you on an empty back street of the Thieves' Quarter, then return to whence they came.

As the lammasu departs, you sink to the ground, sighing. "Oh, well, we almost had the gem."

Zane smiles impishly and says, "Do you suppose I'd drop this after all we've been through to get it?" In her hand, she holds the red gem.

Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem" and turn to 64.

You move in with your batons, intent on taking the battle to Kaviani, but the supernatural brute won't let you get close enough. Its eyes flash with sorcerous power an instant before twin bolts of lightning shoot from them and bite into the cobblestone next to you. A mere fraction of the

crackling energy surges through the stones and knocks you completely off your feet. Subtract 1 hit point from your total.

"Come along, insect!" the fiend chortles as it pursues you. Despite your numbness from the attack, you know you must make a move now or perish, so you slip a blade from your gauntlet and hurl it into your enemy's thigh. The blade distracts Kaviani long enough for you to flee.

But wait, you think and come to a stop. Maybe this defeat can work to my advantage . . .

You return back into the street, waving at the angry monster. "Ho, pumpkinhead! You want the Triad? Then come and get it!" The pit fiend growls in rage and lumbers after you, just as you had hoped.

Turn to 39.



163

In your search for Gibbon, you travel deep into the Thieves' Quarter of Vasivada. Zane has an idea about where the Leaper might be found. "He's known to be quite the gambler," she explains. "All we've got to do is find the right game."

But that is easier said than done. You visit every gambling house Zane can think of, but there is still no sign of Gibbon anywhere. "This is hopeless!" you say after the eleventh back-room gaming parlor. "He could be playing dice in some back alley, for all we know. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Zane suddenly smiles. "The gods are with us, Jadd," she says. "There's our needle now."

You follow her gaze to a nondescript trinket shop across the avenue. There in the doorway is Gibbon, counting out a

bag of new coins before pocketing his windfall and sauntering up the street. You start after him, but Zane catches your arm. "What if it was the gem that he just pawned in that store?"

If you choose to follow Gibbon, turn to **202**. If you go to the trinket shop instead, turn to **120**.

164

Your weapons are useless against the hulk's chitinous armor, that much you can surmise. And your strength will mean little against such a powerful creature.

Still, there are other ways to topple a giant. You remove the grapple line from your belt as you move to meet the creature.

"Die, thief!" it growls, lumbering after you with jaws clacking loudly. You wait until one of its massive feet leaves the ground to dart forward and lasso the lifted foot. Then you race around the confused creature, trussing its legs like a bird at a feast till it can no longer maintain its balance. When the umber hulk finally falls, it seems like the entire Down-Below shakes from the impact.

You stare at the creature as it flounders on the ground, unable to raise its own great weight. "I've seen strange things down here," says Weejax as he observes the thing, "but this tops them all. What is *that*?"

You quickly tell your story of the Murai and the Triad, and of tracking Vermin through the Down-Below.

Weejax shakes his head afterward. "The thief could be anywhere down here," he says. "We will split into teams and help you look for this Vermin."

Turn to **28**.

165

The ranks of the Murai army close in around you like creatures from a nightmare world. The hobgoblin commander stands at the forefront. "How tasty," it observes, whacking you with one hammerlike fist, to the applause of the assembled monstrosities. Subtract 1 hit point from your total.

"Prepare the roasting spit!" the hobgoblin orders, then

chortles evilly. "How do we like our meat, brothers? Regular or extra crispy?"

Through the laughter, you hear a new voice, small and singsongy, from the crowd gathered around you. "Is friend Jadd okey-doke?" it says. The Murai stop laughing abruptly and look all around to discover where the voice came from. It isn't until they look down that they see the bulbous head sprouting right out of the empty air between the hobgoblin's straddled legs. "Ready come back yet?" Boggle asks. "Friend Zane much worried." He reaches out a gibbous arm, grabs your wrist, and jerks you straight through the hobgoblin's legs, into another world altogether.

You close your eyes to the dazzling, terrifying sights of dimensional travel and keep them closed until you hear Zane's soft voice reassuring you. "Jadd? Are you all right?" You're back in the Down-Below, in your own world, and she is cradling you in her arms. "What—what happened over there?" she asks.

"No time! No time!" Boggle cries anxiously. "Look to hole! Something comes!"

You both turn to the rift in horror as a great horned head pokes through it, followed by thirty feet of reptilian muscle and razor-sharp spines. The tarrasque, the great ravager of countrysides, is said to be fury incarnate. And there is no one else to stop it but you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **32**. If it's less than 15, turn to **196**.

166

The witch's skeletal hand glows with building power, and you sense what is coming. You backpedal, wishing you had some way to fight back. but you have nothing to help against such magic. "Here!" you yell, fishing a Triad stone from your belt pouch. "Take it!" You hold out the gem, but the hag looses her sorcerous attack anyway, and a searing beam of light lances toward you. You avert your eyes, expecting the worst, but somehow the beam never strikes you! Instead, it hits the gemstone you hold, and its energy is captured and multiplied by the stone and hurled back at

its source! The witch is completely unprepared for the blast that sends her flying across the room and snuffs out her life like a candle flame.

Turn to 7.



167

Whichever one the Murai is, you reason, must be stronger than Zane. So all you have to do is attack the one who seems to be winning . . .

One of the Zanes has the other down in the shallow water and is pummeling her repeatedly. "Try to impersonate me, will you?" she barks, pounding blow after blow into the other's face. Then she holds up the stone. "I've got it, Jadd," she says, smiling triumphantly.

Without warning, you hurl your baton at the winner. It strikes her just behind the left ear, knocking her cold.

You hurry over to help the real Zane. "Are you all right?" you ask as she climbs to her feet. But you no more than get the words out before her hand closes around your throat.

"I'm just fine!" the Murai mocks as it lifts you completely off the ground. The illusion of Zane fades to reveal a toadlike troglodyte. "I knew you'd expect me to win," it chuckles. "That's why I pretended to lose." Then the creature throws you into the cavern wall, leaving you battered and unconscious.

Subtract 2 hit points from your total.

When you come to, Zane is standing over you. "It got away," she says, rubbing the bump behind her ear. Check "lost" on your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem."

"I—I'm sorry," you stammer.

"Forget about that now. Let's just get out of here." She looks around. "I guess there's only one way to take. Downriver." She trembles. "Too bad. I hate to swim."

Turn to 124.

You find your way back to the cavern, where the battle between the rat people and the Murai still rages. More of Weejax's warriors have joined the melee, and together with their former enemies, they have the Murai forces on the defensive. The latter's spirit seems shaken; their champion and leader, Kaviani, has departed—to look for you, no doubt—and there is no one left to goad them on. "I think Weejax and the others will be all right," you tell Zane, then pat your pocket containing the red gem. "We'd best leave before Kaviani shows up again."

"But we don't know the way out, Jadd. We could wander around in here forever!" she protests.

You silently agree. That idea has nagged you since you entered the Down-Below. But there has to be a way, there just has to. . . . "You'd think the rats or someone else down here would have marked these passages to keep their people from getting lost."

"Maybe they have," Zane muses, inspecting the chamber wall. Behind a covering of lichen, she finds a series of small picture symbols chipped into the stone, pointing out the way to the rat-men, the man-rats, and other regions of the Down-Below you can't decipher. The last picture is of a sun symbol. "This must be the way to the surface," Zane pronounces, taking your hand and following the direction indicated by the symbol. It takes you almost three hours, but you finally emerge from the labyrinthine depths of the Down-Below.

"Jadd!" Zane exclaims. "Up ahead . . . I see a light!"

The moonglow is blinding after the darkness, and the night breeze feels somehow alien to your skin, but it is good to be in the surface world again. You find yourselves on the plains of Vasivada. The silhouette of the city itself can be seen in the distance.

"We're not finished yet," you say, weary but determined. "We can't rest until the Reckoning has been prevented and Kaviani stopped once and for all!"

With resolution burning within you, you head back to Vasivada.

Turn to 64.



"Why would anyone want to live down here?" you ask Lorkt.

"For many reasons," the leader of the underground tribe replies, shrugging. "Some of us were thieves like yourself and we were forced to hide from Hadrian Turk. Others are escapees from his royal dungeon. Still others came here seeking gold and treasures, but all any of us found was mutation. We didn't know that the dumping grounds for Vasivada are just above us, that cast-off potions and formulae and other magical materials have been seeping down into the caverns for centuries. Once we began to change, we became outcasts. There was no going back to the surface again."

"But the stink . . ." Zane grimaces.

"It's not so bad after a while. This hasn't worked for six years now," he says, tapping his nose. "But you didn't come Down-Below to talk about me. What brings you here?"

You tell Lorkt about the Murai and the Triad and the Reckoning. He listens in awed silence. When you are finished, he tells what he knows of Vermin. "He's been down here before, hiding out and stealing our things, though he's never stayed long enough to begin to change. We've tried to catch him, but he's a slippery one. He may have moved farther down in the caverns, to the Dark Waters or the Witching Woods. They are two dangerous places, my friend. The magical refuse that changed us is even worse down there. The effects are even more staggering."

"We'll be careful," you say, standing. "How do we get there?"

Turn to 72.

What was once the gargoyle seethes with anger—that and magic are all that keep the thing aloft, for its wings have long since lost their webbing. “Hachen!” it screams, swooping for the kill, blades flashing.

You make a sweeping block with one baton, deflecting the closest hook sword, and then put all of your mustered strength into a single swift blow. The wooden stick shatters the blackened skull like an eggshell, extinguishing the angry glow in the fiery sockets. Now lifeless, the creature falls, shattering at the base of the tower.

“Jadd!” Zane whispers urgently, pointing to the window a few feet away. “Guards! They’ve found the man I knocked out!”

With Zane right behind you, you move along the narrow ledge until you are out of sight of the window. Then you crouch beside a brooding stone gargoyle.

“What now, Jadd?” Zane asks, huddled close against you to fight the chilled night breeze.

“We find the gemstone, of course,” you say simply. You lower your rope to the next ledge and climb down, then repeat the process until you reach the roof of the palace itself. Then you stalk across the palace roof till you find an empty balcony below that leads into the palace proper. Sneaking inside is deceptively easy.

“If the other thieves could only see me now,” Zane whispers as you sneak down marble halls. “Just think, a thief inside the palace of Vasivada. By the way, where are we going?”

“To the dungeon.”

She groans. “I had to ask!”

Turn to 158.



"I'll lure the guard away," you whisper to Zane, "while you free Vermin. Then get out of here as fast as you can. I'll meet up with you later." She nods reluctantly.

You step out into the open and call out to the sentry. "Ho, you great lummo," you say, beckoning him closer. "Why don't you taunt someone who is free to face you?" But before the guard can even move, you catch a vicious clout to the back of your head and fall to your knees, the chamber spinning around you.

"Thank you for coming," says Captain Vix, the officer you fought on the ledge of the chasm. "It saves us the trouble of looking for you." He gestures to several rat-men who have captured Zane, and they throw both of you into the pit cell with Vermin. Subtract 3 hit points from your total because of the clubbing and the fall.

You lie there stunned, but as your senses clear, you realize the thief is going through your pockets.

Turn to 22.

You kneel to scour the floor of the passageway, but you can find no clue to Vermin's trail. "Where to?" Zane asks.

"All I can do is play a hunch," you shrug and point to the left. "This way."

The smell of foul water reaches your nose long before you see the underground river that residents of the Down-Below, human and nonhuman alike, refer to as the Dark Waters. It is an ancient waterway, now polluted by the seepage of refuse from the kingdom many levels above. Its waters are brackish, and thick foam gathers at the edge. It is also where your passageway ends—there are no ledges to walk upon, no bank bordering the river. There is only the water. You must follow it or turn back.

Zane casts her vote for the latter. "I don't swim very well," she says with a quaver in her voice.

You bend down near the water's edge. There you see a footprint in the soft sediment beside the stream. The print is human, and it appears to have been made by someone of Vermin's size and stature. "Vermin's been here, I'm sure of

it," you pronounce. "He's probably heading downriver, looking for a way out."

"How do we follow him?"

You look around you. If you keep after him on foot, you'll have to travel the shallows at the edge of the river and fight the current every step of the way. On the other hand, if you can find something that will float, you can take to the deeper part of the foreboding water—an idea that does not especially appeal to your partner.

If you choose to walk through the shallows, turn to 49. If you find something to use as a raft and you take to the deep water, turn to 179.

173

Zane holds up the gem for you to see as Iron Jaw staggers to her feet. "Gimme that!" she slurs. "That's mine!"

"Hardly," you say. "Come, Zane. Let's get out of here." You turn to leave, but there is a lone figure standing in the dungeon passageway. Hadrian Turk.

"Come to settle old debts, Hadrian?" you say, drawing your batons. "Come along, then. I'm ready for you."

Turk stalks forward, his eyes seeming to burn right through you. But when he speaks, it is not his voice that you hear. "Give me the gem, thief," Hadrian says in a deep alien tone, "or die. Observe!" He turns toward the cell behind you where Iron Jaw leans against the bars for support. Suddenly his eyes flash with yellow, and an instant later, a bolt of raw energy lances from his eye sockets and arcs across the corridor. Iron Jaw is too stunned to move. The bolt strikes her in the chest, and she literally lights up! For a moment, you swear you can see her skeleton through the skin. Then she's completely enveloped by the beam. A small pile of ashes is all that remains of her.

"Now do you see?" The illusion of Turk suddenly fades, and Kaviani's true brutish features replace it. "Give me the gem!" the pit fiend growls.

You fall back against the bars of the cell, your heart caught somewhere between your chest and your throat. *How do I fight something like that?* you ask yourself in awe. But fight it you must.



Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **192**. If it's less than 14, turn to **88**.

174

"Jadd, what are you doing?" yells Zane as you run straight for the Murai and the Triad scepter. Her cry inadvertently alerts Kaviani and followers to your presence, and the semicircle of creatures turns to meet you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **24**. If it's less, turn to **126**.



175

You catch the dragon's tail and hold on tight as the winged creature sails off down the river tunnel, first dragging you through the water like fish bait and then lifting you completely into the air. The tunnel twists and turns, and you are almost bashed against the walls several times, but you manage to hold firm. After several minutes, you slowly start to clamber up the scaly appendage.

A vertical shaft appears in the tunnel ceiling up ahead. It seems to be what the dragon is heading for. As the dragon approaches it, you strain to see upward. Is that starlight you see? You continue toward it and suddenly burst out into the bright glow of the moon and find yourself high over the Vasivadian countryside.

"Are you still there?" the dragon says, glancing down at you derisively. It belches a plume of fire into the air, then slowly turns its head in your direction.

Turn to **161**.

176

"Stay here," you tell the man-rats as you and Zane furtively move in for a closer look.

You stay as close to the cavern wall as possible, using the stalagmites as cover, until you reach the escarpment where the rats live and work. Then you flit from one cave to the next, ducking into the shadows every few moments to avoid the sentries. Finally you reach the cave where you last saw Vermin and slip inside.

"This must be the jail," Zane whispers. Inside the cave, you see row upon row of pitlike cells chiseled into the floor. At the end of the first row stands a sentry, dangling food over a cell and taunting the captive below.

"Hungry?" he asks with an evil laugh before eating the morsel himself.

"I'll empty your gullet yet, rodent!" calls back the unseen prisoner, though you recognize the strident tone. It's Vermin, all right.

"How do we get past the guard?" Zane asks.

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **190**. If it's less, turn to **171**.

177

The gargoyle is so intent on the battle in midair that it barely notices its proximity to the royal tower, not even when it nearly slams into the tower wall. *It's now or never!* you decide as you bunch your legs against the gargoyle's middle and push away, casting yourself out into space. As you rapidly approach a narrow ledge, you reach out for it and feel your fingers catch on the cold stone, but your weight is too much and you slip almost immediately. The world begins to spin out of control.

Your outstretched hand catches on a projection not far below, and this time you hold on. Icy pain lances through your shoulder as you dangle there, an arm's length between life and death, but you refuse to give in. Slowly the pain eases enough for you to try pulling yourself up.

You find yourself hanging onto a stone gargoyle, one of a series of stone busts that sprout from the wall and circle the outside of the tower. The irony of being saved by such a statue is lost on you; it takes all your concentration just to pull yourself up, slowly, carefully, until finally you collapse

across the stone monster's back, utterly spent. Subtract 1 hit point from your total.

"Thief!" comes a shrieking call, as if from a nightmare, and you look up to see Okediji swooping past you, slashing the air with its talons. "Give the gems to me! Give me the Triad!"

You curse and slip three thin blades from your gauntlet cuff and let them fly. Two strike home, deep into the reptilian hide of the creature's thigh and shoulder. Neither wound is serious, but the blood that flows from the wounds at least assures you that the monster can be hurt. You reach toward your boot for more knives, but the gargoyle retreats out of range, cursing you.

"You will pay for this, Jadd Hachen!" it screeches. "Kaviani will destroy you and this entire kingdom!" Then the creature's great bat wings beat the chilled air, and the beast banks away, disappearing into the darkness of the midnight sky.

Sagging against the stone, you try to catch your breath and clear your mind, but the images of this night simply won't fade away. "Bandits I can take," you say to the night sky, "but monsters? Kaviani, gargoyles, a Triad . . . what is it all about? What have I blundered into this time?"

"Perhaps something a bit beyond your ken," creaks a voice from nearby—but from where? You're at least two hundred feet above the city!

"Who said that?" you call, swiveling about on the statue's back until you spy a window just around the bend of the tower. A white-haired old man stands at the sill. He is bent and frazzled, and his conical hat and moon-bedecked robe give him an almost clownish appearance. But his eyes are what hold you. They shine with an intelligence, a wisdom you have seldom seen. "I am Dadkhah," he says, "the king's court mage. Young man, I think we should talk."

Turn to 56.

178

You draw two of your throwing blades in an eyeblink and let them fly, striking the gargoyle in the chest and backing

it away from the rope. But the damage is done. Okediji's first slash bit through half of the line, and the rest of it is quickly unraveling.

"No!" you shout, diving for the rope even as it separates. The tattered end snakes toward the window, but you manage to catch it and brace your feet against the window frame. "Hold on, Zane!" you shout. "I'll have you up in a minute!"

You have just started to reel her in when a hook sword bites into your back. Okediji falls dead an instant later, but the monster's last act has left you mortally wounded. Darkness overcomes you, and the rope slips through your lifeless hands. ✕



179

"A raft would be able to get us downriver quicker," you decide. "But where does someone find a raft down here?"

Zane points out at the river. "Our luck is improving. Here comes one now."

You follow her outstretched hand. Floating past on the current is the top of a mushroom, only it's twenty times larger than any mushroom cap you've ever seen. But then, you've seen plenty of unusual things in the Down-Below already, and you are not one to question providence. You simply snag the floating vegetation with your grappling hook and pull it to shore. "Your barge awaits, madam," you say, ushering your nervous companion aboard.

The current is strong and, after pushing off, you have no way to steer your raft. You are solely at the river's mercy,

and you can do nothing about it. "I hope there aren't any waterfalls or whirlpools," you say.

When Zane fails to answer, you turn and look toward the rear of the raft, expecting to see her asleep or perhaps retching over the side with motion sickness. What you don't expect is to find her gone!

Turn to 201.



180

You charge the pit fiend and, not missing a beat, you leap up against the wall and then kick off, somersault past the fiend, and pluck the gem from the creature's hand in the same fluid motion.

"Give it back!" Kaviani thunders, tossing the unconscious Iron Jaw back into her cell like a rag doll. The unnatural creature's eyes flash yellow, and a moment later, twin bolts of lightning crackle across the corridor. You barely leap out of their way in time. "Give the gem to me!"

You drop into a fighting stance, spinning your batons. "Come and get it."

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **192**. If it's less than 14, go to **88**.

181

You pick up the gem and slip it into your belt pouch. Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem."

"Jadd!" Zane yells suddenly from the arch of the chamber. Something is coming down the passageway.

You hurry past her and Boggle. There is a troop of creatures approaching, and there is no mistaking the nobleman who leads them. Even as he approaches, he takes on

the appearance of a pit fiend. "You've closed my doorway!" Kaviani roars. "Give me back my gem!"

"Keep behind me," you whisper over your shoulder to Zane and Boggle. "I'll hold them off for as long as I can." But you realize that Zane and Boggle are no longer behind you. And an instant later something lunges out of a worm tunnel and seizes you as well, dragging you back into the darkness of the hole.

Turn to 153.

182

"Blast it!" you curse. "The gem is long gone by now!" Check "lost" on your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem."

"Let's just worry about getting away from here," Zane says. "I can hardly wait to be out of this place."

You wander aimlessly in the tunnels of the Down-Below for what seems like hours, but you only appear to be going in circles.

"This is hopeless," you sigh. "You'd think that someone down here would have had the foresight to map these tunnels so no one would get . . . lost . . ."

Suddenly an idea hits you. "Maybe someone has," you say, carefully inspecting the walls of the passage. You brush a film of glowing lichen aside and find symbols chipped into the stone. One points the way to a picture of the rat-creatures, while another points to a picture of . . . the sun? "That's it!" you exclaim, taking Zane by the hand and following the symbols that you now find in almost every tunnel. Nearly three hours later, you emerge from a cave into the bright moonlight, only a mile or so from Vasivada.

You rest for a while, then head for the high walls of the kingdom. Turn to 64.

183

Your heart is pounding in your temples as the monster called Kaviani looms over you threateningly. *Move fast, Jadd, you think, because once they find out you really don't have the gems, you're done for.*

Fighting back the pain from your beating, you leap to your feet. You notice that you've succeeded in taking the man-beast by surprise as you bolt for the nearest shops that line the street. The heavy footfalls that follow tell you that Kaviani is right on your trail, though. You duck under a heavy market canopy that stretches over the walkway, and as you pass, you kick the support posts from under the canopy and scurry aside. The billowing tent collapses on eight feet of supernatural rage, and you hear Kaviani's roars of frustration as the creature tries to free itself.

Suddenly you sense a presence behind you—it must be the Oriental—but before you can turn, you feel cruel talons bite deep into your shoulders. To your utter shock, you find yourself suddenly being lifted off the ground—twenty, then thirty feet, then up and up into the night sky until the kingdom of Vasivada is far below you. Subtract 3 hit points from your total.

"The Triad!" screeches Okediji into your ear. The monster has let its illusion of the Oriental fade as well, and now you see it as it actually is: a nightmarish gargoyle, with gray, reptilian flesh and a ten-foot wingspan. The sight so fills you with revulsion that you strike out at the creature again and again, pummeling it mercilessly until the thing tries to drop you. But you cling to its houndlike body, refusing to be thrown off. The gargoyle's flight becomes erratic; the embattled Okediji can barely keep you airborne.

A dark shape looms up ahead of you and beneath you. It must be the palace tower, you note, realizing that you've flown completely out of the Thieves' Quarter and are now over the wealthy side of Vasivada. A plan quickly forms in your mind. *If we only fly close enough, you think, I might be able to leap to the tower. . . .*

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to 177. If it's less, turn to 8.



You step out into the deserted street, trying to decide your next move, when a booming voice calls your name: "*Jadd Hachen!*" It is the voice of Kaviani, and it comes from high above you.

There, materializing in the night sky, is a projected image of the pit fiend's terrible visage. "You have two of the Triad gems," it announces. "I have the third."

"Then we're at an impasse, eh?"

Kaviani chuckles. "I also have the girl."

You whirl to discover Zane still standing behind you. "You have nothing!" you shout back to the sky. "Zane has been with me the whole time."

"You have watched her every moment?"

You turn to Zane again to see her smiling, even as her image begins to ripple and fade. The goblin that has taken her place cackles madly and runs off into the darkness.

"If you want to see the girl again," Kaviani's image booms, "bring the stones to the courtyard two streets to the east." Then suddenly, without warning, the image fades from the face of the heavens.

You weigh the two stones in your hand against the value of your friendship with Zane. There is no comparison.

In the empty courtyard, you find Kaviani, along with many other Murai grotesqueries. The pit fiend is holding Zane at its side with one massive hand around her middle. "The gems!" Kaviani demands.

You toss them across the courtyard like oversized dice. "Now let her go."

"But of course," chuckles the fiend as Zane runs to your side. "It will matter little, one way or the other, in a moment. Let the Reckoning begin!"

Turn to 80.

I've got to move quickly before the harpy can fly away with its prize, you realize.

You leap up onto a nearby rock and then launch yourself into the air, catching the creature in the back with both feet and driving her to the ground. Then, while the advan-

tage is still yours, you slip a knife from your gauntlet and drive it home. The harpy screams and thrashes wildly, all the while trying to crane her neck to bite you. It takes two more such blows from you before she finally lies still. Only then do you pry the stone from her grasp.

Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem" and turn to 168.



186

Quickly you slip into the vampire's cape and high collar. Then you don the creature's wide-brimmed hat and pull the brim down over your eyepatch. *If they don't notice my flushed pallor, you think, I might have a chance.* Finally you take a deep breath and approach the Murai army and the ritual altar.

No one challenges you. In fact, most of the creatures seem to give you a wide berth. Murai vampires seem to command a good deal of respect.

You walk straight toward the altar and the rift. The next Murai to approach the dimensional door is a huge lizardlike beast with sharp spines across its back and an unusual bipedal gait. One of the Murai refers to it as a tarrasque, the legendary ravisher of countrysides. The creature is small for its species—only about thirty feet tall.

You gasp as you think of something. The first human the tarrasque will encounter on the other side will be Zane!

You leap up onto the altar even before you're sure what you will do. "Stop!" you call, trying to sound menacing. "I protest. I should be the next one through the gate."

Much to your surprise, the tarrasque speaks in a booming voice. "We drew lots," it thunders. "I am next."

"But it isn't logical," you argue. "If you pass through, the humans will unite to defend against such an obvious threat. But if I go, I can move among them and turn many to our cause. It clearly serves our purposes best if I go next."

The tarrasque shrugs ponderously. "I suppose . . ." it booms with its deep voice. While it wrestles with the logic, you move quickly past it and step through the rift.

There is a brilliant flash of colors that sears your vision, driving you to your knees. Before your vision can clear, you feel Zane's arms around you. "Jadd! It's you! I—I was so worried," she whispers.

Just then Boggle screams a piping alarm. "Something coming!" he shouts, pointing to the rift.

First a monstrous horned head pokes through the rift, followed by taloned hands and sharp, spiked scales. "You tricked me, thief!" the tarrasque roars. "Now you die!"

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **32**. If it's less, turn to **196**.

187

As soon as your feet leave the ledge, you realize you've misjudged the distance and the harpy's speed. You make a desperate grab for the creature as you plummet past, but all you succeed in doing is grabbing a handful of feathers.

You curse yourself for your stupidity as you continue your fatal descent into the depths of the chasm. ✕



188

Stealing the king's crown is a fool's mission, you think, especially when your friend is in danger. "The gem can wait," you say aloud. "I've got to help Zane. The question

is, how do I get past all those hostile thieves?"

Just then a sudden screech catches your attention, and you lift your face skyward. There, outlined against the moon, is a dragon-winged figure, part man, part monster, a Murai agent called an abishai. It is scouring the city with its eagle's gaze, searching for the Triad. For you.

And that gives you an idea.

Turn to 150.



189

Think quickly, Jadd! you curse. You can't keep them waiting forever!

"Well, insect?" bellows Kaviani.

"Be patient," you tell the fiend. "The gems are hidden in my boot." You bend down slowly, keeping a constant eye on the two of them as you reach into your boot cuff. There are no gems there, of course, but it gives you a chance to remove the concealed throwing blades from your gauntlet while the other hand reaches to the ground and carefully scoops up a handful of pebbles. "You want your gems?" you ask. "Then work for them!" And you throw the pebbles

high overhead so that they clatter down on the rooftop of the nearest building.

"Okediji!" the towering beast shouts, pointing. Before your eyes, the Oriental takes the shape of a gargoyle and immediately takes to the air, its great leathery wings carrying it into the night sky. *One villain gone*, you think as Kaviani's attention is diverted. Now is the time to act. With a backhand motion, you let your blades fly, embedding two of them deep in the biceps muscle of the monster's extended arm. It immediately roars in pain—at least it's mortal, you are gratified to learn—and drops Zane Nazzari to the ground.

You rush forward, grab the stunned thief, and all but carry her from the alley, with the sound of Kaviani's shouts ringing in your ears. You feel an instant of intense heat on your back just as you turn into the street, and a split second later, a blinding bolt of arcane lightning lances from the alleyway, missing you by scant inches.

"What—what's happening?" Zane cries, slowly regaining her wits. You pull her along as you move quickly down the street, staying close to the shops to make it difficult for the gargoyle to spot you from the air. When a darkened doorway appears, you hide in the shadows and wait.

The flapping of oversized wings announces Okediji's nearness, and suddenly you hear another sound nearby. Kaviani is walking down the middle of the street, holding its arm and eying each of the markets and shops as it passes. The creature no longer flaunts its true appearance. Instead, it's camouflaged in yet another illusion, this time as a wizened old beggar, complete with tin cup. But there is no disguising the evil in those eyes. You stay perfectly still, holding your breath until the beast slowly passes by and disappears down the street. You hear the flapping of the gargoyle's wings fade into the distance.

"What—what *were* those things?" Zane asks.

"I'm as baffled as you," you reply. "Apparently they were after the stones your friends took from me."

"They're no friends of mine!" she spits angrily. "They abandoned me, didn't they? Ooo, what I'll do when I get my hands on them!"

"You'll have to wait in line, then," you tell her. "Those three are mine. Besides, I've got to get those stones back. I've got a hunch they're more important than I ever imagined."

"Then you'll be needing my help."

You look at her suspiciously. "Your help? What's the catch?"

"No catch. I'd just like to see them get paid back. Besides, you saved my life back there. I owe you." She looks cautiously up and down the street. "But for right now, I think we should get to somewhere safe. And I think I know just the place." She takes your hand and leads you farther into the heart of the Thieves' Quarter.

Turn to 82.



190

You pick up a pebble and hurl it into one of the pits farther down the row to distract the jailer, but he merely shrugs and ignores the sound. It takes two more pebbles before you can lure him to investigate. He stands on the lip of the cell and peers down into the darkness. That is when you fling one of your batons, striking him just behind the ear. The guard goes limp and topples straight into the pit before him.

You hurry to Vermin's pit and throw a rope to him. "Thank the gods," the thief sighs as you pull him up, but as soon as he sees your face, he recognizes you and lunges for your throat. A baton to the sternum changes his mind abruptly.

"The gem!" you say, lifting him up by the collar. "Where is it?"

"I—I hid it," he wheezes, "out there in the caverns, before I was caught."

"Then you'll just have to show us where it is," you snap, shoving him toward the entrance.

"Shhh!" Zane silences you. "Something's causing a commotion out there in the main cavern."

Turn to 33.

191

"I can't waste time with disguises," you reason. "I'll just have to depend on my thief's ability to avoid detection."

You keep a close watch on the Murai activity around the altar and, when the way seems clear, you creep from the dark woods and circle around to approach the altar from the rear.

You drop to your stomach when a massive dragon sails into the clearing on leathery wings, its scales almost brushing your back as it rises into the air. But the lizard doesn't seem to notice your presence in the grass, and you are able to keep in its shadow all the way to the altar. When you reach the other side of the altar, you peer around the side. The rift still hangs in midair over the altar, and the next member of the Murai army appears ready to pass through. It is a great lizardlike beast from legend called a tarrasque, a feared ravisher of entire countrysides. It looks quite a bit like a dragon, except that it stands partially upright and its back is covered with razor-sharp spines.

You gasp when you realize that the first person it comes across on the other side will be Zane!

Realizing you dare not delay any longer, you leap up onto the altar and make a mad dash for the rift. Behind you, you hear the Murai army howl in rage.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to 81. If it's less than 13, turn to 159.

192

The pit fiend's eyes light up once more, but you don't wait around for the fireworks this time. You move quickly, and the batons in your hands are a blur of motion as you pummel Kaviani without mercy, landing so many blows that even a monster such as it is stunned. But you know you can't keep this up forever. What then?

The sound of rushing feet reaches your ears. You turn to

see a contingent of Royal Guards hurrying down the corridor toward you. *Oh, great*, you sigh. *Caught between a rock and a hard place*. You can't hide your shock when the soldiers rush past you to confront Kaviani. He curses their spear thrusts and attacks with arcane lightning, but more soldiers keep pouring into the dungeon to help even the odds.

Turn to 4.



193

You swim down and glide along the rocky river bottom, peering through the gloomy depths for proof of your hunch. You think you see a branch jutting from the rocks just ahead, but when you get up close, you realize it is not a branch after all. It is Vermin's hand, white and lifeless. What the alligator didn't eat of him has been stuffed under a rock ledge for later. But what about the gem?

Suddenly you spot it in the mud at the bottom, gleaming like a beacon. All at once its light is eclipsed by a monstrous shadow slicing through the water. The alligator has returned, and it's angry.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to 3. If it's less, turn to 129.

194

Carefully you test the walls of the pit, but they are smooth and free of handholds. "There must be *some* other way out," Zane says.

"Maybe there is," you say, unwinding the long sash from around your middle. It is wound around and around, some thirty feet of it, for just such an emergency. You tie a loop in one end, then weight it down with a few pebbles. "Guard!" you yell. "Come quickly!"

When the rodentlike head peers into the pit, you fling the sash. The improvised lariat flies true and loops around the sentry's neck. He immediately pulls back, struggling, providing just the anchor you need to clamber quickly up the line. The guard is just drawing his dagger when you reach him. The struggle is short as you force his own dagger back into his stomach.

"I'll have you out in just a minute," you call down into the pit to the others. Then you feel the cold steel of a dagger sink into your back.

"I underestimated you," Captain Vix says as you sag beside the edge of the pit. "I will never make the mistake of doing so again."

And as you stare in astonishment at his twitching snout whiskers, your gaze fades into blackness. ✕

195

"It's said that the crown is kept in the far chamber," whispers Gibbon as you sneak into a short corridor, "just on the other side of the narrow tower." He points to the only other door on the level. With lockpick in hand, he stalks forward, but his eyes widen when the unlocked door simply swings open. "It must be a trap!" he gasps, flattening against the wall.

"Perhaps," you say, judging the situation quickly. "But the guards could have taken us by now." Curiosity spurs you through the doorway, and the Leaper reluctantly follows.

There is no squad of soldiers inside waiting to ambush you. Only one man is there, reclining on the dais with the jeweled crown on his lap. "Is this what you're looking for?" Hadrian Turk asks with a smirk. "I've been expecting you, Jadd Hachen. Do you think I'm stupid enough not to have spies in the Thieves' Guild?" He unsheathes two knives and stands. "We have unfinished business, Hachen."

Gibbon reaches for his own knife, but you stop him. "This is between Turk and me," you say, drawing your batons.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to 17. If it's less, turn to 112.

196

"Get back!" you cry to Zane and Boggle as you stand defiantly against the huge tarrasque, feeling completely defenseless armed with only your batons.

A great claw slashes through the air, and you barely manage to deflect it. Then the creature's massive jaws snap at you and force you back toward the chamber archway. You fail to see the tarrasque's muscular tail thrash out at you from your blind side, and you are slammed back out into the passageway. Subtract 2 hit points from your total.

"Run, Jadd!" Zane pleads. "You can't fight that thing!"

"Boggle, get her out of here!" you order. The spindly creature quickly grabs the struggling girl and dives into the nearest tunnel-worm hole. You stand alone as the tarrasque stalks through the arch and into the passageway.

You curse your defiance. "I'll not succumb to the Murai without a fight!" you swear, drawing out a handful of daggers for the final battle. "Come on, then. Let's finish this!"

The tarrasque roars and charges, but at that very moment you are grabbed from behind and jerked back into the darkness of a worm hole, leaving the Murai and the red gem behind. Check "lost" on your Character Stats Card beneath "red gem," then turn to 153.

197

You are led down into the dungeon and thrown into a small cell. The guard removes your weapons and gear, then leaves.

"Well, we're here," Zane sighs. "Now what?"

"Now we find Iron Jaw."

If you want to try to pick the lock and search for Iron Jaw, turn to 57. If you wait until the guard returns and question him, turn to 144.

198

You take the wight by surprise, landing a kick to the middle of its back before it even knows you're there. The blow jolts the creature straight into the shimmering vortex,

where it instantly disappears from sight. But you are not completely unaffected by your attack. Even through your boot sole, you could feel the deadly chill of the creature. Deduct 1 hit point from your total.

"Jadd! Look out behind you!"

Zane's warning brings you to your senses, just in time to see the other wight struggling to its feet. It is still lethargic from transdimensional travel. It attacks, but you easily dodge aside. You let the undead creature move past you, then drive a hard kick into its side and send it back through the rift as well.

"Hurry, Jadd!" Zane calls. "Get the gem before anything else comes through that rift."

You take a step toward the stone pedestal and reach out for the gem, but some sort of force pulls you away and draws you across the room, directly toward the rift. You try to fight it, but the vortex is too strong. You inch closer and closer to the doorway leading to the Murai dimension.

If you have a lightning rod, turn to **40**. If you don't, turn to **89**.



199

You launch yourself at the great beast, driving a vicious kick into its barrel-like torso, then attack its head with a double baton blow. The huge hulk doesn't so much as flinch. It simply swings one tree-trunk arm, and though you backflip away and thereby avoid a broken neck, it still knocks you a good six feet across the cavern. Deduct 2 hit points from your total.

Roll two dice and add the result to your cunning skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **164**. If it's less, turn to **60**.

You tumble through space, too far from the tower to grab one of the lower ledges, but you continue to clutch your line. Twisting in midair, you give the grappling hook a single spin and lob it at the next ledge as you plummet past.

The throw is a bit high, and the hook bounces off the wall instead, but the rope loops around a stone gargoyle and snags. As the line snaps taut, you continue to slide down its length, feeling the abrasive heat through your gauntlets. You clutch the rope even harder, till the blood runs freely from your hands, and finally you come to a halt . . . right at the end of the line. "Don't even think about it!" you mutter to yourself as you strain to climb back to the ledge.

Livid with rage, you look at the window above, but there is no sign of Gibbon now. You hurl your grapple again, this time hooking the ledge at a point farther from the window, and climb up quickly.

You are just pulling yourself to the uppermost ledge when a dark shape hurtles out of the night sky and enters the palace through the open window. Suddenly Gibbon cries out in terror, and you race along the ledge to peer inside.

The Leaper is cowering in the center of the room, using his pitiful broomstick to stave off the nightmare before him. It is a dragonlike creature called an abishai, standing erect, with great wings and a saurian head. It stalks Gibbon with bestial glee.

You know that the Leaper is a cheat and a brigand, and that also he just tried to kill you. Nevertheless, you still attack the creature, not to help him but yourself, for you know that as soon as the monster finishes with Gibbon, you will be next.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **46**. If it's less, turn to **98**.

201

You search all around the raft, but there's no sign of Zane anywhere. You didn't hear any splash. "But where could she be?" you ask aloud.



Then, without another thought, you dive over the side.

It's difficult to see beneath the peat-stained water. The blackness cuts your visibility to only a few feet. You swim down deeper, past the slow-moving shadows of monstrous underwater creatures. You're drawn by some sort of odd premonition, as if you can almost hear Zane calling to you through the water. . . .

That's when you see the bubble. It's anchored to the sediment of the riverbed, and it's large enough to hold two bodies. One of them, Zane, is scratching at the bubble but can't seem to break through. The other, looking drugged and sluggish, is Vermin. Your partner is trying to say something to you. You press your ear to the bubble to hear Zane scream, "Look out behind you!"

An amorphous shadow is coming toward you through the water, nearly eight feet in length, clinging to the bottom but able to reach out at you with six long, segmented legs. You can see its multiple eyes though the murk as the giant water spider attacks, intent on acquiring another tasty morsel for its bubble-like den.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to 135. If it's less, turn to 12.

202

"Gibbon's no fool," you surmise. "He'd take that gem to a jeweler before he'd take it to a pawnshop. Quick, after him!"

The Leaper hurries through the Thieves' Quarter at a determined clip. You have to work hard just to keep up, but when he turns down a dark alley, you are not far behind. Halfway down the alley, he turns and confronts you. "For a Prince of Thieves, your movements are a bit obvious," he says.

"I want the stone you took from me, Gibbon."

"Now, see here, Hachen," the tall thief complains. "I stole that piece, fair and square."

"Thieves don't steal from other thieves."

He laughs. "A quaint notion, friend, but haven't you heard? There is no honor among thieves anymore. Espe-

cially in Vasivada. It's every man for himself." He nods at Zane. "Or woman, as the case may be. Now, if you think you'd like to try to steal it back . . ."

More thieves step out of hiding to back up the Leaper, and your senses warn that the alleyway behind you is blocked as well.

" . . . you are quite welcome to try," he concludes.

If you decide to surrender, turn to **128**. If you want to try to escape, go to **100**.



203

You kneel down and scour the floor, searching for a footprint in the siltlike fungus, a flap of torn clothing, anything that might indicate which way Vermin went, if he came this way at all. But there is nothing to be found.

"Wait a minute," you say aloud. "If Vermin left a mark behind, it wouldn't be inadvertent. He's too experienced a thief. It would be on purpose."

"But who would leave a mark behind intentionally?"

"Someone who wants to find his way back out of this maze." You scour the walls of the tunnel. Reaching up, you wipe the glowing lichen aside and there, chipped into the stone with a knife blade, is an arrow pointing toward the Witching Woods.

Turn to **63**.

204

You put one hand on Weejax's shoulder. "Easy, friend," you say. "They have us outnumbered. Perhaps it's best we go quietly. We can always think of something lat—"

"No!" barks the man-rat. He immediately launches himself at the leader of the rat-men and bowls him over, then

darts into the passage with one of his enemies in hot pursuit.

"Stupid man-scum," grumbles the rat as he gets to his feet. He fixes both of you with a glare. "I am Captain Vix," he snarls. "Try anything like that, and I'll have your skins for a shirt. Now, march!"

You begin to move down the passage at sword point just as Weejax's pursuer returns. "Well?" asks Vix.

"He got away," the soldier rat replies. He receives a hard cuffing for his trouble. Silently he falls in behind you, doubtless worried about receiving worse once the squad reaches home.

The rat fortress is a honeycomb of natural tunnels set into a huge cavern's towering escarpment. The two of you are led directly to a guarded pit and pushed over the edge. The thirty-foot fall stuns both of you, but luckily you escape serious injury. Subtract 2 hit points from your total.

"Hey," rasps someone near the wall of the pit. "Have you got anything to eat?"

The voice is familiar. You whirl about.

It's Vermin!

Turn to 22.

205

You manage to evade the sentries surrounding the estate, then slip over the high iron fences and approach the palace itself. There is still no sign of Gibbon. *Maybe the guards caught him*, you think hopefully.

The palace is an imposing structure, especially the high tower reaching into the night sky. "The king won't be wearing his crown at night," you think out loud, "so a jeweled treasure such as that would probably be kept in the most inaccessible place." And that draws your eyes to the tower once again. There are narrow ledges every three floors, complete with stone gargoyles jutting from the tower walls. *As good a place as any to start*, you think, taking the grappling hook and line from your belt.

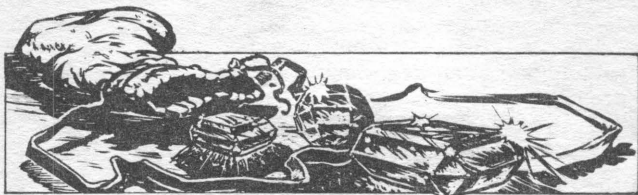
A single throw catches the first ledge, and you work your way up the tower wall quickly. Your second and third throws have like results, and a fourth hooks precariously

on the lip of the last ledge, just beneath an open window.

You are halfway there when Gibbon leans out the window, smiling, holding a broomstick. "Happy landings!" he calls as he begins poking at the grappling hook's tenuous hold on the ledge. You try to speed your climb, but . . .

Gibbon's third attempt pokes the hook loose, and you plummet toward the ground below.

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **200**. If it's less, go to **78**.



206

You launch your attack with a throwing dagger clutched in each hand, but the hobgoblin leader meets you head-on with a hard thrust of its metal shield. The blow sends you reeling into Zane's arms. Subtract 2 hit points from your total.

"We can't win against such beasts," she says, shaking you to your senses. "We've got to get out of here!" But before you can even nod in agreement, the hobgoblins are after you, chasing you both out of the settlement and across the open cavern.

"Jadd, I—" Zane starts to say, but at that moment she seems to disappear into thin air. You see only an open shaft in the chamber floor, where she must have fallen. You start to call out to her, but the hobgoblins are almost within reach. So, without another avenue of escape, you jump in after her.

The inclining shaft is crystalline like the one that you followed to the Down-Below, but this time the ride isn't nearly as long. It empties into another cavern much lower than the last one and drops you nearly twelve feet to the floor.

You are stunned by the fall, but Zane appears to have landed more gently than you. "Jadd, he's down here!" she says excitedly. "I saw him!"

"Saw who?"

"Vermin! After I fell, I saw him rush by, carrying the red gem! C'mon, let's get after him!" She runs for the arch leading out of the cavern and disappears from sight. Almost immediately you hear her scream.

"Zane!" you call, stumbling after her, breaking into a run. But as you duck through the arch, you realize that there is no ground before you, just a yawning ravine, and your momentum is too great to stop! It carries you right over the edge.

"Jadd!" Zane calls. Out of the corner of your eye, you see her clinging to a ledge just below you. Quickly she stretches out her hand . . . but can you reach it?

Roll two dice and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **149**. If it's less than 13, turn to **25**.



207

Kaviani's attack is quick and ferocious. The pit fiend forsakes its magical lightning bolts for the primal satisfaction of pounding you into the courtyard like a carpenter's nail. But, unlike those sorcerous attacks, you have fought physical battles against large opponents before, and you use your superior speed and agility to stay one step ahead of Kaviani and stymie the monster's attacks. You know, however, that you cannot keep such evasions up forever.

You bunch your muscles like coiled springs and wait patiently for your opening. The next time Kaviani takes a step and is slightly off balance in midstride, you launch yourself at the creature and swing the batons with all the

power you can muster. The blow staggers the monster, throwing it off its feet . . . and onto the jagged remainder of the scepter, still jutting up from the cobblestones! Impaled, the fearsome Kaviani, king of the Murai, cries out in anguish and dies.

Zane rushes to your side and hugs you. "I was so worried!" she manages to say between sobs.

"But we won, Zane. And it's all over now."

"Yes, indeed," says a soft, gentle voice from above you. You look up to see a lionlike lammasu hovering on eagle's wings, and beside that a ki-rin and a feathery couatl, and every other lawful creature you could imagine. They materialize overhead, filling the night sky and blotting out the stars. "We were not ready for the invasion in time," the lammasu goes on, smiling. "If it were not for you, Jadd Hachen, this world would have suffered grievously. For that, we are grateful." It drops a heavy leather sack into your hand, then all the creatures rise back into the darkened sky and vanish from sight. You open the pouch, and you are momentarily blinded at the sight of gleaming gold coins!

"We're rich!" exclaims Zane. "Do you know what we can do with these? We can live like kings, with fine wines and silks and . . ." She sees your sour expression and smiles sheepishly. "Well, anyway, we can feed quite a few families with this, eh, Prince?"

"I like the way you think, Zane Nazzari," you say, smiling. You put one arm around her shoulders and walk off into the dark streets of Vasivada. ✕

208

"We have business, you and I," you growl to Hadrian Turk, "but it will have to wait. I'm needed elsewhere tonight." Abruptly you grab the girl and yank her to her feet. "I hope you can run," you say quickly, "because I'd hate to have to drag you."

"I'll keep up," Zane replies groggily as the two of you head down the street away from the soldiers. Strangely, Hadrian Turk makes no move to follow. Why is that, you wonder, unless . . . You slow your pace and look to the end of

the street, knowing there will be soldiers there even before they step into view.

You are trapped.

Hadrian Turk smiles broadly as he strolls toward you. "Now, Jadd Hachen," he gloats, drawing his sword, "about that business?"

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **145**. If it's less, go to **97**.

209

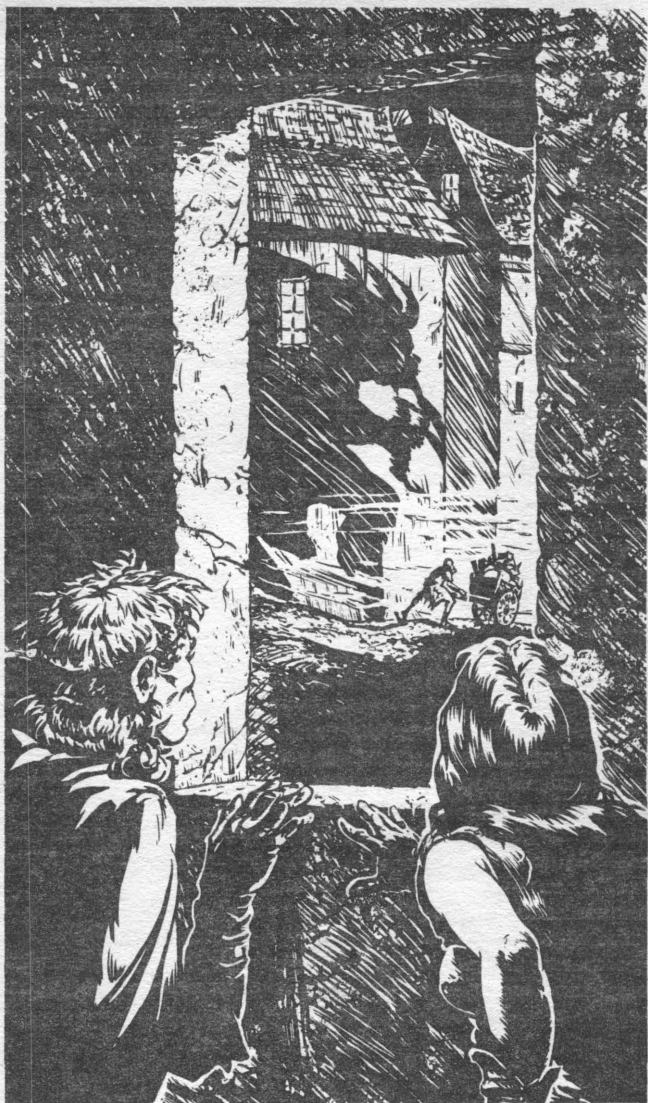
Suddenly you make a break for the balcony where you entered the palace and vault over the railing in one fluid motion . . . only to land in a sea of uniforms and gleaming armor. They were waiting for you here, too—Turk's trap is complete. You sink beneath a wave of violence as blow after blow pummels you deeper into unconsciousness and beyond. ✕

210

You charge the pit fiend in a serpentine pattern, dodging lightning bolts, feeling their heat blister your skin. But instead of attacking Kaviani directly as the monster expects, you somersault past the creature and pluck the gemstone from the ground.

"You'll never get away!" roars Kaviani, shaking an upraised fist in anger. Zane comes wobbling out of the witch's shop just then, and you grab your dazed partner and all but carry her down the street as sorcerous lightning crackles around you and nips at your heels. Turning a corner, you dive through a narrow cellar window for cover. And you wait.

Kaviani's tantrum ends after several seconds, and there is silence. You remain still, not daring to give yourself away. Then someone comes down the street and passes the window. It is an old beggar pushing a rag cart, or at least he appears to be. But you are not fooled. On the wall behind the beggar, the moonlight casts a shadow that is immensely different, neither stooped nor feeble, but brutish and unnaturally powerful.



You don't even breathe until the figure is completely out of sight.

"Did we get the stone?" Zane asks. You hold it up for her appraisal.

Check "found" on your Character Stats Card beneath "blue gem" and turn to **64**.

211

"Just what are we hiding from?" you ask as Weejax hurries frantically around the ledge, searching for somewhere to hide.

"The enemy!" he snaps. "We are in enemy territory! We must hide, we must!" His ears perk. "It's too late. They're here!"

Zane crosses the ledge to stand at your side as a squad of figures no taller than you come through the cave and out onto the ledge. They are clad in a hodgepodge of rusted armor and pilfered equipment, but there is no doubt that they are dressed for war. Their faces reveal them to be rat-creatures, just like Weejax. "Aren't these your people?" you ask Weejax.

"How dare you!" Weejax snaps, offended. "I am a man-rat. These curs are rat-men. There's a huge difference." He draws a dirk from his cloak. "Come on, then, ratspoor. Let's get on with this!"

The leader of the six rat-men sneers at the challenge. "You are a fool, spy. Surrender now or die." They bear their swords menacingly.

If you choose to surrender, turn to **204**. If you elect to fight, turn to **77**.





212

"You will die for what you have done this night!" the pit fiend growls, spewing bolts of electrical energy from its gaze.

You raise the scepter in defense and the lightning splits the shaft of it, throwing you backward and spilling the Triad stones across the courtyard.

The pit fiend stalks after you, death in its gaze, but something stays Kaviani's hand, stops the creature cold in its tracks.

You look behind you to see an entire army materializing over the city, the extent of its size hidden by the darkness but large enough to blot out all the stars in the heavens. Its soldiers are all of the fantastic creatures from lore and legend—ki-rin and dragon horses, lammasus and hippogriffs and manticores, and a myriad other lawful beasts, all gathered to face the Murai horde, only to find but one of them left to fight.

The fiend backs away, and as it does, it kicks one of the Triad stones lying at its feet. Kaviani scoops up the wish-stone and mutters a low incantation over it, opening a slim rift in the fabric of time and space. "I will be back!" it growls, aiming its words directly at you. "And when I return, you will pay. Your whole world will pay!" Then the creature steps through the rift, gem in hand, and the portal closes behind it.

With the Murai threat ended, at least for the foreseeable future, the lawful army overhead vanishes as well. Almost instantly the courtyard is silent and empty, save for the two of you. "It's over at last!" Zane sighs as she helps you to

your feet, letting you lean on her for support.

“For now, at least,” you tell her. “But Kaviani will be back someday. I can feel it.” And the thought sends a chill up your spine. ✕

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