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Two dice, a pencil and an eraser are all you need for this adventure. YOU decide which routes to follow, which dangers to risk and which monsters to fight.

Cover illustration by Terry Oakes



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CAN.	\$4.95
N.Z.	\$7.95
(incl. GST)	

ISBN 0-14-032238-8



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STEVE JACKSON
AND IAN LIVINGSTONE

Beneath Nightmare Castle

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ISBN 0 14
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Steve JACKSON AND
Ian LIVINGSTONE

PRESENT

BENEATH NIGHTMARE CASTLE



BENEATH NIGHTMARE CASTLE

You are a travel-weary hero, returning to the town of Neuburg in Khul to visit your old friend Baron Tholdur, when a moment of carelessness lands you in captivity. Will you escape? And even if you do, what will you find in Neuburg? For things have changed there; all is not as it seems, and beneath the Keep lie hideous horrors, which you must face if you are to free the town from the ghastly hand of grim sorcery, and rid it once and for all from the resurrected terror of the past.

Two dice, a pencil and an eraser are all you need to embark on this thrilling adventure, which is complete with its elaborate combat system and a score-sheet to record your gains and losses.

Many dangers lie ahead and your success is by no means certain. YOU decide which routes to follow, which dangers to risk and which monsters to fight!



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**Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
present:**

BENEATH NIGHTMARE CASTLE

by Peter Darvill-Evans



Illustrated by Dave Carson

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Published by the Penguin Group

27 Wrights Lane, London W8 57Z, England

Viking Penguin Inc., 40 West 23rd Street, New York, New York 10010, USA

Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia

Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 2801 John Street, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 1B6

Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, 182-190 Wairau Road, Auckland 10, New Zealand

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

First published 1987

5 7 9 10 8 6

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Text copyright © Peter Darvill-Evans, 1987

Illustrations copyright © Dave Carson, 1987

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Printed and bound in Great Britain by

Cox & Wyman Ltd, Reading

Set in Palatino by

Rowland Phototypesetting Ltd

Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

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YOUR CHARACTER

You are a warrior, a skilled and hardy adventurer. Your last escapade was less than successful, and you face your next adventure with little money and no food. Your abilities, however, are as noteworthy as ever; you will use dice to determine your exact attributes, and on pages 18–19 there is an *Adventure Sheet* on which you will record your scores and the incidents of your adventure. Use a pencil, or make photocopies of the *Adventure Sheet*, as you will almost certainly need to make more than one attempt to solve the mystery **Beneath Nightmare Castle**.

Skill, Stamina, Luck and Willpower

Roll one die. Add 6 to the score and enter the total in the **SKILL** box on the *Adventure Sheet*.

Roll two dice. Add 12 to the score and enter the total in the **STAMINA** box.

Roll one die. Add 6 to the score and enter the total in the **LUCK** box.

Roll one die. Add 6 to the score and enter the total in the **WILLPOWER** box.

These are your *Initial* scores and you must keep a permanent record of them. All your scores may change during your adventure, but they will exceed your *Initial* amounts only on very rare occasions. You must keep a record of all changes to your scores – so write small or use a rubber.

Your **SKILL** score reflects your expertise in combat, your ability with weapons and your dexterity. Your **STAMINA** is your health, fitness and ability to survive wounds and physical hardship. Your **LUCK** score shows how lucky you are. **WILLPOWER** is a measure of your mental stability and determination; the higher it is, the more you can cope with pain, despair and unpleasant surprises.

COMBAT

During the course of your adventure you will meet other people and creatures. Some of them will attack you; others you will decide to fight. The procedure for resolving battles is described below.

SKILL and **STAMINA** scores are given in the text for each opponent that you meet. Write these scores in the first vacant Monster Encounter Box on the *Adventure Sheet*. Record also any special abilities or instructions that are unique to this particular opponent. The sequence is then:

1. Roll two dice for your opponent. Add the total to his **SKILL** score. This is his Attack Strength.
2. Roll two dice and add the total to your current **SKILL** score. This is your Attack Strength.
3. If your Attack Strength is the higher, you have wounded your opponent. Go to step 4. If your opponent's Attack Strength is higher, he has wounded you. Go to step 5. If the Attack Strength totals are the same, you have avoided each other's blows – start a new Attack Round from step 1.
4. Subtract 2 points from your opponent's **STAMINA**. You may be able to deduct additional points if you use your **LUCK** (see below) or if you have a special weapon. Go to step 6.
5. Subtract 2 points from your **STAMINA**. You may



use your LUCK to reduce this loss (see below).

6. Make sure you have recorded on the *Adventure Sheet* all adjustments to STAMINA and LUCK scores.
7. Begin the next Attack Round, starting again at step 1. This sequence continues until either you or your opponent has a STAMINA score of zero. If your opponent's STAMINA score reaches zero, you have killed him and can continue with your adventure. If your STAMINA score reaches zero, you are dead; you must start the adventure again from the beginning, having rolled dice to create a new character.

You may be given the opportunity to *Escape* from some opponents. If you decide to do so, the battle ends – but your opponent automatically wounds you once as you flee. You must deduct 2 STAMINA points. You can use your LUCK on this wound as on any other (see below).

Often you will have to fight more than one opponent at the same time. Sometimes you will treat them as a single opponent; sometimes you will be able to fight them one at a time; and sometimes all of them will be able to attack you while you defend yourself and attack only one of them. Specific instructions will be given whenever you meet more than one opponent.



Using Luck in Combat

You can use your LUCK in combat to inflict a particularly serious wound, or to minimize a wound that has been inflicted on you.

Whenever you wound an opponent, you may *Test your Luck*. Roll two dice; if the total score is equal to or less than your LUCK score, you have been Lucky. If the total is higher than your LUCK score, you are Unlucky. Whatever the result, you must deduct 1 point from your current LUCK score. If you are Lucky, you have inflicted a severe wound: deduct an *extra* 2 points from your opponent's STAMINA. If you are Unlucky, you have merely grazed him, and you deduct 1 *less* point of STAMINA than normal.

If you have been wounded, you can *Test your Luck* in exactly the same way. Remember to deduct 1 point from your LUCK whatever the result. If you are Lucky, the wound was only a glancing blow and you can deduct 1 *less* point of STAMINA than usual. If you are Unlucky, the wound is more serious: deduct 1 *extra* STAMINA point.



HINTS ON PLAY

Skill

Your **SKILL** will not change much during your adventure, and you should change it only if given specific instructions in the text. As **SKILL** is a measure of combat prowess, it can be reduced by losing your weapon or by the effects of poison, for instance; acquiring a magical weapon could increase your **SKILL** – but remember that you can use only one weapon at a time!

Stamina

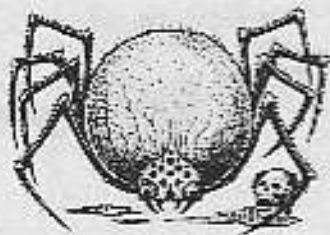
Your **STAMINA** will change frequently during your adventure as you suffer wounds and then recover. At various times you will be given opportunities to eat meals and to buy provisions. Eating a meal normally restores up to 4 points of **STAMINA**; you may eat only one meal at a time, even though you may have more in your backpack. Unless specifically stated, your **STAMINA** may never exceed its *Initial* score.



Luck

There will be times when the success or failure of your exploits will depend entirely on your **LUCK**. You will be instructed to *Test your Luck*, the procedure for which is as follows. Roll two dice. If the total score is equal to or less than your **LUCK** score, you are Lucky. If the total is higher than your **LUCK** score, you are Unlucky. Whatever the outcome, you must deduct 1 point from your **LUCK** score. As you will see, the more you use your **LUCK**, the less likely you are to be Lucky. There will be occasions when you are able to recover some points of **LUCK**, but unless specifically stated your score cannot exceed its *Initial* value.





Willpower

WILLPOWER works in exactly the same way as LUCK, and the procedures and comments described above for LUCK apply equally to WILLPOWER. As with LUCK, you must remember to deduct a point from your WILLPOWER score after each time that you *Test your Willpower*. There is, however, one extra pitfall: at the start of your adventure you are already tired, and you are about to meet a succession of horrible and unnatural creatures. If your WILLPOWER drops below 6 points, and you then *Test your Willpower* unsuccessfully, you will lose your grip on sanity, and your adventure will be over.



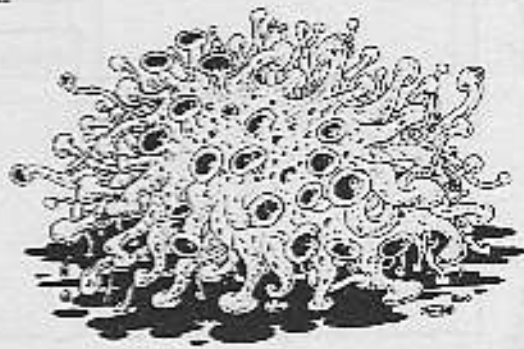
Equipment

You trudge down from the hills with only your armour, your sword and your backpack. You have no food and very little money.

Getting Started

Neuburg is a dangerous place, and you are very unlikely to succeed in your mission at the first attempt. It is recommended that you make notes and draw a map as you explore. There is a way to succeed that involves little risk of death or madness, even if you start with low *Initial* scores. There are many more routes that lead to failure and unpleasant fates.

Start with the 'Background' section; then go on to the section headed with the number 1. After that go to whichever numbered section you are instructed to. Do not read sections you have not been told to: it amounts to cheating and will lessen your enjoyment.



ADVENTURE SHEET

MONSTER ENCOUNTER BOXES

SKILL

Initial

Skill =

STAMINA

Initial

Stamina =

LUCK

Initial

Luck =

Skill =

Stamina =

Skill =

Stamina =

Skill =

Stamina =

EQUIPMENT
GOLD PIECES
POTIONS

Skill =

Stamina =

Skill =

Stamina =

Skill =

Stamina =

WILLPOWER

Initial

Willpower =

Skill =

Stamina =

Skill =

Stamina =

Skill =

Stamina =

PROVISION

Skill =

Stamina =

Skill =

Stamina =

Skill =

Stamina =

BACKGROUND

Captured! Netted, strung up and helpless! You curse yourself for an inattentive fool.

So much for the peace and quiet of civilization! It was daydreaming about the comforts of home that got you into this mess. But even the hardest adventurer can tire of life in the wilderness and begin to yearn for a soft bed, and it was difficult to think of anything else as you trudged to the summit of the last of the foothills and glimpsed the town of Neuburg basking in the afternoon sun.

You know Neuburg; you have been here once before. It is not a large settlement, but you remember it as peaceful and prosperous. The black battlements of the Keep of Neuburg seem to loom threateningly over the little town; but Baron Tholdur, the Margrave of Neuburg Keep, is an old friend of yours. He is more than a friend, in fact – he is a comrade-in-arms. The two of you fought side by side at the Battle of Helm Hill, a renowned victory which has,



so far, prevented any further incursions by the Southerners of the steppes. You had been looking forward to seeing the old warrior again; and instead you have let yourself be caught by a band of those very same southern barbarians.

Nearing the end of a hard trek down from the mountains, with the roof-tops of Neuburg in sight and your head filled with thoughts of a hearty meal, you failed to notice the warning signs. The bushes at the side of the trail rustled – and not quite at the same time as the wind gusted across the hills. Bird-song broke out as you approached a solitary tree, and you should have noticed that it was not entirely like any bird-song you had heard before. At any other time you would have stopped and looked around before stepping under that overhanging branch – it was such an obvious place for a trap.

And then the ground gave way beneath your feet. Voices shouted in an unfamiliar tongue. You struggled, but could hardly move. And here you are. It's dark: you're in a pit. The ropes about you are pulled tighter. You move upwards, out into the light. You are in a net, hanging from a branch, and you are surrounded by silent swordsmen swathed in flowing robes. As you spin slowly, their glittering eyes and gleaming blades seem to circle you. You glimpse the lowering shape of Neuburg Keep, and then something very heavy hits the back of your head. Pain . . . flashing lights – you lose all consciousness . . .

NOW TURN OVER

1

You wake. A particularly insistent Dwarf blacksmith seems to be using your head as an anvil. Your hands and feet are tightly bound, and a blindfold covers your eyes. You cannot move, you cannot see, and you can hear only distant, indistinct sounds.

Time passes. The pain in your head subsides to a dull throb. Nothing else happens. Then you hear a voice, an urgent whisper: 'My friend! Hush! Say nothing! I have a sharp knife, but I dare not stay long. I cannot enter through this small space; you must pull yourself a little to your right and I will sever your bonds. Hurry!'

Do you trust this unknown voice and shuffle nearer in the hope that your ropes will be cut? If so, turn to 331. If you reject this offer of help, turn to 130.

2

Neuburg Keep's outermost fortification is a high battlemented wall that surrounds the summit of Castle Hill. The main gate is between two stout square towers. The drawbridge over the dry moat is down, and as you cross it one of the huge gates grinds open. Will you stride in confidently (turn to 324), or will you draw your sword and creep cautiously over the threshold (turn to 193)?



3

If you want to eat a meal (and recover some STAMINA) you can do so now. You can also choose to offer food to the Dwarf. He will certainly accept if you do.

If you decide that you cannot afford to waste your provisions by handing them out to other people, the Dwarf will understand your point of view and, if you eat, he will watch glumly until you finish your meal. Deduct any food you have consumed from your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to 396.

If you give food to the Dwarf you must deduct one portion of provisions for the food he eats, plus another one if you eat too. If you have only one portion in your pack, you can share it with the Dwarf – but you will regain only 2 points of STAMINA. Turn to 334.

4

You step out of empty air into a place that you know at once is alien and wrong. The magic portal has transported you across unguessable gulfs, and you are in a place that has not a single element of familiarity. It is night, but the breeze carries the perfume of unknown flowers; the shapes of the trees are all wrong. The moon is too big, too yellow. It seems to have a sardonically winking face . . .

If you can successfully *Test your Willpower*, you will remain sane; but you will never return to Khul.

5

As you follow the winding path downhill to rejoin New Wall Street, you find your way blocked by one of the robed southern warriors. On a leash he has a strange animal: it looks something like a low-bellied tracking dog, but it has a white, hairless, distended body, sharp talons on all four paws, and a face that looks distressingly human – except for the elongated nose that terminates in a snuffling, trumpet-shaped orifice. With a guttural cry, the swordsman draws his weapon and releases the creature, which howls and races towards you. You will have to fight it and, if you win, you will then have to fight the swordsman.

	SKILL	STAMINA
SNUFF HOUND	5	4
SOUTHERN SWORDSMAN	6	5

If you defeat them both, you continue into the centre of town. Turn to 108.

6

The door opens easily to reveal a luxurious chamber; and the voices from within it cease immediately. You step through the doorway, scanning the tapestries, carpets and upholstered couches that fill the room. You see, first, a foul and bloated creature sitting on the floor like a mound of damp rags. Its tiny eyes, almost lost in folds of flesh, stare back at you. It looks peculiarly obscene in these pleasant surroundings. Then you notice that at one end of



the room two serving-maidens are gazing at you in open-mouthed astonishment. And you see that the room has one other exit: a door alongside the one through which you have just entered. Will you move towards the creature to attack it (turn to 76), or move towards the women to question them (turn to 38)?

7

A flight of stone steps leads downwards just inside the doorway. The first few steps are illuminated by the red glow from the passage, and far below you can make out the bottom of the stairway, dimly lit by a blue radiance spilling through a doorway. Most of the stairway is in complete darkness, and you descend carefully. Halfway down, at the darkest point, you halt in mid-stride: a voice is addressing you. 'Halt, stranger! State the name of my master or do not dare to approach me!' You cannot detect the source of the voice. If you decide to say nothing and continue to tiptoe down the steps, turn to 379. If you reply, write down the name you choose to call out and turn to 77.

8

You are overcome with nausea as you survey the bodies of the awful creatures. No wonder the townspeople stay indoors at night! At least you now have some idea of the savage and unnatural nature of the evil afflicting Neuburg.

You may take a memento of your victory, if you want to. If you can overcome your revulsion, you

may slice a suckered tentacle from one of the beasts' mouths, and put it in your backpack. Don't forget to record it on your *Adventure Sheet* if you decide to do this.

As you are wiping the blood off your sword, you hear more of the creatures in the distance. You don't want to meet any more Blood-Lurchers tonight, so you return to the inn as quickly as possible. Turn to 245.

9

You cannot tell how far below the surface you are, but the total darkness and silence begin to oppress you. You feel as though you are miles under the ground. The passage seems interminable, but eventually you reach a junction: a stairway leads upwards, and the passage continues its winding course on the same level. You are relieved to be able to climb, and you take the stairs. They end at last at a small wooden door. You open it and emerge into a wide corridor, illuminated by widely spaced cresets. To your right, the corridor is darker; to your left it is well lit and has a number of doors leading from it. You go left. Turn to 40.



10

As you creep along the narrow ledge you watch the glowing blob rising through the liquid. It fills the cavern with weirdly rippling red light. It reaches the surface, assumes humanoid shape, and then erupts into a dripping, shining form, hovering above the surface of the pool. The Vitriol Essence bares his vulpine fangs, flexes his vast, claw-tipped hands, and hisses: 'Who dares disturb my centuries of slumber?' Without waiting for a reply, he attacks. You must deduct 2 points of SKILL because of your precarious position.

VITRIOL ESSENCE SKILL 8 STAMINA 6

If he manages to wound you, turn to 351. When you have reduced him to 2 points of STAMINA, turn to 112.

11

You continue to skirt the overgrown garden. Halfway along this side, there are steps leading up to a small door set into the high wall that surrounds the garden. The steps are covered with a tangle of thorny branches, and the door is barred and secured with an enormous rusty padlock. You decide to continue to the corner of the garden. There is no tower at this corner; you can see that the path continues to follow the wall alongside the garden at least as far as the next corner, where there is a tower. Halfway between you and this next tower, a wide



stairway ascends from the garden. You can either walk as far as the staircase, and use it to leave the garden (turn to 212); or you can continue past the staircase and take a look at the tower (turn to 44).

12

You slice through the silvery filaments with ease – but the tattered strands writhe towards one another and knit together almost as fast as you can cut them. The monstrous spider is beginning to take an interest in your attempted destruction of her web, and starts to pick her way towards you. You attack the web with increasing frenzy, but you cannot cut it fast enough. You glance at Senyakhaz. She has discarded the black box; the surface of the mirror is a swirl of colours. She turns to you and snaps her fingers – and the illusory cobweb and spider disappear! She waves and steps through the mirror. As you watch her escape you, the frame of the mirror begins to glow and lose its shape. If you try to follow her through the mirror, turn to 363. If you decide to leave the room, turn to 169.

13

You assume that the brass tube must be a weapon, although it is nothing but a hollow cylinder. Engraved near one end is a mysterious symbol. You decide to hold the tube at arm's length and try to make it do something. Do you hold it by the end with the engraved symbol (turn to 234) or the other end (turn to 176)?



14

The old Goblin—for by now you are fairly sure that's what he is—takes your money, inspects it by the light of the candle, bites each coin in turn, and then throws the coins over his shoulder to add to the heaps of debris. He hands you the broken fork, and you can see that it is the head of a weapon—a three-pronged spear of blue metal, with vicious barbs and intricate inscriptions overlaid with copious amounts of rust.

'Even cleaned up it won't be of much use without its shaft,' the Goblin tells you. 'But if you can find its handle it should make a prodigiously powerful weapon against those southern scum and their horrible pets. I've kept that spear-head since before most of the buildings in this town were built. I was told it was broken in the battle fought on Castle Hill itself, before there even was a Neuburg or a Keep. The Southerners were defeated and fled. The legends say that their unnatural allies were swallowed up by the ground on which they stood, and that the spear-shaft went with them. They were mortally afraid of that spear, the stories say.'

You put the spear-head in your backpack and make your way to the market-square, still wondering whether you have wasted your money. Turn to 237.

15

You cannot scramble fast enough; your kicks are badly placed and fail to deter whatever foul creature is engulfing your legs. Oozing steadily along the

tunnel, the slimy thing overtakes you. By the time it has surrounded your chest, your feet are deep within its body and are already disintegrating as powerful digestive acids do their work. There can be no escape.

16

At the foot of the staircase is an open doorway through which you can see into a small chamber. The blue light that fills the room emanates from within an open-topped stone sarcophagus that lies in the middle of the floor. As you approach you see that there is a skeleton in the open tomb; across its ribs rests a length of blue metal, intricately wrought with bulbous protuberances and strange engravings. It is from this that the pale light pulses. If you decide to snatch it from the coffin, turn to 52. If you think it would be prudent to dismember the skeleton first, turn to 337.

17

Fighting back your revulsion, you put your hands to your head and begin to batter and tug at the protoplasmic blob. You can feel its cold, sticky mouths attempting to anchor themselves in your skin, but you keep your hands moving and you discover that the monster has surprisingly little resilience. It soon drops to the ground, where you hack it into tiny pieces with your sword. When you look inside your backpack you find that the Kiss of Death Protoplasm has devoured two portions of your rations, but that everything else is unharmed. Turn to 139.

18

You are hoping that the intense light of the Talisman will cause the green globe to glow and heat up so rapidly that it inflicts serious damage on Xakhaz. Your first task is to lodge the globe somewhere in the nest of wriggling limbs. You pull it from your backpack and carefully toss it towards the writhing mountain. Even as it flies across the room, the globe seems to absorb light from the Talisman's dazzling ray, and becomes too bright to look at. Roll two dice. If the total is more than your current SKILL (excluding bonuses for special weapons), turn to 313. Otherwise, turn to 134.

19

If you now have less than 6 points of WILLPOWER, your powerlessness before the excruciating torture of the Vitriol Essence's cruel claws is the final blow to your fragile sanity. The horrors of Neuburg have overwhelmed you. You crouch at the side of the pool, writhing and whimpering, while the grinning Vitriol Essence finishes you off at his leisure.

If you still have 6 or more points of WILLPOWER, you abandon yourself to the pain only temporarily. But you are still helpless to defend yourself when the Vitriol Essence attacks again. Return to 230.





20

You stand transfixed as the dripping tentacles encircle your legs. You are pulled gently into the pool towards the beak-like lips of the submerging creature. You almost recover your senses when you feel slimy liquid filling your mouth – but by this time your fate is sealed.

21

You follow the path up the hill in a series of steep hairpin bends. The renewed silence is unnerving. Your ears strain to hear any sound. You tiptoe around the next corner – and meet a rampaging pack of gruesome animals. They are the most abnormal creatures you have ever seen. It is in some respects a blessing that it is dark and that you have so little time to notice their bulbous, hairless bodies, their prehensile paws with talons like daggers, their low, eyeless heads, and their gaping mouths filled with writhing tentacles. With renewed screaming, they are upon you before you can raise your sword. Your adventure is over. You have been shredded and sucked dry by Blood-Lurchers.

22

'I am older than I look, my young friend, although you may not think it possible,' Huw tells you. 'I helped to build this temple, and I know why it was built here and which evil forces it was intended to contain. Many legends tell of the clashes of armies, the slaughter and the sacrifice that took place when the ancestors of these townsfolk drove the southern

hordes out. The stories do not dwell on the unseen side of that conflict: the struggle between the priests of Oiden and Xakhaz, the accursed archmage of the despicable gods of Zagoula.

'Xakhaz was not destroyed, but his earthly form was sundered, and his spirit sealed deep beneath the earth. This temple was constructed over one of the entrances to those subterranean chambers; Neuburg Keep was built to guard the other. The seals beneath this building are still intact. But I began to worry when Baron Tholdur announced his intention to visit the infernal city of Zagoula. When he returned with a retinue of southern soldiers I was displeased; and when it became clear that leading the soldiers was a mysterious wizard whom none in Neuburg has yet seen, my fears were confirmed. Xakhaz is stirring. He may already have material form. I cannot guess what he will be like or what he will do after so many centuries in limbo!' Turn to 100.

23

As you step into the gloomy passage between the towers, you catch sight of a movement at the edge of your vision – but it is too late to react. You feel surprisingly little pain as a sharp blade sinks into your side.

24

You hear approaching voices in the kitchen. You close the door and drag the massive body of the dead Orc into the storeroom. You wait behind the

curtain, but hear nothing. After a while you emerge again. You can re-open the door to the kitchen and walk in (turn to 172); you can set off along the corridor (turn to 267); or you can look at the contents of the tray which the Gnome abandoned (turn to 384).

25

You strike a flint, light the wick of one of the many oil lanterns in the storeroom, and by the flickering light you cautiously descend the steep and narrow stairs. At the bottom, a passage, roughly hewn in the solid rock, leads away into darkness. It is cold and dank; water drips on to you as you creep forward. At irregular intervals shafts pierce the roof of the tunnel, providing a little illumination. The shafts are too long and sheer to climb, and you see metal grating across the distant ends. You are fairly sure that the passage is taking you beneath the castle's inner bailey, towards the Keep. The stairs are out of sight behind you and the tunnel disappears into darkness ahead of you. There is a wooden door blocking a side-tunnel to your right. The door is held shut by two massive wooden wedges that have been hammered between it and the surrounding rock. Do you want to try to remove the wedges and enter the side-tunnel? If so, turn to 388. If you would rather press on along the main passage, turn to 248.



26

You are perched on a very narrow ledge. You are badly wounded and writhing in agony. It is not surprising that you lose your footing and splash into the pool. It is acid. For a few seconds it feels as though you are in the heart of a furnace. Your body disintegrates as it sinks through the liquid.

27

The dazzling radiance from the Talisman floods over the warrior, but it seems to have no effect on him. Far from recoiling in shock, he advances, swinging his broadsword. You leave the Talisman exposed – at least its light helps you to see – and prepare for combat. If you have the Trident of Skarlos, turn to 378. If not, turn to 241.

28

A few paces to the right of the door and the drawbridge a narrow ledge juts from the stonework of the Keep and continues until it forms an cave over a small open window. Trying not to look down into the ravine, you stretch across the gap and gain a toehold on the ledge. Clinging by your fingertips to rough edges of stone blocks, you inch along the ledge. Above the window you let yourself fall, catch



the ledge, and swing through the window. Easy! You are in a small, dusty room. To your right is a low door, which is securely closed with a stout bar across it. If you remove the bar and go through the door, turn to 262. Alternatively, there is a door in the wall opposite the window. If you go through it, turn to 102.



29

'My name is Cernic,' the young man stammers. 'I am a priest of Oiden from his temple in Neuburg. I came here secretly to explore, but I found southern soldiers everywhere, and worse in the depths. I could not risk the Talisman of Loth falling into the hands of Xakhaz, so I found a safe haven – this wretched dungeon – and have been praying for a warrior mightier than I to relieve me of the burden of carrying this responsibility. If you intend to destroy Xakhaz, this will be of help.'

He lifts the shining disc, on a leather thong, from about his neck and places it around yours. With some misgivings, you conceal it beneath your tunic. The young man is very nervous and plainly anxious to escape now that he has given away the Talisman. Will you let him go, and then follow him through the open door out of this dungeon hallway? If so, turn to 376. If you decide to restrain him and demand more information, turn to 150.

30

Overwhelmed by the horrors you have encountered since your arrival in Neuburg, you cannot retain your precarious grip on sanity. You are in a grim stone cellar, but your mind is elsewhere, listening to bird-song in a sunlit meadow. You are hardly aware of the arrival of a troop of guards; you scarcely notice your incarceration in a dungeon cell. There are plenty of terrible experiences still in store for you in the short time before your death – but you will not even notice them.

31

The battlemented walkway ends at a door which leads into the first floor of another square tower. You open the door cautiously, but there is no one in the tower. There are two other doors on this floor: you assume that the one opposite you will lead to a continuation of the battlements atop the inner defensive wall; the door on your left is more interesting, as it should lead towards the Keep. You peer down the steps and see that there is an exit from the ground floor of the tower; you calculate that it should give access to the outer bailey. You have to choose between the first-floor door which may take you to the Keep (turn to 360) or the ground-floor door which might let you into the outer bailey (turn to 157).



32

You stroll northwards along Bridge Street until the old stone bridge and the misty fields beyond the river are in sight. In this part of town, at least, things seem normal enough. All the shopkeepers have brought their wares out on to the street, which is reverberating with cries of 'Fresh fruit!' and 'Salted sea-fish!' and 'Curios from the mystic South!' and 'Swords sharpened here!' – among scores of others. Crowds of townsfolk are bustling among the merchants' stalls and trying to shelter from the drizzle beneath the brightly coloured awnings. You decide to retrace your steps in order to buy some provisions and, as you mingle with the throng outside a general grocery shop, you suddenly feel that you are being watched or followed. *Test your Luck.* If you are Lucky, turn to 390. If you are Unlucky, turn to 171.



33

You lose 2 points of STAMINA because of loss of blood, but the clammy touch of the creature's sucker has brought you to your senses. Turn to 67.

34

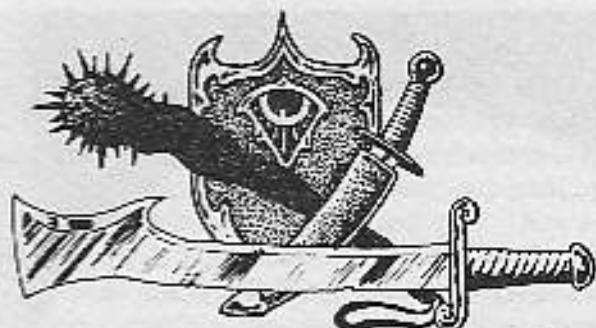
The dazzling crystal pops out of its niche and immediately stops glowing. A second later all the other lights are extinguished and you have no choice but to continue your descent in darkness. Turn to 379.

35

Halfway through guzzling his meal, the Orc begins to eat more slowly. Then he rises to his feet with a look of utter confusion on his bestial features. His body convulses, he hurls the spoon along the corridor and he collapses like a felled tree. He is dead. You find a key on a ring at his waist. It fits the lock of the small door. You open it and step through. Turn to 374.

36

The globe is almost too hot to touch, but you manage to fumble it into your backpack. You can feel its heat through the canvas and leather, but it seems to be diminishing in power. Before long you cannot feel it at all, and you continue on your way towards the next corner of the garden. Turn to 44.



37

Fighting back your revulsion, you put your hands to your head and begin to batter and tug at the proto-plasmic blob. You can feel its cold, sticky mouths attempting to anchor themselves in your skin, but you keep your hands moving and you discover that the monster has surprisingly little resilience. It soon drops to the ground, where you hack it into tiny pieces with your sword. When you look inside your backpack you find that the Kiss of Death Protoplasm has devoured two portions of your rations, but that everything else is unharmed. Turn to 132.





38

As soon as you step towards them, the young women clutch each other, scream and run to the right-hand door, which opens as they approach. A flash of light fills the room and you are momentarily blinded. You blink, look up and see, not two, but three serving-girls skipping towards you. They are almost identical. They smile, curtsy and break into a complicated dance, all the time humming a haunting melody, tinkling tiny bells and trailing gauzy silks. Their nimble steps and lithe gestures are quite breathtaking. *Test your Willpower.* If you are successful, turn to 198. If not, turn to 246.

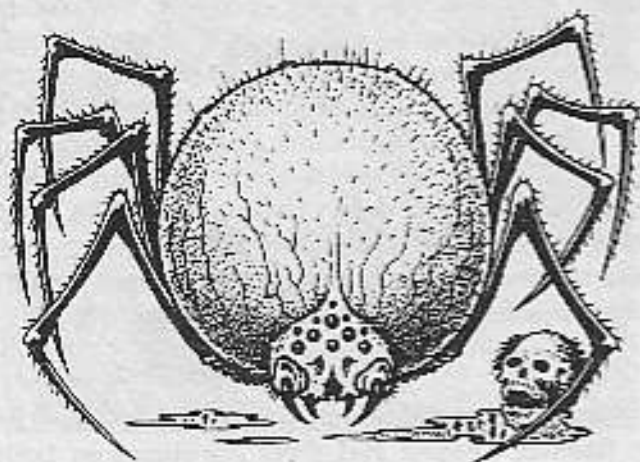
39

A woman's voice shouts orders to the few remaining guards, and you hear the sounds of pursuit behind you. You race along corridors, completely lost, and shudder to a halt only a finger's length from the broad back of a robed sentry. He is facing the Keep's main door, and he has not seen or heard you. There is the entrance to a narrow corridor on your left. You tiptoe into it and along the corridor. You ignore a small door on your right. You keep going down the corridor until the shouts of your pursuers have faded. You allow yourself a self-congratulatory grin. You got away. Turn to 87.

40

Although the corridor is deserted, it is now well lit by flaming cressets and there are doors on both sides. From behind some of the doors you hear the

voices of southern soldiers, and you tiptoe past. Others are silent, but the few you try to open are locked. You come to a door which has a key protruding from the keyhole. You turn it and open the door. The room is a large prison cell, equipped with shackles and chains and other instruments of restraint, and in its centre is a heavy bench with leather straps and buckles nailed to its corners and edges. Your attention is fixed on the captives, however: a young man and a young woman dressed in rags, weighed down with chains, and secured to iron rings in the wall by the horrific headgear that each of them wears. They are muzzled, and their heads are almost completely enclosed in tight bands of leather and metal. They stare at you, but can make no sound. Will you release first the man (turn to 276) or the woman (turn to 118)?



41

The door shudders from the impact of your shoulder, and splinters fly as you wield your sword – but you are unable to force your way out. After many exhausting attempts, you are gathering your strength for a renewed onslaught when you hear approaching footsteps. Your captors are returning. You will have to fight them all, but you can improve your chances by attacking as they appear in the doorway. You can fight them one at a time.

You flatten yourself against the wall as you hear heavy bars being lifted. The door opens, and you launch yourself at the first of six swordsmen.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First SWORDSMAN	5	5
Second SWORDSMAN	6	4
Third SWORDSMAN	4	6
Fourth SWORDSMAN	5	5
Fifth SWORDSMAN	4	3
Sixth SWORDSMAN	4	8

If you manage to kill them all, go to 315. If your STAMINA falls to 2 or less, the southern warriors take advantage of your weakness and beat you into unconsciousness. Turn to 266.

42

You move the rod towards 'Z' and watch the mirror. Cloudy shapes form in the glass, and within seconds the mirror's frame contains a swirling mass of colours. You walk up to it, take a deep breath and step into the rainbow maelstrom. Turn to 110.

43

Moving as quickly as you dare, you edge along the right-hand side of the pool. You keep your back to the wall and your eyes on the slowly rising glow. When you reach the corner, you have to spend some time turning around, and you shuffle along the back wall facing the uneven rock. Halfway along, you are obliged to waste more valuable seconds finding outcrops to cling to as you reach up to collect the keys. By the time you have returned to the entrance to the cavern, the Vitriol Essence is erupting out of the liquid. He stretches his grossly elongated arms towards you, but he cannot move beyond the pool and you are out of his reach. He howls in fury as you leave. Turn to 273.

44

You have reached another tower in a corner of the garden. To your left the path continues along the surrounding wall and passes a wide staircase that ascends from the garden. The wall of the square tower in front of you is windowless, but there is a small wooden door at the base. The door is slightly ajar, and there is darkness beyond. If you would like to enter the tower through the door, turn to 394. If you would rather walk to the staircase and use it to leave the garden, turn to 212.



45

The elderly Dwarf studies your face, nods, raises a gnarled finger to his lips and indicates the sentry with a quick movement of his eyes. 'Follow me, then,' he croaks. 'This way, if you please. That's right, that's it, past this southern slowcoach, and now you're behind him, so if you turn quickly . . . That's right, exactly: that's the way it's done.' The old Dwarf clearly enjoys your skilful attack on the sentry. You have a hand clamped over his face and your sword driven into his back; he is quiet but far from dead. The Dwarf produces a long knife and calmly forces it into the sentry's chest. 'Thank you!' you tell him – but he has already turned away and is walking off into the shadows, pointing towards a narrow corridor leading away from the hallway; you decide to follow his advice and the corridor. Turn to 87.





46

Tearing through the thin walls are the zombified corpses of unnatural mutants. There are three of them, and they would have looked horrific even when alive: they resemble gigantic upright frogs, with short, muscular legs, long spindly arms which terminate in huge splay-fingered hands, and enormously wide, flat, bulging-eyed heads. Their thick, black, prehensile tongues flicker from their gaping mouths. Dead, yet moving, they present an unbearable sight. Rotten flesh drops from them as they advance towards you. They smell of everything that is noxious about stagnant water. They are Chrabats, unfortunate creations of evil sorcery, and they are getting very close. *Test your Willpower.* If you are successful, turn to 194. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 269.

47

You walk up to the forbidding entrance. The old man remains motionless, propped on his staff, until you are only a few paces away. Then he opens sparkling blue eyes and snaps at you: 'I am Huw, last priest of Oiden in this town. Hurry inside, my friend, for enemies are approaching.' He turns sharply and beckons you to follow him into the depths of the gloomy ruin. His voice sounds familiar, but you cannot quite recall when and where you have heard it before. If you want to follow him, turn to 398. If you would rather return to the centre of town, turn to 5.

48

You land, stumble, teeter on the edge of a limitless gulf, and then throw yourself to the safety of the corridor floor. You rise hurriedly when you feel the floor moving beneath you, but the huge slab you are on is merely grinding back into position to cover the hole. You walk back to the fork in the corridor and decide to explore the right-hand passage. Turn to 155.

49

Sandwiched between two of the burliest of the swordsmen, and surrounded by a squad of others, you have no chance to escape as you are frog-marched out of the cellar, up a flight of stairs, through the gloom of the servants' quarters, and into the opulent private chambers of the Margrave of Neuburg Keep. Your guards halt at a pair of grand carved doors, on which the leader raps loudly. When the doors have been opened, he bows and announces in a barbaric accent: 'May it please the Margrave, a foreign spy captured within the castle walls!' A swordsman shoves you from behind and the entire troop marches in to present you to Baron Tholdur. Turn to 127.

50

The young man stands over you, mumbling and hopping from foot to foot, while you release the woman. She, too, has a swollen face, but she manages to smile at you. The man looks worried and tries to hold her, but she pushes him aside and

advances towards you. The young man cowers in a corner and you back away nervously as the woman's smile becomes a grin, and then a yawn, and then her mouth opens wider still – and not one but a hundred writhing tongues spill from between her impossibly wide jaws. *Test your Willpower.* If you are successful, turn to 321. If not, turn to 223.

51

The door at the top of the stairs is apparently bolted or barred on the other side. It is also very battered and splintered – you conclude that the Ogre you have just dealt with has made a sustained attempt to break through it with its club. You can think of only three options:

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| Shoulder-charge the door until it gives way | Turn to 173 |
| Inspect it closely to find a way to open it | Turn to 325 |
| Yell: 'I've just killed the Ogre. Let me in!' | Turn to 235 |



52

You pick up the misshapen shaft of blue metal. It is surprisingly light, as if it is hollow, and despite its unusual shape it fits snugly into your hand. One end of the shaft terminates in a screw thread, so it is clear that whatever it is, it is incomplete. Do you have a three-pointed spear-head? If so, turn to 251. If not, turn to 309.

53

You step out of the mirror into Senyakhaz's chamber. It is exactly as you left it a couple of seconds ago. Your trip through the magic portal has proved inconclusive, but you are still convinced that it is the key to the terrible mystery of Neuburg Keep. You can move the rod on the black box to 'X' and try the mirror again (turn to 288), or you can smash the box open (turn to 381).

54

You are in the large circular chamber, looking up at the strange tree. It is completely leafless, but you are sure it is alive. Its sinewy white limbs have a ghostly luminosity. 'Climb!' Huw tells you.

You cannot see the top of the tree. It seems to disappear into shadows near the domed ceiling. You clamber up the branches until you can no longer see the room below, but still you are nowhere near the top. A strong, bitter wind clutches at you; you cling on as white mists swirl all around. Higher: your body feels fatigue and increasing pain; in-

human voices clamour in your head. Grimly, you continue to climb, with all your senses assaulted. It feels as though your mind and body are being torn apart. You lose consciousness.

Add together your **WILLPOWER** and **STAMINA**. Roll one die eight times. If the total of your die rolls is less than your combined **WILLPOWER** and **STAMINA**, turn to 298. Otherwise, turn to 219.

55

There is an iron ring set into the centre of the door, but no amount of twisting it, or pushing or pulling, will open the door. If you have the head of a three-pointed spear, you can try to use one of the prongs to pick the lock (turn to 147); otherwise, you will have to give up and try one of the doors at the other end of the passage – either the huge metal one (turn to 243) or the small wooden one (turn to 373).

56

You are very lucky indeed. The two mutated creatures were the victims of a disease magically created by the sorcerer Xakhaz. The disease is infectious, but you have not been infected. Turn to 228.



57

The coin plops into the green liquid and disappears beneath the surface. Nothing happens. Feeling rather foolish, you make a wish. Still nothing happens. If you want to put your hand into the liquid to try to retrieve your Gold Piece, turn to 168. If you want to drink some of the liquid, turn to 380. Alternatively, you can investigate the overgrown path beyond the statue (turn to 232), or you can return to the edge of the garden and continue along the perimeter path (turn to 11).

58

You steel yourself to attack again. Will you cut down the dancing-girl on the left (turn to 328) or the one on the right (turn to 208)?

59

The cellar contains little except for the straw on the floor and several broken boxes. You search for some time; you find no secret doors and no weapons. You are still on your hands and knees sorting through the straw when you hear the sound of approaching footsteps.

Six robed figures march down the steps; they are amused to find you untied, and enjoy chasing you around the cellar. You have no weapon and, in spite of all your struggles, you are doomed to lose this unequal fight. The swordsmen want to capture you alive, it seems, and they bludgeon you into unconsciousness. Turn to 266.

60

You fall for what seems like minutes, until you land on a stone floor and break a lot of bones. Through red clouds of pain you can just make out three shapes shuffling towards you. They are ghouls, and they are coming to eat you. There is no escape.

61

You step out of the empty air and suffer a short but ungainly fall on to a flat-topped boulder. You are on a barren rocky plateau under a wide leaden sky. A cold wind whips around you. Apart from tufts of coarse grass, there is no sign of life. You have no idea where you are, although after several days of walking you will find a primitive Half-Orc village where you will discover that you are lost in the Wastes of Chaos. Neuburg is three weeks' hard travel away. No doubt you will find your way back there, but for now your adventure ends here.



62

You are in an outer bailey of the castle. It is a narrow, dirt-floored courtyard sandwiched between the curtain wall on your left and an even higher defensive wall on your right. Anyone standing on either set of battlements could hardly fail to

spot you crouching by the barred door, but the walls, towers and the bailey itself are deserted. You decide that this is as good a place as any to take a short rest before investigating the rows of wooden boxes that line the bailey walls. You unstrap your backpack to take stock of its contents. Do you have a piece of Blood-Lurcher tentacle in your pack? If so, turn to 277. If not, turn to 139.

63

You gaze down at the body of the girl, wondering at the delicacy of her features and the horribly contrasting armour. She seemed almost grateful as you struck the fatal blow. You feel troubled and depressed.

If you survive your adventure you will discover that the girl was Baron Tholdur's adopted daughter, and that the wearing of the enchanted armour was a subtly cruel torment inflicted on her by the Zagoulan wizard. The news of your deed, although you did it unknowingly, will plunge the Margrave into despair, and cast a shadow over all your brave exploits. Lose 2 points of LUCK, and wander disconsolately from the room. If you have not already done so, you can now unlock the opposite door (turn to 96) or leave the dungeon area through the open door (turn to 376).



64

If you are a prisoner, all dungeons are the same. The pits beneath Neuburg Keep are no exception. You are in a cramped, damp, filthy, airless hole, and the fitful torchlight that sometimes creeps between the cracks in the metal-studded door is so weak that you can barely make out the shapes of the fat rats that scurry among the dirty straw on the floor.

If you have any food with you, you can eat a portion now. If you have a green glass globe, you can extract it from your backpack (turn to 117), or you can take out the trident head (turn to 362). If you have neither of these items, or do not wish to look at them, you will just have to sit morosely in your cell until something happens. Turn to 206.

65

Smears of slime left by the retreating creature irritate exposed areas of your skin as you progress downwards. The tunnel is now very wide – you cannot reach the other side of it with your outstretched sword – and you are sure that all the holes in the surface above lead into this one great shaft. The difficulty now is preventing yourself from sliding or falling forwards, as the tunnel is almost vertical. You see the pale light ahead of you again, and soon you are clinging precariously to an outcrop of rock at the end of the tunnel. You are dangling from the ceiling of a low cavern and looking down into a pool of green luminescence that covers nearly all of the floor. There is a ledge jutting out over the surface of

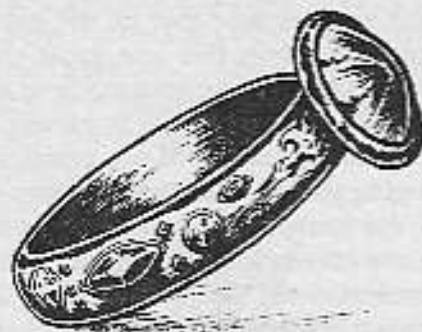
the slime. You will have to try to jump on to it. Roll two dice. If the total is less than your SKILL, turn to 316. Otherwise, turn to 124.

66

Test your Luck. If you are Lucky, turn to 297. If you are Unlucky, turn to 162.

67

Fighting back your revulsion, you put your hands to your head and begin to batter and tug at the protoplasmic blob. You can feel its cold, sticky mouths attempting to anchor themselves in your skin, but you keep your hands moving and you discover that the monster has surprisingly little resilience. It soon drops to the ground, where you hack it into tiny pieces with your sword. When you look inside your backpack you find that the Kiss of Death Protoplasm has devoured two portions of your rations, but that everything else is unharmed. Turn to 136.



68

It is as if you are the only living creature in Neuburg. With your sword in your hand, you are ready to react to the slightest sound – but now the silence is absolute. There are no lights in the houses. A pale moon shines occasionally between racing clouds. You are beginning to relax a little when you hear something: footsteps! Not a man – a beast. A large dog, perhaps. More than one!

You pull yourself into the porch of the nearest house. Not a moment too soon: one of the animals has sensed your presence and jumps at you out of the darkness. You have no time to think; your sword is ready and you fight. Turn to 253.

69

The dying Orc begins to slump to the ground. His battle-axe slips from his fingers, and you notice that his other hand is about to release its hold on the rope. If you want to try to grab hold of the rope before the Orc lets go, turn to 189. If you would rather ignore the rope and search the Orc's body, turn to 138.

70

Defiantly, you hold the glittering ring high in the air for all to see. 'Here, Tholdur! Here is the ring you entrusted to me!' you shout exultantly. 'A warrior never had a truer companion than you have in me!' The entire assembly holds its breath. The Margrave's strange vizier seems to be dumbfounded.

Baron Tholdur himself has risen to his feet, full of new vitality. He strides towards you and, oblivious to everything else, insists that you recount all your adventures since he last met you. The guards slink away, and you realize that the doors are open and that you can easily make your escape – but you are no longer sure that escape is necessary, now that Baron Tholdur is restored to his normal self. If you want to make a run for it, turn to 39. If you are content to stay with the Margrave, turn to 217.

71

As you charge towards the guards, they look up in alarm. One steps forward to intercept you, while the other hurries back to the double doors and pounds them noisily. You are able to tackle them one at a time.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First SOUTHERN GUARD	9	10
Second SOUTHERN GUARD	8	12

If you have the Talisman of Loth, you can reveal it as you approach your opponents: each of them will lose 2 points of SKILL. If you kill the guards, you find yourself standing outside the closed double doors. All is quiet. Turn to 391.



72

The door is too heavy; you cannot close it. The swordsmen charge up to the vast doorway, and you make your stand in the gap between the doors. Only one soldier at a time can attack you, and you put up a magnificent struggle. But there are multitudes of the robed warriors, and although you slay a prodigious number of them and create a hillock of corpses on which you stand and fight, they eventually come at you from both sides. The end is inevitable.

73

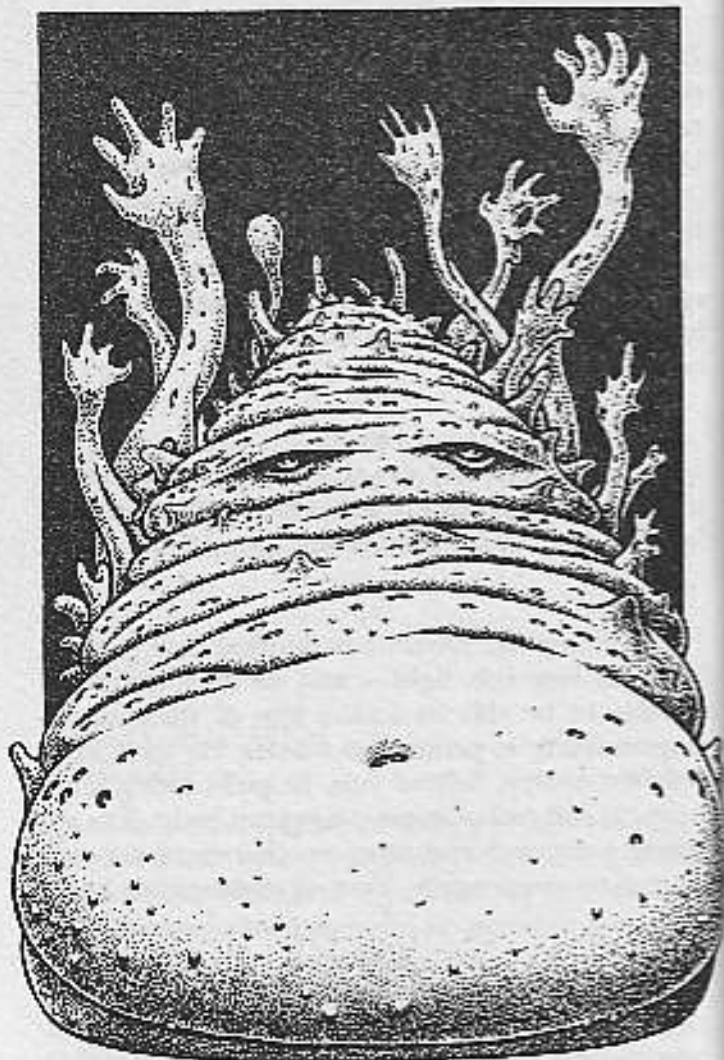
You lose 2 points of STAMINA because of loss of blood, but the clammy touch of the creature's sucker has brought you to your senses. Turn to 17.

74

The cunning old Dwarf has decided that you are likely to lose this fight – and he does not want anyone to be able to accuse him of shirking his responsibility to protect his master. He joins in to help the sentry. Behind you, he pulls a long knife from his belt and plunges it into your body. You are sorely wounded and have no chance of survival against two opponents. Your adventure ends here.

75

"THIEF!" bellows a voice from inside the shop. In a rage, the burly shopkeeper charges into the street, brandishing an axe. If you want to run away, turn to 364. If you would rather stay and fight the enraged grocer, turn to 186.



76

The flabby mound is a Vlodblad, a creation of evil sorcery. It is very sluggish, hence its low *Initial Skill*; however, as you move towards it, you see that it is beginning to generate blobs of flesh all over its body, and that some of these are extending into boneless limbs. It will continue to do this until you kill it. During any combat round in which you do not wound it, its *SKILL* will increase by 2 points as it produces more limbs to attack you.

VLODBLAD

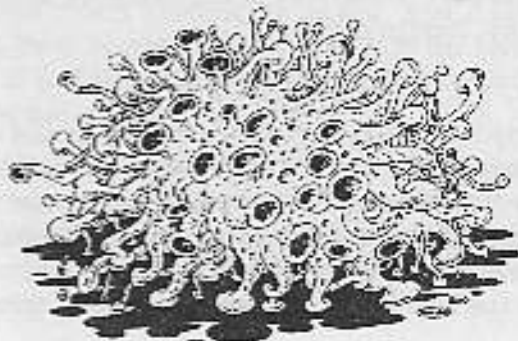
SKILL 3

STAMINA 10

Shortly after you begin this fight, you notice that the serving-girls have left the room. If you want to try to follow them you can *Escape* (unless you have the Runic Axe) after one combat round (turn to 323). If you stay and defeat the Vlodblad, turn to 260.

77

If the name you shouted was 'Oiden', turn to 356. If it was 'Xakhaz', turn to 258. If it was 'Tholdur', or any other name, turn to 379.



78

The riverside dwellers scatter in panic as you squelch across the muddy road and charge on to the jetty. The soldiers discard their whips and draw their curved blades. You realize that you cannot hope to defeat them all simultaneously, and you choose to make your stand on a narrow plank that projects from one side of the jetty. The soldiers can attack you only one at a time; but you cannot escape unless you kill them all.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First SWORDSMAN	6	8
Second SWORDSMAN	5	6
Third SWORDSMAN	5	9
Fourth SWORDSMAN	8	7

If you win, you can investigate the one crate that is left on the jetty (turn to 259), or you can return to the centre of town and explore a different part of Neuburg (turn to 377).

79

Test your Luck. If you are Lucky, turn to 56. If you are Unlucky, turn to 163.

80

It is very hard work removing a flagstone, and when you have finally heaved it out of position, you are disappointed to find that underneath it are rocks and packed earth. You persevere, however, and find that the next few flags are easier to lift. And under the fourth you find a gaping hole, a rough

downward shaft that is just large enough for you to squeeze through. If you want to descend into the darkness, turn to 264. Otherwise, you can replace the flagstones and wait in your cell for something to happen (turn to 206).

81

A banquet awaits you beyond the open double doors. Walking into the room is like entering a tent: the walls are covered with soft billowing sheets of material that are gathered together in the middle of the ceiling, where a mass of multicoloured ribbons rustles. Thick ropes trail from the ceiling. In the middle of all this, an ornate table is covered with fruits and sweetmeats. The perfumed breeze carries hints of gentle music. There is otherwise no sound. If you decide to inspect the food on the table, turn to 218. Alternatively, you can still decide to go back to the wall of flame (turn to 145).

82

A spark of animation remains in the eyes of the unfortunate Tree-Man. Its branches reach towards you with much rustling of leaves. You listen intently; there seems to be a message in the scraping twigs. It is: 'The gardener is in the tower behind me. Beware the other two towers.'

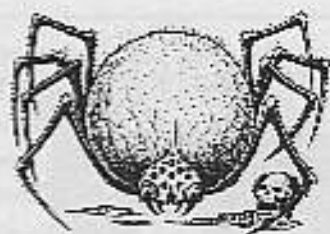
This information is whispered over and over again, and gets increasingly indistinct. You decide to move on, but it is clear that the path beyond the Tree-Man is completely blocked. You turn back and rejoin the perimeter path. Turn to 11.

83

The globe does not break when it hits the floor. It continues to produce a ferocious glare and a heat that you can feel from the other side of the room. Xakhaz, pursuing you, shuffles away from it a little, but is still close when it explodes. The stunning crash stings your ears and sends you flying backwards across a table. You lose 3 points of STAMINA. As you pull yourself to your feet, you are appalled to see that Xakhaz has survived. Half of his mountainous body has been obliterated, but he still has some limbs and tentacles that work. He limps towards you, dragging a stump of mangled flesh and leaving a trail of blood and ichor. Turn to 167 to fight him, but reduce his STAMINA to 10 and his SKILL to 9 because of his wounds.

84

You select a barrel, turn its tap and fill the cup with rich ruby liquid. It is a fortified wine of excellent vintage, and you enjoy every drop. It restores up to 2 points of STAMINA, if necessary; but it also contains a considerable amount of alcohol which dulls your senses and slows your reflexes. Reduce your SKILL by 2 points until you next eat a portion of food. Turn to 286.



85

As your eyes become accustomed to the deep gloom you see that your visitor is a slight young man in military clothing. He is clearly not a Southerner, however, and your answer seems to interest him. 'Shield your eyes!' he warns, and pulls aside his tunic. A ray of brilliant white light bursts from something on his chest. It is not too dazzling if you avoid looking directly at it. The youth beckons you to follow him out of the cell. Turn to 29.

86

You lunge at the old priest - and fall flat on your face, screaming with pain. The wooden legs of the heavy stool on which you were seated have grown around your ankles, which have been horribly twisted as you fell. You are powerless to move. Huw stands over you. 'Wretched fool!' he says. 'You are not worthy of the gifts of Oiden. You are not even fit to live. I will leave you here. In time, your body will feed the roots of the Great Tree. Farewell.' He leaves, locking the door behind him. You lie on the floor in agony until you die.



87

The corridor turns to the left, and as you turn the corner you hear voices ahead. You advance cautiously, and find your way blocked by a jumble of mops, brooms, buckets, boxes of rags, and other household equipment, all of which is covered in dust and cobwebs. You pick a path through it, and realize that the passage has led you into the back of a storeroom. A tattered curtain hangs across the doorway; you listen to the voices from the other side. An argument is finishing. A harsh, guttural voice states: 'You'll do it because I tell you to do it! And if you don't I'll boil *you* up for his stew tomorrow!' A door slams. You peek round the curtain and see a small Gnome dressed in the uniform of a page standing in a corridor which ends at a large wooden door. With some difficulty he is holding an enormous tray with an earthenware pot on it, and he looks completely forlorn. Tears trickle down his cheeks. You can attack him (turn to 361), ask him why he is so miserable (turn to 326), or ignore him and set off along the corridor away from the door (turn to 267).

88

Test your Luck. If you are Lucky, turn to 161. If you are Unlucky, turn to 370.

89

Arms over your face, you push through the silvery filaments. You feel them clinging to your skin, and then they disappear. You look around: the web

and the spider – both illusions – have gone, and Senyakhaz has turned to face you. She is angry and fearful, and pulls a long knife from the sleeve of her robe. If you have the Talisman of Loth and want to reveal it, turn to 357. If you decide to try to talk to the sorceress, turn to 233. If you want to attack her immediately, turn to 160.

90

As you walk along Fish Street towards the river, it is obvious that you are entering the poorest quarter of town. Here the river is no longer clear: it has spread into an oozing marsh, and a stench pervades the entire area. Only a few boats are tied up at the rotting jetties. The riverside path, known as Shivering Lane, is ankle-deep in clinging mud, and the pitifully decayed cottages seem to be settling into the marshy ground. The few local people that you see are small, swarthy types, and are dressed in drab rags. There are no shops, and nobody is working on the boats and barges.

A cart is approaching from the north-east. The two horses are having difficulty pulling it over the muddy, pitted surface of Shivering Lane. As it nears the wharves, you can see that it contains a contingent of robed warriors.

Do you want to conceal yourself in this unpleasant part of town in order to spy on the robed swordsmen? If so, turn to 336. Or would you rather explore an area of Neuburg that you have not yet visited? You can go up Castle Hill to the Keep (turn to 289).

or into the Temple Quarter (turn to 195) or to the Merchants' Quarter (turn to 32).

91

If you have the Trident of Skarlos, turn to 378. If not, turn to 241.

92

There is a metal gate in the wall at the end of the courtyard. Through it you can see another, larger courtyard with the path continuing through it to a door in the wall at the far end. There is no one about, so you open the gate and set off along the path. You soon notice that the ground is littered with animal carcasses and bones. On both sides of the path holes gape. Some of the holes are wide enough for a human to squeeze into, and they all appear to descend steeply into the earth. If you want to explore down one of the holes, turn to 244. If you pass them by and go through the door in the wall, turn to 157.

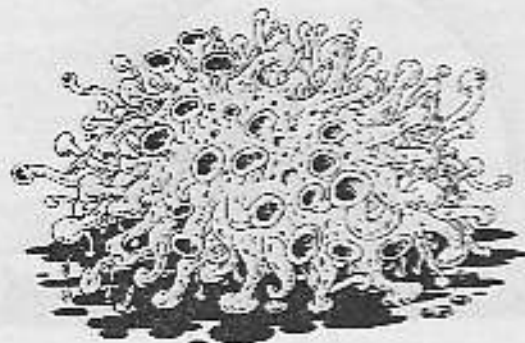


93

You lose 2 points of STAMINA because of loss of blood, but the clammy touch of the creature's sucker has brought you to your senses. Turn to 37.

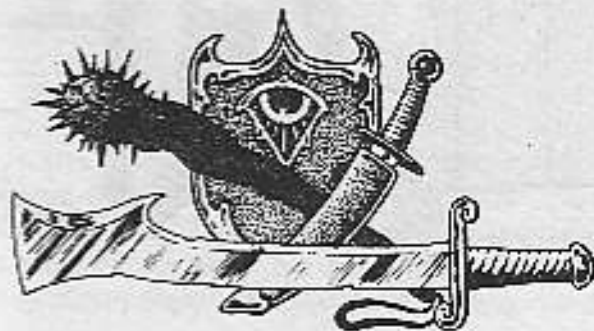
94

You burst through the door and into the anteroom. It is empty. There is another door in the opposite wall. You hurl yourself through it, and fall into the storeroom – which is empty except for boxes and barrels. You roll upright and look around: there is another door, next to the one through which you just hurtled. Desperately, you lunge through it – and find the inner sanctum. This is Senyakhaz's bedroom, audience-chamber and workroom. As you enter, the wizard, covered again in deep red robes, picks up a small box, steps towards a tall mirror, waves at you, walks into the mirror and disappears. The frame of the mirror begins to glow and lose its shape. If you try to follow the wizard through the mirror, turn to 363. If you decide to leave the room, turn to 169.



95

Hacking at brambles with your sword, you follow the path around the hillside in the shadow of the battlements. The path veers to the left and disappears into a clump of bushes at the base of the wall. You push aside the prickly branches and discover a small door, which you have some difficulty in opening as there is just as much undergrowth on the other side. You cut your way down a flight of stone steps, and find yourself in an untended kitchen garden. The vegetable patches, herb beds and fruit trees are wildly out of control and it is impossible to see across the garden. You can make out that the garden is square, is surrounded by walls, and has the remains of a gravel path around its edge. You are at the mid-point of one side. Will you turn right (turn to 175) or left (turn to 275)?





96

You unlock the door and push it open to reveal not a dismal cell but a well-furnished room. It is lit by several lanterns and has an unpleasant smell. You step inside, turn quickly, and find yourself facing Griltig, Baron Tholdur's one-legged Hobgoblin gaoler. Griltig has been kept prisoner in his own quarters for several days and is in no mood to talk. He wants to kill someone. He snarls and hobbles towards you with surprising agility, a spiked club raised above his ugly head.

GRILTIG

SKILL 8

STAMINA 12

If you have the Talisman of Loth, you can reveal it after one round of combat. Its dazzling gleam will reduce Griltig's SKILL by 2 points. Unless you have the Runic Axe, you can *Escape* after one round. You flee from the dungeon hallway through the open door. Turn to 376.

If you kill Griltig, you can search his room (turn to 203); or cross the hallway and unlock the other door, if you have not already done so (turn to 165); or leave this dungeon area through the open door (turn to 376).

97

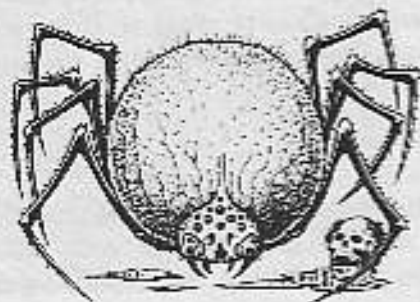
The swarthy swordsmen watch with interest as you rest your weapon and proffer your bribe. Their leader takes your offering, and insists on searching your backpack for more. He mockingly pretends to be very disappointed that you have nothing else of

value to him, and then suddenly orders his men to seize you. You cannot reach your weapon in time, and you are soon held fast in spite of your struggles. The swordsmen are highly amused at your outraged expostulations. Turn to 49.

98

Unknown to everyone, the Margrave of Neuburg Keep is worried about his expanding waistline and resorts to this potion when feeling particularly overweight. Its effect is to reduce the appetite; in fact, it abolishes feelings of hunger and makes the sight and smell of food repulsive. The effect wears off after a day or two—but for the rest of this adventure, you will not be able to eat any provisions.

You descend the spiral staircase. The darkness is oppressive and the circling seems endless. Eventually you crash into a door, push it open and emerge dizzily into a dimly lit corridor. You walk towards the brighter end. Turn to 40.



99

Within seconds you are surrounded by a merciless mob of robed swordsmen. Your body is pierced again and again by their curved blades. By the time the swordsmen have finished with you, there isn't even very much left to feed to the strange animals that are penned in the Keep's outer baileys.

100

The old priest of Oiden continues his explanation: 'If Xakhaz is resurrected and restored to his ancient powers, Neuburg and all its people will be helpless before his vengeful sorcery. I shudder to imagine the terror and despair he will inflict! However, he can be defeated and imprisoned again, especially while he is still weak. His physical form can be destroyed by the sword of a mighty warrior—such as you—and he and his minions can be weakened by the Talisman of Loth. Unfortunately, the Talisman is missing. A week ago I sent Cernic, my fellow priest, to explore the Keep. He has not returned, and I cannot contact him—although I think he is still alive. You must go to the Keep, and try to find the Talisman of Loth before you descend into the lower caverns. Do not enter the castle by the main gate—it is heavily guarded. There is a little-known side-entrance that you will find if you turn to the right before you reach the main gate. I can give you no more information; but if you wish to undertake the Ordeal, Oiden may yet bestow gifts upon you.' If you want to try the Ordeal, turn to 54. If you would rather get on with your quest, turn to 368.

101

You continue to exchange blows with the irate shopkeeper. He is weakening, but reinforcements are arriving to help him. From nearby shops and stalls a motley collection of tradesmen come and join in attacking you with much shouting and cursing.

You are sorely wounded by the time a squad of soldiers arrives. It consists of six more of the southern swordsmen, and while you lie on the ground clutching at your wounds a furious argument erupts between the soldiers and the townspeople about who should have custody of you. Eventually the townspeople have their way, and after a brief trial the same day you suffer the ignominious execution of a common criminal. No doubt your fate would have been even less pleasant if the southern soldiers had got their hands on you.

102

The door opens on to a narrow corridor. You reason that to the left will be the main hallway of the Keep, and soldiers and the likelihood of discovery. You follow the corridor to the right. Turn to 87.

103

You start to ransack the gardener's storeroom. Test your Luck. If you are Lucky, turn to 327; if you are Unlucky, turn to 202.



104

Your globe of green glass is getting painfully bright. It is also almost too hot to hold. You no longer need it as a source of light, so you can return it to your backpack. If you do this, turn to 382. If you would rather put it down and stand over it to see what happens, turn to 329. Alternatively, you could place it at one end of the passage and watch from the other; if you do this, you can choose to place it on the floor next to the large wooden door to your right (turn to 221), or the small wooden door to your left (turn to 158), or the massive metal door (turn to 123).

105

You have fallen into a very deep hole. You seem to fall for ever, and as you tumble through the whistling gulf you catch glimpses of the huge stone slab slowly grinding back into place across the ever-diminishing sliver of light far away above you. It shuts, and you carry on plummeting in complete darkness. You are about to lose consciousness when you are smashed against the rock floor.



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106

You drop lightly to the cobblestones and pause, listening for the slightest sound. All is quiet. You draw your sword and head uphill, towards the quarter of town where the backs of the houses are set into the rock-face and their fronts seem to hang over one another. Above them all, Neuburg Keep looms like a brooding shadow, a patch of utter blackness against the scudding clouds. You follow the winding road upwards.

Your heart jumps, and you almost drop your sword. A bubbling, screaming, baying noise splits the night – and stops as suddenly as it began. Then you hear it again – louder, nearer. And then there are several of the awful voices, wailing simultaneously. The source of this unnatural noise is ahead of you, and seems to be approaching. Will you turn back to explore the town (turn to 68) or press on towards the castle (turn to 21)?

107

Intrigued by the pale luminescence exuded by the warrior, you inspect his still body. When you experimentally kick him through his surcoat, you find a strangely solid mass where his legs should be. With a growing sense of fear, you grasp his helmet. You pull it off – and drop it in horror. He has no head. Instead, there is a glistening, featureless, rubbery protuberance which, as you watch, begins to distend and ooze towards you. *Test your Willpower.* If you are successful, you tear yourself away

from the appalling sight and make for the open doorway (turn to 279). If you are unsuccessful, turn to 257.

108

Having returned to the market-square, you can now explore any part of Neuburg that you have not already visited. Do you choose to make for:

The Merchants' Quarter?	Turn to 32
The riverside area?	Turn to 90
Neuburg Keep?	Turn to 289

109

As you near the bottom of the stairway, you can see that one of the steps is different from all the others. It is not carved out of the surrounding rock, but from stone that gleams in the light of the glowing crystals. You avoid stepping on it and continue to the end of the stairs. Restore 1 point of LUCK, if you need to, for evading a particularly unpleasant trap, and then turn to 16.

110

You step into oppressive heat. Sweat trickles down your body inside your armour as you inspect your new surroundings. The magical mirror has clearly transported you a long way from Neuburg. You are in the semi-darkness of a shuttered room, but through the slats you can see harsh sunlight and hear the bustling noises of a foreign city. The mirror is still a whirlpool of colours, but there is no black

cube in evidence. If you decide to step back into the mirror, turn to 307. If you want to leave this room to explore the city, turn to 220.

111

The metal joint screeches as you tug at the statue's arm, and then you hear mechanical clicks and whirrs from within the metal Elf maiden. Her mouth opens and a squeaky voice recites a rhyme in an incomprehensible language; the urn swivels until the neck is downwards, and then a trickle of green liquid flows from it into the stone basin. The stream of liquid ceases when the basin is almost full, and the statue closes its mouth and raises its arm. The mechanism has stopped working. You lower your face to the basin. The green liquid has no odour; it is thick and opaque, but is a very fresh-looking colour.

If you want to put your lips to the liquid and drink, turn to 380. If you have a Gold Piece and would like to throw it into the basin, turn to 57 (remember to deduct it from your *Adventure Sheet*). If you want to put your hand in the liquid, turn to 168. If you would rather leave the statue, you can attempt to continue along the overgrown path (turn to 232) or return to the perimeter path (turn to 11).



112

Raging, snarling, and flicking drops of liquid from his claws, the Vitriol Essence sinks below the surface of the pool. You watch as his luminosity descends to the depths; the cavern returns to deep gloom. You can now sidle around the perimeter of the pool and collect the sets of keys (turn to 345); or you can return to your dungeon cell (turn to 206).

113

'Oy, you! Halt!' yells the Orc, his voice reverberating along the passage. 'Come no further and state your business!' One of his thick hands closes around the haft of a battle-axe, while the other reaches for a rope that hangs through a hole in the ceiling. You fear that the rope may be attached to an alarm signal, and you charge at the Orc—but even as you attack he pulls the rope taut. No alarm sounds, however. The Orc holds on tightly to the rope as you fight.

ORC GUARD

SKILL 9

STAMINA 13

If you win, turn to 69.

114

Soon there is only one crate left on the jetty, but the ragged labourers are unwilling to touch it. Even the cart-horses shy away from it. No matter how brutally the southern soldiers wield their whips, they cannot persuade the riverside folk to load the crate on the barge. In fact, the labourers look increasingly terrified, and eventually, under a rain of vicious



blows, they take to their heels and flee. The soldiers are nonplussed. They talk to one another briefly, and then climb into the cart and drive it away, leaving the solitary crate on the jetty. You wait for several more minutes, but no one appears and no sound breaks the silence.

If you want to emerge from hiding and look at the crate, turn to 259. If you would rather slink back to the centre of town and explore a different part of Neuburg, turn to 377.

115

You have found the inner sanctum of the Zagoulan wizard who has enchanted Baron Tholdur and called up unspeakable horrors from the depths below Neuburg Keep. The wizard is standing at the far end of the large room, and the thrown-back cowl of the deep red robe reveals the features of a regally beautiful young woman. She is standing in front of a tall mirror, staring at her reflection as she manipulates a small black box. She turns to face you and speaks: 'You have found me, then. No matter. I am Senyakhaz of Zagoula; I will escape from you now, and return to finish my work here at a more propitious time. Passing years mean little to me. Take care! Beware of my little pet!' You suddenly realize that a massive cobweb spans the room. Squatting in it, near the ceiling, is a spider as large as a horse. Do you walk into the web, in the hope that you can force your way through? If so, turn to 89. If you would rather cut a way through with your weapon, turn to 12.

You shove at the door until it opens enough to let you squeeze through. You have barely had time to notice that the door had been barricaded with rakes, hoes, and chests full of smaller garden tools, when you are attacked by an axe-wielding Dwarf. You cannot back out through the narrow gap in the doorway – this will be a fight to the finish.

DWARF

SKILL 8

STAMINA 4

If you defeat him, a look at his body tells you that although very proficient with his axe, your opponent was quite old and frail. You are surprised to see that his hands and forearms are stained bright green! He must have been the gardener, to judge by the contents of this large and dusty chamber: gardening tools, sacks of produce, bundles of dried herbs, and young shoots in pots are tidily arranged on shelves and benches. There is another door in the far wall.

This room looks interesting, but so does the rune-inscribed axe clutched in the Dwarf's lifeless fingers. If you want to explore the room, turn to 268. If you want the axe, turn to 341.



The globe emanates a soft green glow. It provides enough light for you to be able to inspect your surroundings. The walls are all made of titanic blocks of stone, cut by a mason who knew his trade well: there is not so much as a single crevice between the blocks. Once you have kicked aside the mouldy straw, however, you see that the floor might be vulnerable to an escape attempt. The flagstones are ill-fitting and it might be possible to prise some of them up. If you want to try to do this, turn to 80. If you would rather wait in the cell until something happens, turn to 206.

You close the door, find a set of keys on a peg behind it, and set to work unlocking locks and unbuckling buckles. Soon the young woman is free of her chains and of the confining headgear. Not surprisingly, her face is swollen, but she manages to smile as she turns to face you. The smile widens to a grin, and then turns into a yawn, and then her mouth opens wider still – and not one but a hundred writhing tongues emerge. *Test your Willpower.* If you are successful, turn to 321. If not, turn to 223.



119

As you head west to the market-square, you notice that the few householders you can see are hastily barring their doors and shuttering their windows. When you reach the Southern Star tavern, it appears to be closed. Pounding on the boards with the pommel of your sword brings the innkeeper to the door. It is easy to rent a room, as there are no other guests. You eat a solitary meal by the light of a candle in the gloom of the inn's shuttered common room. Recover up to 4 points of STAMINA, if you have lost any so far.

You decide to ask the innkeeper what is going on in Neuburg. You have to choose whether you will reveal your past association with Baron Tholdur (turn to 164), or whether you will keep this information to yourself (turn to 301).

120

You pick up the mace. It is short and surprisingly light. The sharp silver spikes are alive with some form of energy, but you feel that the weapon's lack of both reach and weight would put you at a disadvantage in a fight against someone armed with a sword or a battle-axe. If you nevertheless want to dispose of your current weapon and keep the mace, turn to 333. Otherwise, return to 190 and make a different choice.



121

Still smiling in death, the girl sinks to the floor. Stricken with remorse, you stare down at the corpse. You raise your eyes to meet those of the remaining two dancers; they smile radiantly, and begin to dance again. Your weariness amazes you; you gaze at the dancing young women. *Test your Willpower*. If you are successful, turn to 58. If not, turn to 246.

122

Thrusting your sword at random into various piles of rotten vegetable matter, you are rewarded with an assortment of interesting finds: a mouldy turnip, a broken earthenware pot and a dead sapling. But you are intrigued to find that in one particular heap your sword meets no resistance. No matter how far you push into the sodden mass, you seem unable to touch the floor. Puzzled, you start to move the compost to one side, and soon you reveal a large hole in the ground. It looks as if one of the flagstones has broken and fallen through into a space below the floor. You can just make out the cubical shape of the subterranean room; it is a littered with dust and compost, and there is a small, green, glowing shape in one of the far corners. You decide to investigate, so you lower yourself through the rectangular opening. Turn to 317.



123

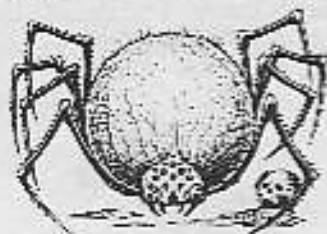
You place the incandescent globe in front of the great metal door and back away. Within seconds the sphere is too bright to look at, and you can feel its heat from the far end of the passage. Then it explodes. The roar is unbearably loud, and the shock-wave hurls you against the rock wall. When your head clears and the dust begins to settle, you see that the vast metal plates are blackened and buckled. You approach the door, wait a while for the metal to cool and, after much sinew-wrenching effort, manage to topple it towards you. You leap aside, grip your weapon and advance through the doorway. Turn to 190.

124

The ledge is covered in thick grease, and you are too near its edge. Your fingers can gain no purchase. You tumble into the bottomless vat of Protoplasmic Slime, which rapidly gets to work digesting you with its acidic fluids.

125

If you still have 6 or more points of WILLPOWER, turn to 303. If you have less than 6 points, turn to 270.



126

You are standing over the corpse of the first swordsman when the second comes into sight, pauses and then charges at you.

SOUTHERN

SWORDSMAN

SKILL 11

STAMINA 6

If you are using the Talisman of Loth, his SKILL is reduced by 2 points.

If you kill him, you can think of no better plan than to dress yourself in the flowing white robes of one of your slain adversaries and then attempt to bluff your way past the guards in front of the closed double doors at the end of the right-hand branch of the corridor. Moments later, looking far more confident than you feel, you march towards the two guards.

To your surprise, they leave their post as soon as they see you approaching. They pass you with the merest grunt of greeting, apparently in a hurry to return to their barracks now that someone has turned up to relieve them. You are glad you had the forethought to conceal the carnage in the corridor. They disappear from view, leaving you in possession of the guard-post outside the closed double doors. You have to choose whether you will knock on the doors (turn to 391) or try to sneak through them secretly (turn to 213).



127

When you were last in Tholdur's Great Hall, as his honoured comrade-in-arms, you marvelled at the austere magnificence of the vast stone-pillared chamber. It seemed to reflect the Margrave's grand and rigorously martial personality. Now you are his prisoner, and everything seems to have changed. Sumptuous tapestries cover the walls, and the floor is littered with rugs and cushions. Ranks of impassive swordsmen stand on guard, while their captains and Neuburg merchants are waited on and entertained by lithe maidens in gauzy silks. Some of the young women are dark-haired beauties from the south; others, wearing chains between ankles and wrists, are from the Neuburg area. Tholdur himself is sprawled on a grandiose gilt throne, a goblet in his hand and a faraway look in his eyes. Seated next to him on the dais is a small figure in a dark red cloak with a cowl that conceals its face. This figure whispers in Tholdur's ear as you approach. Will you remain silent while Baron Tholdur dispenses summary justice and decides your fate? If so, turn to 392. If you want to identify yourself and appeal to the Margrave's memories of your past exploits together, turn to 261.



128

The young woman has no weapon; the tendrils reaching out of her gaping throat must be for eating with. You try not to think about it, and attack. This should be an easy fight.

MUTATED WOMAN SKILL 4 STAMINA 7

If you win, your only thought is to get out of the room. At least you now know why the two creatures were chained and muzzled. You close the door behind you, and re-lock it. Turn to 79.

129

With much gesturing, the little old being invites you into a tumbledown lean-to hovel behind his stall. Inside the windowless shack, you can hardly move for bric-à-brac: rusty weapons, broken furniture and cracked pots take up virtually all the available space. Pausing only to light a candle, the stall-holder begins to rummage with surprising energy in a particularly cluttered corner. With a triumphant cry he pulls something from beneath a pile of rags and brings it towards you. It looks like a small garden fork! It is very rusty and it has no handle. You begin to wonder whether the old stall-holder is demented. You are even more worried when he demands 3 Gold Pieces for it.

If you want to pay him, deduct 3 Gold Pieces from your *Adventure Sheet* and turn to 14. If you want to waste no more time on this transaction, you leave the hut and continue towards the market-square (turn to 237).

130

The mysterious voice implores you to move so that your bonds can be cut, but you remain motionless. Eventually, you hear: 'I must go now. It is near dark, and I fear for my life. They will return soon and take you. May Oiden be with you, stranger.'

A little later you hear footsteps approaching. Rough hands pick you up, carry you up some stairs and throw you into what seems to be a cart. Almost as an afterthought, your captors club you into unconsciousness. Turn to 266.

131

Buried in one face of the cubical box is a small metal rod. Etched above and below it are two letters: 'Z' and 'X'. The rod can be moved forwards and backwards. You decide to experiment. Will you push the rod towards 'Z' (turn to 42) or towards 'X' (turn to 288)?

132

If you have any rations, you can eat one meal now. Remember to deduct it from your *Adventure Sheet* and to restore up to 4 points of STAMINA, if you have lost any.

If you have a globe of green glass you notice that it is still glowing dimly, and that it begins to shine more brightly when you remove it from the depths of your pack. You put it away again quickly.

Feeling somewhat refreshed, you shoulder your pack and set off along the well-used track that hugs the rocky base of the black Keep. As you circle the

monumental structure, the track becomes a ramp, climbing through the boulder-strewn foundation rock towards a gatehouse tower perched across a deep ravine. Once through the forbidding gatehouse archway, you find the portcullis raised and the drawbridge over the chasm lowered. There are no guards in sight, and you are now at the main doorway into the Keep – at Baron Tholdur's front door. Will you hammer on the enormous door and demand entrance (turn to 311)? Or will you look for a way to break in surreptitiously (turn to 28)?

133

You place the floppy white object over your head and experience a moment of panic as you feel something like cold jelly moulding itself to your scalp. Your fear is soon submerged in a welter of alien images; you feel your own personality sinking in a morass of memories. Your head is filled with images from aeons past and from otherworldly places. Your emotions are superseded by totally inhuman desires and needs. You are the latest in a long line of hosts for a Brain Defiler; you will spend the rest of your days skulking in dark places, a slave to its whims, the instrument of its unnatural purposes.

134

You have thrown well: the globe thuds into Xakhaz near the top of the motley pyramid of flesh, and disappears among a tangle of thrashing limbs. Almost immediately it explodes. An ear-numbing crash signals the end of Xakhaz. Turn to 271.

135

You recoil with a cry, just as the questing fingers of a decaying hand are about to touch your face. With manic speed you snatch up the crate's lid and slam it down over the squirming mass. Sobbing, you use your bare hands to hammer at the nails, until you are sure that the lid is secure. You collapse on the jetty and try to recover your scattered wits.

Some time later you stride grimly into the centre of town, determined to seek out the source of Neuburg's horrible afflictions. Turn to 377.

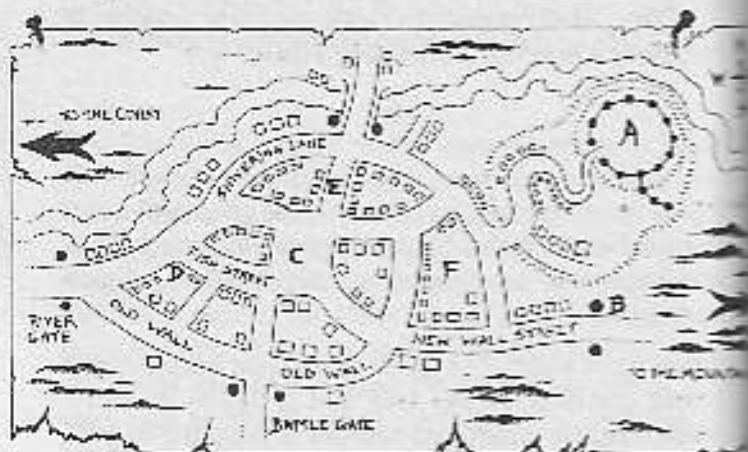
136

If you have any rations, you can eat one meal now. Remember to deduct it from your *Adventure Sheet* and to restore up to 4 points of STAMINA, if you have lost any.

If you have a globe of green glass, you notice that it is still glowing dimly, and that it begins to shine more brightly when you remove it from the depths of your pack. You put it away again quickly.

As you walk about the room you begin to regret that you killed the Dwarf gardener. You have no way of knowing whether any of the plants or dried herbs are useful or harmful, or whether there is anything of value hidden in the room. If you want to spend time on a thorough search, turn to 103. If you would rather cross the room and leave through the far door, turn to 282.

There is no market today. The square is empty, except for a few grim-faced townspeople who scurry across the cobbles. You spot a notice-board nailed to a post between the stocks and a horse-trough; you walk over to it and find that, among proclamations about the permitted prices for meat pies, there is a tattered map flapping in the wind. It is a plan of the town:



- A Neuburg Keep
- B East Gate
- C Market Square
- D Riverside quarter
- E Merchants' quarter - Bridge Street
- F Temple quarter

Which part of Neuburg do you want to explore? If you go north, to the Merchants' Quarter, turn to 32. If you go east, to the Temple Quarter, turn to 195. If you go west, towards the wharves and warehouses at the riverside, turn to 90.

The rope jerks upwards and disappears through the hole in the ceiling. You hear the grate of bolts sliding across the other side of the door, and you realize that the rope was part of a defence mechanism that bars the way through the door if the guard is killed. You turn and find that the rope also operated a trap: three portcullises have descended across the corridor. It is possible that a week or so of chipping at masonry would allow you to escape; but you will almost certainly be discovered and executed before you succeed. In any event, your adventure is over.

If you have any rations, you can eat one meal now. Remember to deduct it from your *Adventure Sheet* and to restore up to 4 points of STAMINA, if you have lost any.

Then you shoulder your pack and set off on the beaten path that runs along the centre of the long, narrow courtyard. You walk between two rows of large wooden boxes, and as you pass each box you hear a frantic scrabbling noise from inside. If you want to try to open one of the boxes, turn to 306. If you would rather ignore them and continue to the end wall of the courtyard, turn to 92.

140

The anteroom is deserted. There is a door in the opposite wall, through which you find the storeroom – also deserted. The storeroom has another door, which you are about to open when you hear an explosion from the other side. When the sounds of falling debris cease, you look into the room. It has been comprehensively wrecked. You find no other exits from this suite of rooms, nor do you find any way of reaching the lower levels from the corridors on this level. You return to the dungeons and cellars and find the southern soldiers milling around in confusion. In his private apartments, Baron Tholdur is awakening from his enchantment. Together, after questioning guards and servants, you manage to work out that your activities have frightened away Senyakhaz, the Zagoulan sorceress who bewitched the Margrave. She has escaped through the magic portal which she used to reach the insane and aeons-old warlock Xakhaz, trapped in the depths below Neuburg Keep. She destroyed the portal as she fled.

The Margrave and the people of Neuburg are grateful to you, but you know you have failed. Senyakhaz has escaped and can still reach Xakhaz, who remains brooding beneath the Keep, gathering strength for his revenge. For Neuburg and its people, the day of reckoning has merely been postponed.

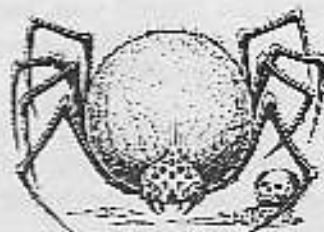
141

Remember to deduct 1 point of WILLPOWER from your *Adventure Sheet*. If you still have 6 or more points of WILLPOWER remaining, turn to 339. If you have less than 6 points, turn to 20.

142

One of your flailing hands instinctively hooks itself over the step below the one that gave way. You stretch your legs but can find no purchase; you sense that you are hanging above a vast chasm. You breathe deeply, trying not to panic in the darkness. With great deliberation you reach up to push your weapon on to a secure step. You now have two hands to support your weight. You concentrate: block out the pain, contract the muscles. Inch by inch, you pull yourself up.

When your limbs have stopped shaking, you continue down the steps, hardly daring to rest on any one of them. You reach the end without further incident. Turn to 16.



143

Sentries are often appointed as such because of their brawn and combat experience. This one is no exception. The old Dwarf will be no help to you in this fight – he stands aside as you close with the soldier.

SOUTHERN

SWORDSMAN SKILL 9 STAMINA 18

If at any time during the fight you have 6 or more points of STAMINA less than the soldier, turn to 74. You can *Escape* at any time after the first combat round. You flee along a narrow corridor and are relieved to find that the swordsman does not consider you worth pursuing (turn to 87). If you stay and win, turn to 369.

144

You have been crouched in a crevice between clammy boulders for quite some time, and you are getting cold and stiff. The old man has not moved. You are beginning to realize that concealing yourself in this pile of rocks was a waste of time, when you hear noises from behind you, back down the path. You extricate yourself from among the boulders and head cautiously downhill.

You follow the path away from the ruined temple for several minutes, and then come face to face with one of the southern warriors and a strange animal that he is holding on a leash. The animal looks something like a low-bellied tracking dog, but it has a white, hairless, distended body, sharp talons on all four paws, and a face that looks distressingly

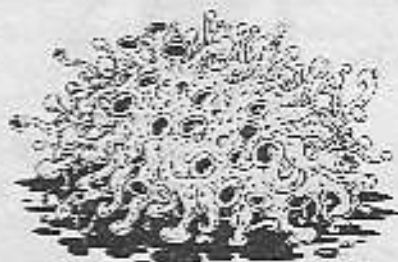
human – except for the elongated nose that terminates in a snuffling, trumpet-shaped orifice. On seeing you, the swordsman utters a guttural cry, draws his weapon and releases the unpleasant beast. It howls and races towards you. You have to fight it and, if you win, you will then have to fight the swordsman.

	SKILL	STAMINA
SNUFF HOUND	5	4
SOUTHERN SWORDSMAN	6	5

If you kill them both, you hurry back to the temple to see the old man. Turn to 263.

145

The soaring wall of fire continues to burn with undiminished vigour. If you want to try to jump through it, take a long run at it and turn to 231. If you would rather try to approach the inferno slowly, turn to 352.

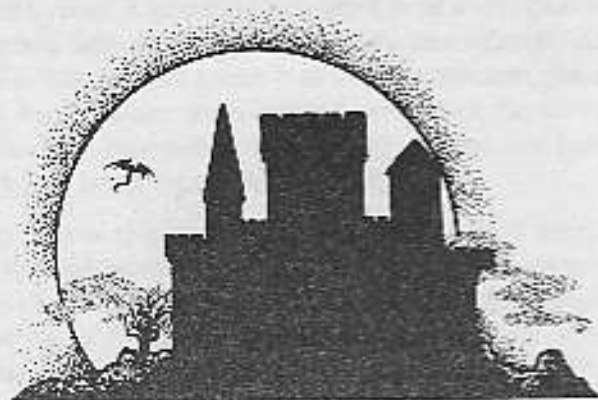


146

You look into the passage from which the creature emerged and see that it branches: the main path continues downwards, but a small tunnel, almost blocked with rubble, leads upwards and to the left. Will you take the main passage (turn to 9) or the side-tunnel (turn to 296)?

147

The truncated trident almost crackles with energy as you insert one of its points into the keyhole. To your surprise, the lock begins to twist and sag, turning molten even though there is no source of heat. You push against the door and it opens a little. Replacing the head of the trident in your backpack, you grip your weapon and walk through the doorway. Turn to 7.



148

You step out of empty air and into the branch of a conifer. You fall to the ground in a shower of pine needles. You are in a forest on a hillside; through the trees you glimpse the waters of a lake. You have no idea where you are, but you orient yourself by the sun and head south. In several days' time you will reach the port of Arion, where you will discover that the magic portal has transported you across the entire width of the continent of Khul. The journey to Neuburg will be long and difficult. The sea passage from Arion to Kelther alone will take weeks – if you are lucky enough to find a vessel that will take you. No doubt your expedition will have its share of incidents and mayhem; but this adventure ends here.

149

You return to the grocery stall and survey the array of cold meat pies and small loaves of crusty bread temptingly displayed in the open air. A single Gold Piece will buy enough for three meals; or, if you are feeling desperate or daring, you might be able to filch enough for one meal while no one is looking. If you want to buy three meals, turn to 383. If you try to steal one, turn to 229.

If you would rather leave the Merchants' Quarter of Neuburg, you can go to any part of the town you have not already visited. You could either make your way down to the river (turn to 90), walk across town to the Temple Quarter (turn to 195), or go up Castle Hill to Neuburg Keep (turn to 289).

150

Cernic is close to panic, but answers your questions. 'The Talisman of Loth is Oiden's gift,' he explains. 'It was both a curse and a blessing for Loth, a leader of our people before we became field-ploughers and town-dwellers. His skill in battle was equalled by his pride and self-love, and he set up images of himself for worship. Oiden's Talisman made him stronger yet in combat - its light befuddles enemies, especially such Hellspawn as infest this castle - but at the cost of Loth's favoured pastime. Never look in a mirror while you wear the Talisman - it will destroy you.'

The Margrave is under the spell of a wizard from Zagoula who is restoring life to what remains of the sorcerer Xakhaz. This wizard wears red robes and inhabits guarded chambers at the end of the corridor below this dungeon. Xakhaz is alive now, but still sealed in the deeper levels of these tunnels; the only way to reach him is through the wizard's chambers.'

Cernic pulls away from you and scampers through the open door out of the dungeon hallway. After a few minutes, you follow. Turn to 376.

151

'I thought you were looking a bit peaky,' says the Dwarf, 'although I'm not surprised at anyone being, shall we say, a bit more nervy than usual, what with all these strange beasties on the prowl and suchlike. I'll put something together that'll soon sort you out.'

We'll need some of this dried herb here, it's known as Wolfwell; and then this root, ground to a powder - it's Orcsbane, but we won't use very much; and from this jar a few Mountainsweet flowers, dried in the smoke of Honeytongue wood. Pound it all together, and there you have it. It's best taken as an infusion, and followed by a good night's sleep; but you'd better try to eat it dry. It won't taste good, but it should do the trick.'

And, sure enough, although you choke on the powdery mixture, it has a definite effect. You feel warmed - as if the sun had suddenly broken through the clouds. You stretch your limbs and laugh with joy. You can restore up to 2 points of lost WILLPOWER. The Dwarf has more information for you. Turn to 396.

152

As easily as walking through a door, you step out of the waiting-room and on to the crenellated roof of the Keep. Your enjoyment of the panoramic views and bracing wind is spoilt by the fact that you are inside an iron cage. It resists all your efforts to escape. After you have been on the roof for several days, a soldier pops up through a trapdoor, sees you, disappears again, and returns later with a troop of swordsmen. You are taken away and soon afterwards executed as a spy.



153

Brushing away crushed spiders, you look for the green globe. It did not break when you dropped it, but it is now glowing very brightly and is getting brighter by the minute. It is radiating increasingly intense heat. Will you:

- Walk away from it? Turn to 330
 Put it into your backpack? Turn to 36
 Stay close to it to see what happens? Turn to 178

154

You are screaming uncontrollably. The pain is insupportable. You see nothing but the leering features of the Vitriol Essence. He is toying with you; choosing his moment to lacerate you again with his dreadful claws. You cannot find the will to fight him. Did you slip or did you jump? The result is the same. The pool is acid: for a few seconds it feels as though you are in the heart of a furnace, and then your lifeless body disintegrates as it sinks to the bottom.

155

This corridor has many natural recesses in its rock walls. You are able to get quite close to the guards outside the double doors by flitting from cover to cover. However, you are unable to gain much more information. The guards look bored and impatient, but reasonably alert, and you have no way of telling whether there are more soldiers beyond the doors.

It would be impossible to rush the guards and dispose of them before they could raise the alarm. You can think of only four courses of action.

If you decide to emerge from hiding and charge the two guardsmen, turn to 71. If you want to march up to them, claim to be acting on instructions from the Margrave, and order them to leave their post, turn to 346. If you prefer to slip away back to the entrance to this corridor and await developments, turn to 293. If you want to leave this corridor and instead explore the left-hand passage, turn to 252.

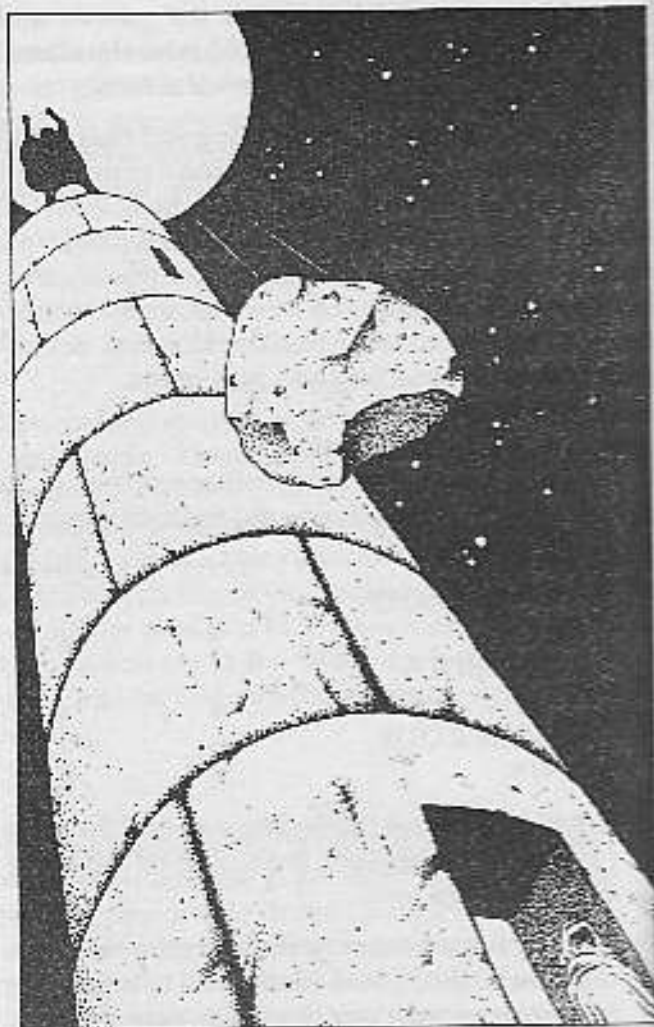
156

The second group of young ruffians moves in to attack you. Fight them as you did the first group.

	SKILL	STAMINA
Fourth MURDEROUS URCHIN	5	4
Fifth MURDEROUS URCHIN	4	4
Sixth MURDEROUS URCHIN	5	6

If you win, you search the bodies, and find they had only 3 Gold Pieces between them. Record this booty on your *Adventure Sheet*.

Abnormally large rats are gathering in the shadows. Some of the heaps of fetid muck seem to be moving of their own accord. You think it is time to leave. Turn to 149.



157

You open the door and find the blade of a curved sword inches from your nose. You duck and crouch instinctively, ready to fight, but the hiss of many swords leaving their scabbards deters you. You have no choice but to surrender – you have walked into the section of the outer bailey that houses the hordes of southern warriors. They remove all your possessions and clothes, lock you into an iron cell, and provide you with decent rations. Each evening they bring you out to play a game called 'Stone-drop': you are pegged spreadeagled on the ground at the foot of one of the towers, and two swordsmen, chosen by lot, have one chance each to drop a boulder from the top of the tower on to your head. All the soldiers in the barracks come to watch, and much excitement is generated. Gold Pieces change hands at a furious rate as wagers are laid on which man will drop his boulder nearer to your head, and on how many days it will be before one of the drops is accurate enough to crush your skull. Eventually, one of them is, and does.

158

You place the incandescent globe in front of the little wooden door and back away. Within seconds the sphere is too bright to look at and you can feel its heat from the far end of the passage. Then it explodes. The roar is unbearably loud, and the shock-wave hurls you against the rock wall. When your head clears and the dust begins to settle, you see that the little wooden door has been completely

pulverized. You walk towards the open doorway and, gripping your weapon, you walk through it. Turn to 255.

159

You race across the courtyard and dive through the gap between the enormous double doors. You are in a quiet inner bailey, with the solid shape of the Keep itself looming in front of you. Your pursuers are right behind you, but the double doors can be barred from this side with beams the size of tree-trunks - if you can close the open door in time. You put your shoulder to the door and push.

Add together your SKILL and STAMINA. Roll one die eight times. If the total is less than your combined SKILL and STAMINA, turn to 308; otherwise, turn to 72.

160

The illusionist Senyakhaz is an accomplished knife-fighter.

SENYAKHAZ SKILL 9 STAMINA 8

If you defeat her, you have earned the thanks of the Margrave and the people of Neuburg. The beautiful Zagoulan had enthralled Baron Tholdur and was the leader of the southern soldiery. However, you have still to discover and destroy the source of the evil and unnatural creatures that plague the town. The tall, metal-framed mirror seemed important to

Senyakhaz; so did the small black box that you now prise from her lifeless fingers. It is hollow and rattles, but is sealed. If you smash it open, turn to 381. If you inspect its surfaces, turn to 131.

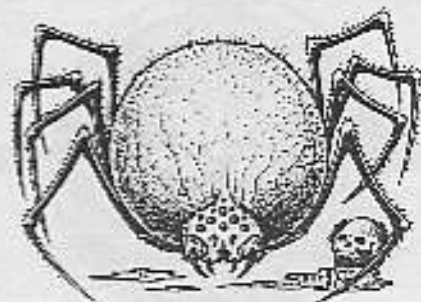
161

Evading the clutching hands of your guards, you flee into the dark tunnel. Within seconds you are round a corner and in complete blackness. You collide with a rock wall, stumble over a boulder and collapse to the ground in a daze. You recover as the first of your pursuers approaches, holding aloft a flaring torch. He fails to see you, and as your blade slices into his leg he howls with pain, drops the torch, and prepares for combat.

SOUTHERN

SWORDSMAN SKILL 6 STAMINA 4

If you kill him within two Attack Rounds, you can run off along the tunnel, but without the benefit of the torch, which has burnt out (turn to 370). If you are still fighting after two Attack Rounds, turn to 278.



162

You slide down the muddy slope and you are unable to prevent yourself slipping straight into the murky pool. Thigh-deep in stagnant water, you are horrified to feel your legs being clasped by muscular tendrils. You draw your sword and prepare to fight the mottled creature that is surfacing in front of you. Turn to 183.

163

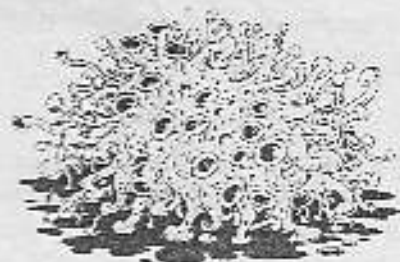
You really are very unlucky indeed. The two mutated creatures were the victims of a disease magically created by the sorcerer Xakhaz. The disease is infectious, and you have been infected. Before you reach the end of the corridor your neck will begin to swell and to hurt abominably. Even at this stage you will have a suspicion of the truth. You will fall into a fever from which, if someone finds and tends you, you will recover. But you will have changed. You will be confused, violent, less than human, and abhorred by anyone you meet. An unpleasant fate for such a promising adventurer.



164

You know Baron Tholdur! Any friend of our Margrave is welcome here. You must try a glass of our very special Neuburg brandy! No? Perhaps you have experienced it before . . . But wait! The innkeeper looks at you sharply. 'How can I be sure you are not trying to trick me? You say you were at Helm Hill, but that battle is common knowledge. Can you prove you know Baron Tholdur?'

Concealed in your belt you keep a bejewelled gold ring inscribed with a comradely message from the Margrave. It would prove that you know him – but it is immensely valuable and would tempt all but the most honest of men. If you want to show it to the innkeeper, turn to 343. If you would rather drop the subject of Baron Tholdur, turn to 301.





165

You unlock the door and push it open. The room beyond has been furnished sumptuously, but you see immediately that all the brocade hangings and silk bed-covers have been torn to ribbons. Even the polished wood surfaces of the furniture are gouged with deep scratches. The only occupant of the room is a young girl who is watching you intently. She has long golden hair, and is wearing about her neck an iron ring which is attached by a long chain to a similar ring set into the stone wall. She is also wearing the strangest suit of armour you have ever seen. The breastplate, and the plates covering her shoulders, forearms and shins, are bristling with needle-sharp spikes. As you watch, she flexes her gauntlets and curved, claw-like blades emerge at the ends of her fingers. Her eyes fill with tears and she attacks. If you are wearing ear-plugs, turn to 318; if not, turn to 187.

166

You select a barrel and turn its tap, filling the cup with clear, golden liquid. It has a spicy fragrance and tastes delicious. Having drained the cup you feel considerably refreshed: restore up to 2 points of STAMINA, if you need to, before turning to 286.

167

Xakhaz is a formidable opponent. He is so large that he can absorb more damage than any human being; and he can attack with many of his limbs simultaneously. He carries no weapons, so his hands are

useful only for punching, grabbing and gouging; but he also has, among many variations, long insect-like legs with razor-sharp edges, and trunk-like tentacles terminating in fang-filled mouths.

XAKHAZ SKILL 14 STAMINA 32

The Talisman of Loth, if you have it, has only limited effect on such a monster – it reduces Xakhaz's SKILL by 1 point. If you have the Trident of Skarlos, however, you find that it seems to revel in skewering the mountain of limbs – it causes an extra 5 points of STAMINA loss each time you wound with it. If you succeed in killing Xakhaz, turn to 271.

168

You dip one tentative finger into the green liquid. It is cold, but quite refreshing. Nothing unpleasant occurs. You submerge your whole hand. You can feel nothing at all on the bottom of the basin, so you pull your hand out again. It is covered in a green film. You wipe it against your jerkin – and you are surprised to find that the green colour will not wipe off. Within minutes your hand begins to itch, and you are appalled to find that tiny plants appear to be sprouting under your fingernails and between your fingers. You have immersed your hand in concentrated magical fertilizer, and it is now a haven for tiny airborne organisms. You must reduce your SKILL by 1 point permanently because of the constant irritation; but if you survive this adventure you will find that you really do have 'green fingers' – anything you plant will grow well. You may now

investigate the overgrown path beyond the statue (turn to 232), or return to the edge of the garden and follow the perimeter path (turn to 11).

169

As you leave the room the mirror frame turns white-hot and explodes in molten blobs. Senyakhaz's magic portal has been destroyed, and you are still alive to assess the situation. You must confess that you have not been successful. The townspeople of Neuburg will thank you, certainly: you have freed their Margrave from foreign influence, and no doubt he will waste no time in expelling the southern soldiers. And now that the portal is destroyed, there is no route by which the appalling creations of the mad sorcerer Xakhaz can be released to plague the surface world. But you know that Senyakhaz is still alive and well – and possibly still able to reach the unknown depths beneath Neuburg Keep, where the evil, aeons-old sorcerer grows stronger, more insane and more determined on revenge. You have failed in your mission: you have merely postponed the day of reckoning for the people of Neuburg.

170

The glowing passage extends for only twenty paces or so in both directions from the point where your side-tunnel joins it. To the right, the passage ends at a large door made of sturdy beams and reinforced with iron bands. It has a metal panel with a keyhole, and seems to be locked. To the left there are two

doors: one is small and wooden, while the other is massive and made of riveted plates of solid metal. The small door has a handle but no lock; the metal door has three huge keyholes, and looks like a thief's nightmare. If you have a green globe, turn to 104. If you have a blue spear-head, turn to 207.

171

Two robed warriors, looking impassive and very out of place, are standing in a clear space on a nearby street corner – and they are staring straight at you.

You turn to face them and stare back. After a few moments, without a word to one another, they abruptly walk off into an alley. Perplexed, you put your hands on your hips – and realize that your purse is missing. The strings dangling from your belt have been cleanly cut. There is no sign of the thief. And now you have no money to buy provisions – or anything else. Turn to 149.

172

Smoke from two open fires mingles with steam from bubbling pots to create a swirling fog in the kitchen. You blunder into a table, knock over a rack of vegetables, and make enough commotion to attract the attention of all the kitchen staff. The smoke clears momentarily and you find yourself surrounded by Orcs, Gnomes and swordsmen, armed with a bewildering variety of weapons and kitchen implements. 'What a treat!' enthuses one of the Orcs. 'Roast human for supper tonight!' The circle closes in. Your adventure ends here.

173

Both your shoulders are numb and you are gasping for breath, but at last you hear the noise of rending masonry as the door's hinges give way. Deduct 1 point of STAMINA: you chose a particularly strenuous way to get through this door. Even though the hinges are broken, the door still proves hard to open. Turn to 116.

174

It is true that you feel very tired. You deserve a rest. The chair is wonderfully comfortable. Senya has a deliciously soothing voice and a gentle smile; you cannot take your eyes off the magnificent red jewel shimmering at her neck. Nothing seems important except that you should stay here and relax. You are not alarmed when the arms and legs of the chair mould themselves around your limbs – it feels even more comfortable. You die slowly and peacefully, unaware that Senya is no serving-girl but the wizard Senyakhaz, a mistress of illusion. You are not sitting in a chair: you are being engulfed by a Vlodblad, a hideous creation of the resurrected evil sorcerer in the depths. The Vlodblad surrounds you and drains your STAMINA, while you remain hypnotized by Senyakhaz's flickering ruby.

175

You reach a corner of the garden. The path and the wall turn to the left, and in the corner a gap in the wall forms a rough doorway into the base of one of the battlement towers. The interior of the tower is dark and silent. The path continues uninterrupted

alongside the garden until it reaches another tower at the next corner. Do you want to enter the base of the battlement tower (turn to 284)? Or will you continue to the next corner of the garden (turn to 44)?

176

You grip the tube and try to imagine something emerging from it. Instantly a shaft of transparent crystal appears at the end with the symbol. It is a long, thin cone of very hard material, and the innocuous brass tube has been transformed into an effective stabbing weapon. Further investigation reveals that the crystal shaft is very cold indeed – so cold that it will damage anything living that it touches. It resembles a large, thin and very deadly icicle. The end of the tube that you are holding is insulated against the unnatural cold. While you are using this weapon you may add 2 points to your SKILL; however, the Ice Sword draws its energy from its holder, and you must deduct 1 point of STAMINA each time that you generate its icy blade (in addition to any STAMINA that you lose through wounds). Deduct 1 point of STAMINA now, and turn to 359.

177

The tapestry is real. The floor in front of it is false. You drop helplessly through a black void and land, stunned, on a stone floor. Lose 3 points of STAMINA. The floor slopes steeply and is larded with grease. You cannot stop yourself sliding downwards with increasing speed. You are on a chute that spirals down through the rock in great loops.

You are battered, dizzy and barely conscious by the time the chute straightens and ejects you into a cavern lit by a pale green luminescence. The light emanates from the seething slime that covers the floor of the cavern. You hurtle across a slick rocky ledge and are heading for the slime. *Test your Luck.* If you are Lucky, turn to 316. If not, turn to 124.

178

Within seconds the globe's light is so intense that you cannot look directly at it. It is radiating heat like a roaring furnace. An impossibly high-pitched note sounds – and then the globe explodes with a force that flattens the vegetation in the garden, strips the trees and blows apart the nearby tower. You are completely obliterated.

179

You survey your chamber with a cautious eye. It looks clean and comfortable. You search beneath the mattress and behind the door: nothing. You secure the door with its strong iron bolt. Crossing to the window, you slowly unlatch and push open one of the heavy wooden shutters. The night is completely silent. You step out on to a small balcony. It would be only a jump down to the street, and you could clamber back easily. What will you do next?

If you want to drop to the street and explore the town, turn to 68. If you would rather go up the hill to Neuburg Keep, turn to 106. If you decide to return to your room, secure the shutters, throw off your cloak and boots and go to bed, turn to 372.

180

Prancing around the slow-moving warrior, evading his broadsword and waving the crackling Trident above your head, you attempt to goad the luminous warrior into incautious speech. He says nothing but 'Be gone or die!', and continues to slide towards you. You have just yelled, 'What's this then? If you're Skarlos, how is it I have your Trident?', when the warrior shudders and halts, and another voice, shrill and eerie, cuts through the darkness. 'My poor little joke Skarlos will be no match for you, it seems. Come through into my workroom. Xakhaz welcomes spirited new slaves.' If you want to peer through the doorway, turn to 279. If you decide to pause to inspect the motionless warrior, turn to 107.

181

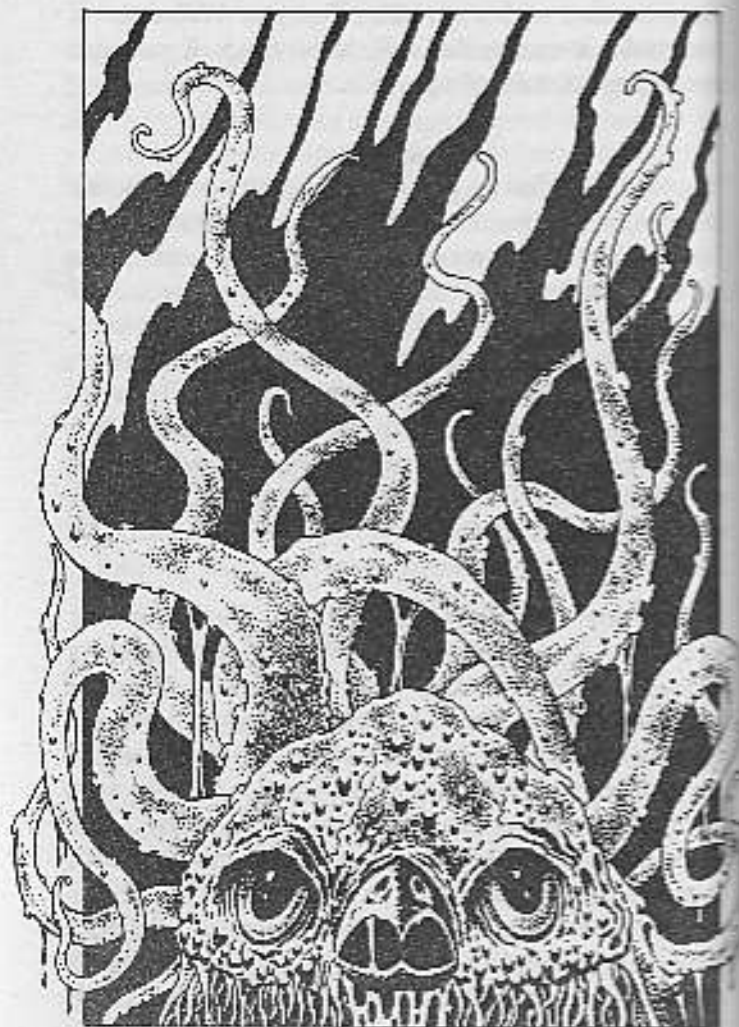
You unbuckle the straps of your pack, fold back the leather flap and stare in amazement at the wriggling mass that fills the inside of the pack. Hundreds of finger-like protuberances reach up from a shifting, lumpy core. Before you can react, the thing jumps towards your face. You duck instinctively, but little rubbery tentacles catch in your hair and as you leap to your feet you find that the blood-seeking circular suckers on the thing's bloated body are bobbing around your face and neck. In the midst of your terror a flash of insight tells you that the Blood-Lurcher tentacle has fed off your rations and has mutated into this Kiss of Death Protoplasm. The thing's many circular lips writhe as they strive to

make contact with your skin. *Test your Willpower.* If you make a successful roll, turn to 37. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 250.

182

The weapon that is glowing in your hands is the Trident of Skarlos, forged with long-forgotten enchantments in the mountains far to the north. It is made entirely of a metal with a blue sheen, and every surface is covered with intricate engravings. The head of the weapon – three barbed points running together into a cylindrical shaft – is small and elegant; by contrast the handle is bulky and has asymmetrical protuberances, in spite of which it is easy to hold with one hand. The handle is its power source – now that the weapon is whole again, the light given off by the separate parts is fading rapidly.

In addition to being easy to use, the Trident is powerful. It delivers a bolt of energy as well as wounding in the normal way. When using it, add 2 points to your SKILL. Against human opponents the Trident will cause an extra 2 points of STAMINA loss when you wound with it; but it was designed for fighting sorcerous and undead creatures, and therefore against non-human opponents you will cause an extra 4 points of STAMINA loss each time you wound. Its magic gives you strength and purpose: restore up to 2 points of WILLPOWER, if you are below your *Initial* score. Lastly, restore 1 LUCK point for finding such an effective weapon! With renewed confidence you return to the red passage. Turn to 240.



183

You are half immersed in filthy water, with your legs encircled by tentacles. Reduce your **SKILL** by 3 points while fighting under these conditions.

MOTTLED KRAKEN SKILL 8 STAMINA 10

If you kill it, you scramble up the muddy slope and leave the tower. You can continue to follow the perimeter path (turn to 11), or you can cut your way to the clearing in the centre of the garden (turn to 319).

184

You crawl into the opening and wriggle downwards. Soon you are in complete darkness, and you hold your sword out in front of you as a guide. As you descend, the hole widens and slopes more steeply. You can feel that other tunnels from the surface are joining yours. You see light ahead, a pale luminescence. There is a slithering noise and a gust of noxious air. And then, questing upwards along the tunnel, comes a featureless cylinder of glowing slime. It touches your sword-point and halts. You stab it and it retreats. After several more attempts to continue, and several more stabs, it contracts and slithers back down the hole. You breathe a sigh of relief and decide whether to follow it (turn to 65) or laboriously crawl backwards up the nearly vertical tunnel, rest for a few minutes, and then go through the door in the end wall of the courtyard (turn to 157).

185

You stare in horror at the wriggling mass that fills the inside of your pack. Hundreds of finger-like protuberances reach up from a shifting, lumpy core. Before you can react, the thing jumps towards your face. You duck instinctively, but little rubbery tentacles catch in your hair and as you leap to your feet you find that the blood-seeking circular suckers on the thing's bloated body are bobbing around your face and neck. In the midst of your terror a flash of insight tells you that the Blood-Lurcher tentacle has fed off your rations and has mutated into this Kiss of Death Protoplasm. The thing's many circular lips writhe as they strive to make contact with your skin. *Test your Willpower.* If you make a successful roll, turn to 67. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 290.

186

Terrified townsfolk scatter as you unsheathe your sword and prepare to meet the shopkeeper's rabid onslaught. His loud roars are attracting attention, and you realize that you will have to finish him off quickly, before anyone arrives to help him.

ANGRY GROCER SKILL 7 STAMINA 4

You fight for two Attack Rounds. If, at the end of two rounds, your opponent is dead, turn to 364. If he is still alive, turn to 101.



187

Claws glittering, the girl hurls herself at you with desperate ferocity. You defend yourself.

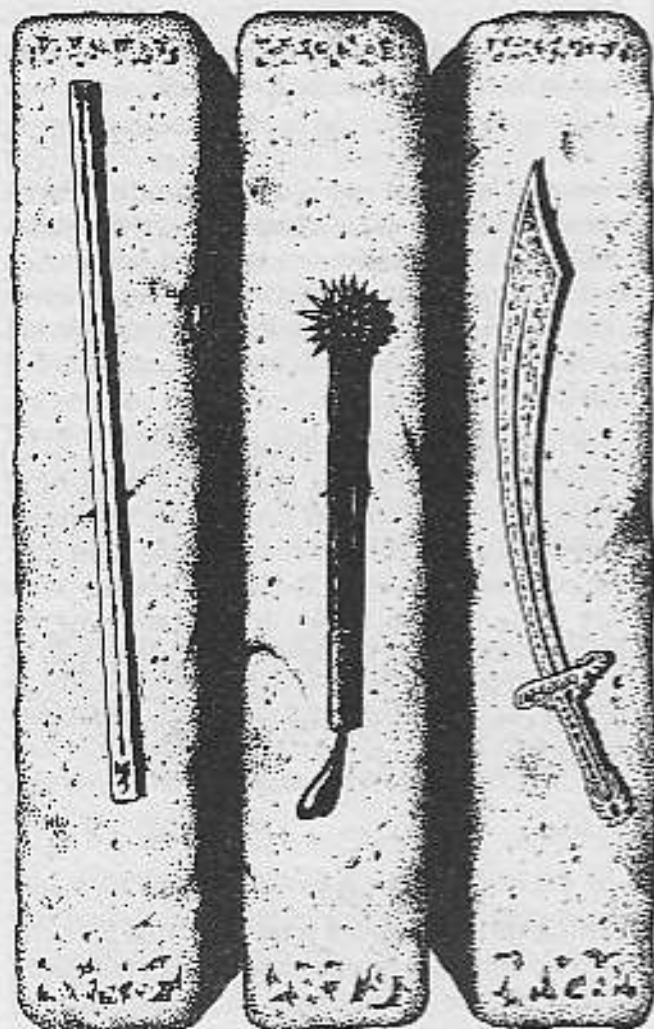
SPIKED MAIDEN SKILL 10 STAMINA 8

Even as she lashes at you with her deadly talons, she sobs and shouts and screams, tears spilling from her wild eyes. You make out some of her words: 'Away! Go away! Run while you can! These claws . . . this metal . . . I can't help it. I don't want to kill you. *She did it!* She put me in here . . . in this metal . . . Help me!'

You are no longer sure you should kill this girl. After one round of combat you can *Escape*, making a mental vow to return - if you survive this adventure - to investigate further. Once out of the door you can unlock the door across the hall, if you have not already done so (turn to 96), or you can leave the dungeon area through the open door (turn to 376). If you have the Runic Axe, or if you are not convinced by the girl's protestations, you continue to fight her. If you kill her, turn to 63.

188

You unbuckle the straps of your pack, fold back the leather flap and stare in amazement at the wriggling mass that fills the inside of the pack. Hundreds of finger-like protuberances reach up from a shifting, lumpy core. Before you can react, the thing jumps towards your face. You duck instinctively, but little rubbery tentacles catch in your hair and as you leap



to your feet you find that the blood-seeking circular suckers on the thing's bloated body are hobbing around your face and neck. In the midst of your terror a flash of insight tells you that the Blood-Lurcher tentacle has fed off your rations and has mutated into this Kiss of Death Protoplasm. The thing's many circular lips writhe as they strive to make contact with your skin. *Test your Willpower.* If you make a successful roll, turn to 17. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 210.

189

As the Orc's mountainous body crashes to the floor, you lunge at the rope escaping from his dead fingers. *Test your Luck.* If you are Lucky, turn to 236. If you are Unlucky, turn to 138.

190

Enough red light seeps through the open doorway to enable you to see that you are in a vast armoury. Rows of swords, shields, spears and pikes disappear into the gloom. You have never seen so many weapons in one room. They are all of antique design and, you judge, are of southern origin. They have been stored here for centuries, but you can see very little corrosion on them; in fact, they are hardly dusty. In front of you, between the stacked rows, there are three stone slabs. On each slab rests one weapon. You cannot decipher the carvings on the stones, but it is clear that each of these weapons is special in some way.

If you are content with the weapon you have, there is nothing of interest to you in this room (turn to 359). If you want to exchange your weapon for one of the three on the slabs, you can choose between:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| A richly decorated scimitar | Turn to 247 |
| A black mace with silver-tipped spikes | Turn to 120 |
| A thin brass tube | Turn to 13 |

191

The old priest stares at you; disbelief, sorrow and anger cross his face. 'In that case, my friend,' he snaps, 'I urge you to leave this town forthwith. It holds nothing for you but danger and death. Now quit this holy place at once!'

You stumble into the daylight. It is unwise to irritate the High Priest of Oiden. He has cursed you. Reduce your *Initial* SKILL and STAMINA by 1 point each. You return to the centre of town. Turn to 108.

192

You grit your teeth and turn away from the girl's smiling face. You turn back and strike at her. Turn to 328.



193

As you step into the gloomy passage between the towers, you detect a flicker of movement. You spin round and just manage to avoid a thrusting sword. You are confronted by one of the robed warriors – and he clearly intends to fight first and ask questions later, if at all.

SOUTHERN

SWORDSMAN

SKILL 8

STAMINA 6

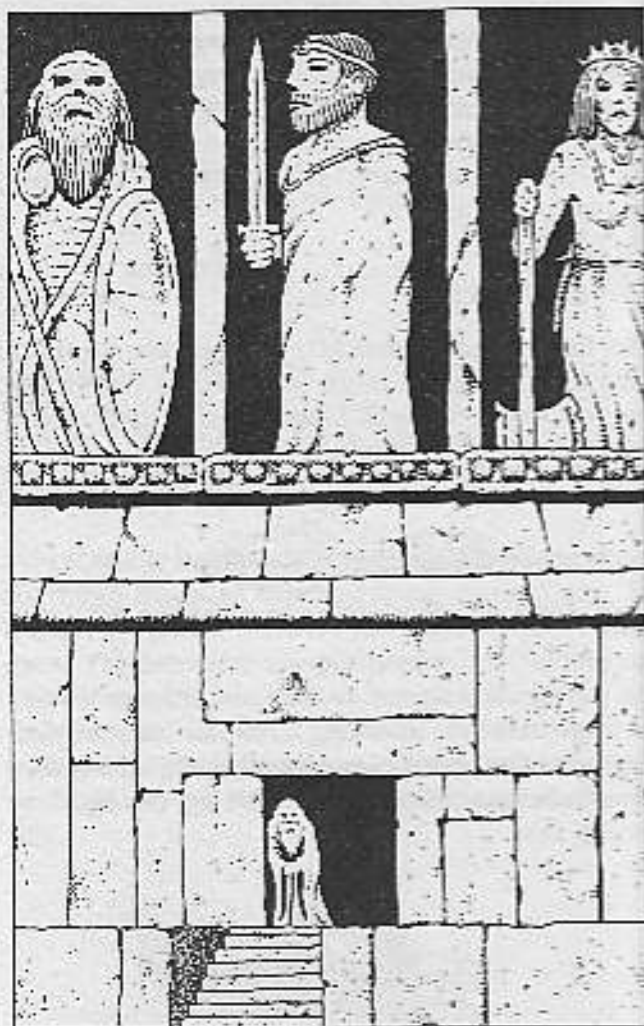
After two rounds of combat, you hear the sound of many feet charging down stone stairs within the towers. Do you want to *Escape* (turn to 347), or will you stay and fight all comers (turn to 99)?



194

You have a clear choice: to stay and attempt to fight the three massive, decaying Chrabats (turn to 367), or to leave the strange blue metal shaft, which they seem to be guarding, and retreat up the stairway (turn to 240).





195

The Temple Quarter of Neuburg is one of the oldest parts of the little town, and the most peaceful. It contains a number of walled residences as well as the fairly humble shrines and temples to the northern gods that the ancestors of the Neuburgers brought with them when they settled this area by force several centuries ago. The newest and grandest temples, dedicated to the currently fashionable gods and goddesses of commerce and farming, occupy large parks along the magnificent New Wall Street. From here, narrower avenues climb the lower slopes of Castle Hill and provide access to the smaller and older shrines and temples. You find that walking up these winding avenues is like travelling backwards in time, into the history of Neuburg and its once barbaric peoples. But as you climb up past the ever more dilapidated temples of ever more ancient and forgotten cults, you begin to despair of finding anything useful in this part of the town. You head for an unusually grand building that looks as if it is the oldest temple of all; but as you approach, you see that it is virtually derelict and apparently deserted. If you want to press on and visit this last temple, turn to 322. If you would rather turn back to the centre of town, turn to 108.

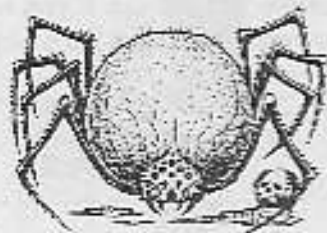


196

Your grip on sanity has been weakening since you entered Neuburg; now you feel relieved to let go. You no longer care that the creatures you just met were suffering from the effects of an infectious disease spawned by sorcery, and that you may be infected. You shun contact with other beings, and live the rest of your short life as a ragged, starving, scurrying denizen of the tunnels beneath the castle.

197

You select one of the few barrels that is in an upright position. It has a tap but no drinking-cup, so you pour a little of the barrel's contents into the palm of your hand and drink a mouthful of the brown liquid. It tastes bitter and sears the roof of your mouth. You begin to feel rather ill. The liquid is poisonous, but as you have consumed so little you lose only 2 points of STAMINA. You can now either look inside the barrel from which you have just drunk (turn to 366), or roll one die to taste the contents of a different barrel: if you roll 1, 2 or 3, turn to 166; if you roll 4, 5 or 6, turn to 84.



198

Something is wrong. It is impossible that three young women could look so similar; it must be an illusion. They are trying to bewitch you, and it is difficult to look away from them. You must attack them: it is the only way to break this spell. With a strangled cry, you raise your weapon. Which smiling, unarmed, defenceless girl will you strike:

The one on the left?

Turn to 328

The one in the middle?

Turn to 121

The one on the right?

Turn to 283

199

The crate is made of thick, seasoned hardwood, and the lid is held in place by nails as big as your fingers. Both your sword and your temper are close to snapping by the time you succeed in prising the lid away from the other timbers. The scrabbling noises from inside the crate rise to a crescendo as you flex your muscles and throw the lid aside – to find yourself staring at a disgusting and incomprehensible horror.

The crate is full of human limbs. There are hands, feet and arms; some are well preserved, others are decayed and putrid. The fetid stench is overpowering. And all of them are moving – slithering and groping towards you.

Test your Willpower (deduct 1 point of WILLPOWER). If you make a successful roll, turn to 135. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 314.

200

There is an iron ring set into the centre of the door, but no amount of twisting it, or pulling or pushing, will make the door open. It is clearly locked, and you have nothing with which to try to pick the lock. Perhaps the trident head will help? If you want to insert one of the trident's points into the keyhole, turn to 147. If not, you will have to try one of the other doors – the small wooden one (turn to 373) or the enormous metal one (turn to 243).

201

You bump into tables and trip over unidentifiable bloody fragments – some of which clutch at you as you pass – but you can move faster than Xakhaz's mountainous body of wriggling limbs. You will have to fight, however – unless you have both the Talisman of Loth and a green glass globe. If you have both of these items, and want to try to use them, turn to 18. If not, you must fight Xakhaz as best you can: turn to 167.

202

Most of the jars and bundles of dried herbs are unidentifiable, but you find one glass container with a label: 'Powdered root of Orcsbane. Danger: this herb has no taste but is deadly poison if taken in quantity.' The bottle is quite small, so you decide to slip it into your backpack. You can find nothing else of interest in the room, so you have no alternative but to leave by the door opposite the one through which you entered. Turn to 282.

203

Your search of Griltig's room reveals nothing valuable except for a small box containing 3 Gold Pieces. You may keep these. Bubbling in a pot suspended over a fire there is a stew. You are glad that you do not know the ingredients, but it smells wholesome and if you decide to eat some, it will restore up to 4 points of STAMINA. Nailed to the back of the door you find a sheet of parchment with instructions for Griltig penned in graceful script and signed, in a shaky hand, by Baron Tholdur. Griltig has been instructed to hand over all prisoners to the southern soldiers. The only exception is the female prisoner, who is to be kept in comfortable circumstances and who is not to be approached by anyone not wearing ear-plugs! Two plugs of candle wax, presumably for Griltig's big ears, dangle from a string hanging over the nail.

If you have not already done so, you can cross the hall and unlock the closed door. If you want to, you can wear the ear-plugs while doing so. Turn to 165. If you leave the dungeon area through the open door, turn to 376.



204

You drop your backpack and the green globe and throw yourself to the ground, rolling over and over and slapping at your body. Crushed spiders fall from your clothing, leaving sticky smears, but others attempt to find areas of exposed flesh into which to sink their mandibles. Fight them as if they were one opponent:

GIANT SPIDERS SKILL 6 STAMINA 8

If you destroy them all, turn to 153.

205

The elderly Dwarf snaps at you: 'This way, then. Come along!' He throws open a door and gestures for you to enter. You hesitate; you were hoping to slip away and roam the Keep at your leisure. The sentry turns, peers at you suspiciously and begins to walk towards you. 'Come along, now, come along!' scolds the Dwarf. 'Into the waiting-room, if you don't mind.' If you decide to enter the waiting-room, turn to 249. If you attack the sentry, turn to 143.

206

It seems as though several eternities pass as you shiver in the dank darkness of your cell. You sleep fitfully on the rotten straw and wake to find rodents gnawing at your toes. You feel hungry: if you have provisions, you have plenty of time to eat another meal. You begin to despair of anything ever happening. And then you hear light, hesitant footsteps

approaching your door. A key grates in the lock. With infinite slowness the door opens, and in the doorway a human shape is silhouetted against the feeble light from the dungeon hallway's single cresset. The figure lifts its shortsword and says: 'Who are you?' Will you attack (turn to 226), say that you are one of Tholdur's men, wrongly imprisoned (turn to 340), or say that you are on a mission to cleanse Neuburg and its Keep of their infestation of evil (turn to 85)?

207

The head of the trident is now glowing fiercely, and the flickering blue light reaches a new intensity when you point it at the large wooden door to your right. If you want to try to open this door, turn to 200. If you would rather try to unlock the metal door, turn to 243. If you want to try the small wooden door, turn to 373.

208

The dancing-girl dies. You feel wretched, and close to both nausea and weeping. The surviving dancer lays her hand on your arm, smiles sympathetically and whispers comforting words. You are grateful for her friendship and understanding. *Test your Willpower.* If you are successful, turn to 192. If not, you cannot bring yourself to continue killing. The young woman tells you that her name is Senya, and urges you to sit down and rest. You agree. Turn to 174.

209

The unusual hat is made of loosely wound strips of white cloth. It is surprisingly heavy and, turning it over, you find a shining, glutinous mass quivering inside. Two dark lumps embedded in the transparent gel seem to stare at you like eyes. You instinctively want to hurl it to the floor in disgust, but before you can do so you are taken with the idea of trying on the hat. You are not sure where the idea came from, but increasingly it appeals to you as the best course of action.

Test your Willpower. If you are successful, your desire to be rid of the thing overcomes the idea of wearing it, and you drop it, back away and climb the stairs (turn to 51). If you are unsuccessful, you cannot resist the suggestion that you should try on the hat. Turn to 133.

210

You cannot bring yourself to touch the loathsome object that has attached itself to your hair. In demented fear you jump up and down and shake your head, but the bulbous shape clings on and swings against your shoulders with soft thuds. Its suckers mouth mindlessly, waiting for an opportunity to touch the exposed skin of your face and give you the kiss of death. Inevitably, as your frantic twitching becomes wilder and wilder, a sucker touches your flesh and holds fast. The sac of the creature's body nestles against your face and begins to turn a dull pink as it draws out your blood. If you still have 6 or more points of *WILLPOWER*, turn to 73. If you now have less than 6 points, turn to 348.

211

The globe hits the floor and shatters harmlessly. You now have no alternative but to fight Xakhaz. Turn to 167.

212

You are in the inner bailey of the castle. Behind you are the ramparts of the second defensive wall, and in front of you, across the narrow courtyard, the massive bulk of the Keep itself juts out of jagged rocks and towers dizzyingly above you. You seem to be making progress: somewhere in that ominous edifice of black stone must be not only the Margrave, but also the source of the evil afflicting Neuburg.

There is no entrance to the Keep on this side, however. The slab-like walls are featureless. A deeply rutted track leads away from you, towards the left, between the Keep and the surrounding wall. This track must lead to the main entrance, and you have no choice but to follow it. First, however, as there are no guards in evidence, you decide to take this opportunity to take a short rest. You sit concealed behind a large buttress and put your backpack on your knees in order to take stock of its contents. Does it contain a piece of Blood-Lurcher tentacle? If so, turn to 355. If not, turn to 132.



213

You push one of the doors and it opens. You step cautiously into a small anteroom. It is sparsely furnished, and there is a door on your right and another on your left. You think you can hear voices from beyond the right-hand door. Which door will you try to go through, the left (turn to 387) or the right (turn to 6)?

214

Paralysed with shock, gasping for breath, and maddened by pain, you are in no condition to fight. If you still have 6 or more points of **WILLPOWER**, you must now *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to 320; if you are Unlucky, turn to 26. If you now have less than 6 points of **WILLPOWER**, turn to 154.

215

You emerge into a circular stone room. There are no guards, and your sword and pack are lying on the floor. You collect them, and then peer through the slits that pierce the thick wall. You realize that you are in the ground-floor room of one of the towers of Neuburg's East Gate. One of the slits gives you a clear view west along the main street leading to the centre of town; the sun has set behind the buildings, but the whole scene is lit by a beautiful red sky. Everything is very peaceful – too peaceful! The streets are almost deserted. There are no shouts from the riverside wharves, no priests chanting in the temples, no dogs snuffling in the piles of refuse

and no revellers stumbling from the inns. The silence is eerie.

You are determined to investigate; but first you must escape from this gatehouse. The one door is of solid oak, banded with iron, and is locked from the outside. You will have to try to force it open. Add together your **SKILL** and **STAMINA** scores. Roll one die eight times and add the results together. If the total is less than your combined **SKILL** and **STAMINA**, turn to 399; otherwise, turn to 41.

216

If you have added Orcsbane to the stew, turn to 35.
If not, turn to 304.



217

The slight, red-robed figure glides to the Margrave's side and interrupts his reminiscences by handing him a large goblet of wine, and then throwing back the folds of the robe's cowl. You are surprised to see that Tholdur's mysterious adviser is a breathtakingly beautiful woman. She kisses the Margrave's cheek and turns to you with a dazzling smile. She welcomes you graciously, encourages Tholdur to

drink, and suggests that after all your exertions you would like to rest in one of the guest bedrooms. You are worried by the Margrave's increasingly slurred speech as he endorses this idea; you are even more worried when the woman offers to conduct you to your room herself. Worry turns to alarm when, outside the Great Hall, she summons an 'escort' of a dozen swordsmen to accompany her. Unfortunately, there is nothing you can do. The woman is the sorceress Senyakhaz, and she and her swordsmen will make sure that you do not reach your bedroom alive.

218

You stride into the centre of the cloth pavilion and stand beside the table, marvelling at the array of tempting delicacies. Languorously, one of the ropes wraps itself around your waist – and in one sickening instant the scene changes to madness and horror. The ribbed black cable constricts, splintering your ribs and lifting you above the table, which you now see through clouds of pain as a jumbled pile of bones and rotting flesh. The billowing tent-sides are in fact writhing, leathery, veined membranes, and your destination, which you once saw as a mass of ribbons, is revealed as a pulsating red maw. The illusion is shattered, but so is your life.



219

You wake to find yourself on the stone floor, curled around the trunk of the tree. Every muscle aches, and your head is spinning. The Ordeal has cost you 1 point of STAMINA and 1 point of WILLPOWER; deduct them from your *Adventure Sheet*.

Only the strongest and most determined can withstand a meeting with Oiden,' Huw intones. 'You may climb the tree again, or you may leave.' If you want to experience the Ordeal again, return to 54. If you decide it is time to leave, turn to 368.

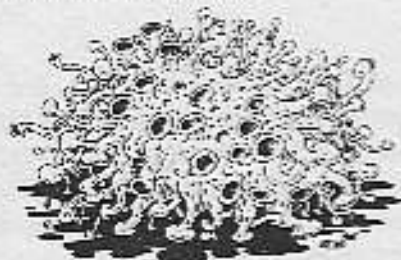
220

As you step out into the sun-bleached street, hundreds of swarthy faces turn to stare at you. Every other person in the noisy throng is swathed in light robes and shod in sandals; everything about you looks foreign. Among the onlookers are a troop of soldiers who arrest you simply because you are dressed so oddly. You discover that you are in Zagoula, the ancient city at the edge of the desert. You are imprisoned in the Tower of the Cheetah, and although no doubt you will one day escape or be released, this adventure ends here.



221

You place the incandescent globe in front of the large wooden door and back away. Within seconds the sphere is too bright to look at, and you can feel its heat from the far end of the passage. Then it explodes. The roar is unbearably loud, and the shockwave hurls you against the rock wall. When your head clears and the dust begins to settle, you see that nothing remains of the door except a few smoking splinters of wood hanging on twisted hinges. You grip your weapon and walk through the open doorway. Turn to 7.

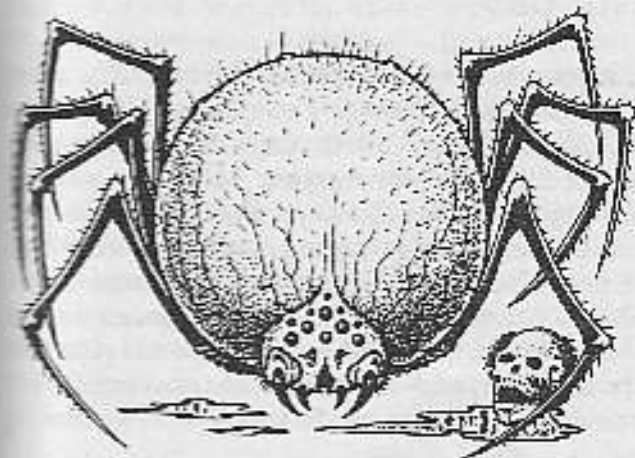


222

You place your backpack on a bench and begin to unbuckle it. Inches from your nose the Dwarf's battle-axe whistles through the air and slices your pack cleanly into two! Enraged, you draw your sword; but the Dwarf, still clutching the rune-covered haft of his weapon, is plainly almost as surprised as you are. Carefully, you separate the halves of your pack – and discover the still-twitching remains of the monstrosity that has been growing inside your backpack. The Blood-Lurcher tentacle has managed to absorb two portions of your

portions (deduct them from your *Adventure Sheet*) and has transmuted into a bloated, blood-sucking mass with hundreds of finger-sized feelers. Thanks to the Dwarf's prescient axe, the thing is dying.

If you had a globe of green glass in your pack, you find that it has been shattered into tiny shards; but in breaking, it has left behind a large emerald. Nothing else is damaged, and the Dwarf provides you with a new backpack. If you have any food left, turn to 3. If you now have no food, turn to 396.



223

You have never seen anything quite so unnerving as this young woman, perfectly normal up to the neck, but with her head folded back at an impossible angle and a forest of wriggling tentacles sprouting from her throat towards you. You run in circles around

the room, but she follows relentlessly, and you finally collapse, sobbing, to await your fate. She does not attempt to harm you; she is interested in booty, and her questing fingers search your body and your backpack. She takes any and all of the following items that you have: food, Gold Pieces, a green glass globe, the Talisman of Loth, an emerald. The yawning gulf of her mouth begins to close as she opens the door and rolls you out of the room with her feet. If you now have less than 6 points of WILL POWER, turn to 196. Otherwise, turn to 79.

224

With your back to the uneven wall you shuffle along the narrow ledge as quickly as you dare. When you reach the middle of the cavern's rear wall you are obliged to waste time trying to find a way of reaching up to take the keys. Eventually you succeed, but as you are returning along the third side of the pool the Vitriol Essence emerges from it and lashes at you with his claws. He has recovered some of his strength, but is less powerful than at your first encounter. His acid-dripping talons now inflict only 2 points of damage when he succeeds in wounding you.

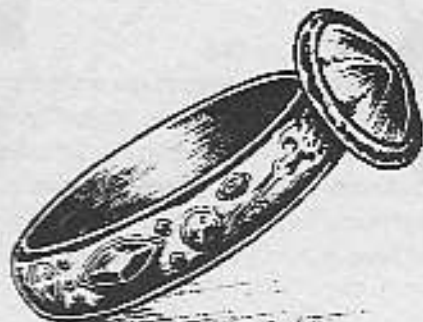
VITRIOL ESSENCE SKILL 8 STAMINA 4

If you kill him, you leave the cavern. Turn to 273.



225

The elderly Dwarf thinks hard for a moment. 'I can't think of much that'll help you on this one,' he mutters at last, 'except for what I've picked up from the kitchen servants in the Keep – those that are still there and haven't been kicked out by the southern rabble. They say there's someone hiding from the soldiers in the dungeon. He's lying low down there because it's the last place anyone'd think to look for him! Name's Cerwic or Cernic, or something similar. A priest, anyway, so he might be useful to you.' You thank the Dwarf for this information, but he says he has more to tell you. Turn to 396.





226

The force of your attack bowls your opponent over, and you both tumble through the cell's doorway and across the flagstones of the dungeon hall. The torchlight reveals a young man in military garb, but apparently unfamiliar with armed combat. This should be an easy fight.

YOUNG MAN

SKILL 4

STAMINA 8

After one round of combat, however, the youth finds time to snatch aside his tunic, and a ray of blinding white light strikes you in the face. Even after you have recovered from the initial shock, you find it impossible to look directly at your opponent. The effect is to reduce your SKILL by 2 points for the duration of this fight. If you are beginning to think that your attack was a mistake, after one more round of combat you can *Escape*, losing 2 STAMINA points, call a truce and explain exactly who you are (turn to 29). If you want to fight on to the death, or if you are wielding the Runic Axe, turn to 281 if you kill your opponent.

227

The guards have no reason to suspect that you are a particularly brave or clever intruder, and as you seem prepared to cooperate with their wishes, they adopt a relaxed attitude. You are amazed that they make no effort to deprive you of your weapon and backpack. Restore 1 point of LUCK, and turn to 64.

228

You follow the corridor a little further and find that it ends at a staircase that spirals downwards into darkness. You set off down it. Turn to 300.

229

Test your Luck. If you are Unlucky, turn to 75. If you are Lucky, you succeed in shoplifting a meat pie and a small loaf. Furtively, you slip your ill-gotten gains into your backpack. Record the addition of one meal on your *Adventure Sheet*. Turn to 280.

230

The talons of the Vitriol Essence rake your body, scoring your flesh and despoiling streams of acid. Deduct 4 points from your STAMINA. Such a wound is not only deep and serious; it is also cripplingly painful. Can you stand the agony? *Test your Willpower.* If you make an unsuccessful roll, turn to 19. If you make a successful roll, you summon up the fortitude to either continue the battle (return to 287) or run from the cavern and scurry back to your dungeon cell (turn to 206).

231

You hurtle through the columns of flame without suffering a single burn. You do not even feel warm. The wall of fire is an illusion. Unfortunately the pit that has swung open on the other side is completely real. *Test your Luck.* If you are Lucky, turn to 48. If you are Unlucky, turn to 105.

232

You walk past the statue and begin to cut a way through the foliage that has grown across the path. In front of you, rooted in the middle of the path, is a disturbingly malformed tree. The closer you get, the more the twisted trunk and waving leaves seem to resemble an unnatural parody of something else. For some reason, the tattered clothes hanging on the boughs are peculiarly terrifying; how could they possibly grow *around* the branches like that? And there, up in that knotty bole of wood – surely those look too much like eyes? They are moving . . .

This tree was once a person. *Test your Willpower.* If you roll successfully, turn to 82. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 125.

233

Senyakhaz nervously fingers the ruby pendant at her throat while you question her. She seems to be ignorant of events within Neuburg Keep. In fact she is clearly just a very frightened young woman. And get through her fear you manage to detect her sympathy and consideration. She is really a very nice person. She makes shy but friendly comments like: 'That weapon must be awfully heavy!' and 'You look worn out – you are obviously very tired.'

You are completely off your guard when she plunges her knife into your shoulder. Deduct 2 points of STAMINA. Her subtle suggestions have worked too: you feel exhausted and scarcely capable of fighting. Reduce your SKILL by 4 points while you fight Senyakhaz. Turn to 160.



234

You grip the tube and try to imagine how it might function as a weapon. Perhaps something emerges from it? As soon as you think this, a thin shaft of transparent crystal appears from the tube – unfortunately, from the end you are holding, which instantly turns so cold that it burns your hand. You lose 2 points of STAMINA and drop the tube. The shaft of crystal disappears. You try again, this time holding the end without the symbol. Turn to 176.

235

From the other side of the door you hear the sounds of heavy objects being laboriously shifted, and then a gruff voice calls: 'Come in – slowly, and with your weapons sheathed!'

You push the door open to reveal a large, airy room full of tidy shelves of plant pots, chests full of garden tools, and herbs drying in bundles in the rafters. There are windows in the walls to your right and left, and another door in the wall opposite you. In the middle of the room stands a frail old Dwarf with bright green hands and forearms; there is a rune-inscribed battle-axe stuck through his belt, and you suspect that he can use it effectively despite his great age. He addresses you again: 'If you have indeed slain the Ogre that has kept me from my garden these past ten weeks, soldier, then you have earned my gratitude. I will allow you passage through my storeroom, whether you be friend to Baron Tholdur or foe.'

He stands aside to let you pass. Will you thank him and leave through the door in the far wall (turn to 282), or will you tell him about your quest (turn to 312)?

236

You grab the rope and hang on. You can feel it trying to pull upwards, and you are sure that if you let go something unpleasant will happen. You pull the Orc's body towards you with your feet, and then stretch down to search it. You find a key and, with more stretching, find that it fits the lock of the door. You turn it, push the door open, release the rope, and jump through the doorway. Behind you, portcullises drop from the ceiling along the corridor. You look for a way out beyond the door. Turn to 374.

237

By the time you arrive at the wet and windswept market-square, you have managed to elude your shadows. Your adventures in the Merchants' Quarter have not provided many answers to the puzzle of what is going on in Neuburg - so where will you try next? You can go to any part of the town that you have not already visited.

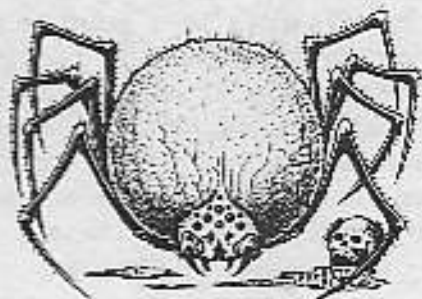
If you want to go down to the riverside wharves, turn to 90. If you decide to venture up Castle Hill to visit Neuburg Keep, turn to 289. If you walk into the Temple Quarter, turn to 195.

238

You are trying to relax. You yearn for peace and rest; but the buzzing and vibration of the Trident is an annoying distraction. You are sure you ought to look at it, just to make sure that it is all right, but it is difficult to tear your gaze from the flickering red gem at Senya's throat. You do not seem to have the energy to lift your hand in front of your face. Test your Willpower. If you are successful, you avert your gaze and manage to glance down at the Trident (turn to 265). If you are unsuccessful, you can stop worrying about the Trident. It slips from your fingers. Senya points out how tired you must be. Turn to 174.

239

Your struggle is brave, but foolhardy and doomed to failure. Attracted by shouts and the noise of clashing steel, more warriors flood into the cellar. Eventually, inevitably, you will begin to tire; you will drop your guard and be cut down. If you attempt to surrender now, you will be given no quarter. Your adventure ends here.



240

At the top of the stairway you emerge into the weird ruby glow of the main passage. You pause to consider your options.

At the far end of the passage there are two other doors. The massive metal one is secured with three locks; if you have not yet been through it, and you have a set of three keys on an iron ring, you can use the keys to open the door (turn to 190). The small wooden door does not appear to be locked. If you have not already done so, you can open this door and step inside (turn to 373). The only other alternative is to return down the side tunnel to your dungeon cell (turn to 206).

241

The words 'Be gone or die' echo lugubriously from inside the warrior's armour as he attacks.

LUMINOUS

WARRIOR

SKILL 11

STAMINA 14

If you are displaying the Talisman of Loth, the warrior's SKILL is not affected by it; however, it does sap his STAMINA by 1 point each Attack Round. If you are fighting with the Trident of Skarlos, each wound you inflict will cost your opponent an extra 4 points of STAMINA - as if he were inhuman. If you kill him, you may go straight to the doorway and look through it (turn to 279), or you can stop to inspect the body (turn to 107).

242

You race across the courtyard and through the open gateway. You spin round, close the heavy wooden door and bar it with a thick beam. You allow yourself a grin of triumph as you hear the swordsmen crash against the wooden barrier. For the moment, you are safe from pursuit. You survey your surroundings. Turn to 62.

243

As you approach the vast metal door you begin to despair of opening it. It fits tightly into its metal frame, and it has no handle - in fact it is completely featureless except for the three large keyholes and the multitude of rivets. You will have to try to open the small wooden door near by (turn to 373) or the larger wooden door at the other end of the passage (turn to 55). Of course, you could just return to your cell via the narrow tunnel, and wait there for something to happen (turn to 206).

244

You find a large enough hole and peer down it. It is circular, with a fairly smooth surface. It slopes steeply downwards, and an unpleasant odour wafts up to you. Once inside, it will be impossible to turn round. Are you going to go in feet first (turn to 349) or head first (turn to 184)?



245

You eat an early breakfast in the common room of the Southern Star. It is a hearty meal, brought to you by the innkeeper's wife. You regain up to 4 points of STAMINA, if you have been wounded. After paying the innkeeper, you have 5 Gold Pieces remaining in your purse. Record this on your *Adventure Sheet*.

You return to your room to collect your sword and backpack, and then step out into the market-square. The sky is leaden, and the Southern Star's name-board clatters to and fro in the gusty, drizzly wind. If you decide to go straight to Neuburg Keep, turn to 289. If you want to walk about the town, turn to 137.

246

The dancing-girls have bewitched you. One of them whispers that you should relax in the chair behind you. You half remember a reason why you should not do so, but it seems unimportant to you now. 'My name is Senya,' says the girl as you sit down. 'Rest here with us for a while. You are very tired.' She kneels and smiles up at you. Turn to 174.

247

The scimitar was the ceremonial sword of Vlax the Slayer, a ferocious general who was killed in single combat with the legendary hero Skarlos. On his death the sorcerer Xakhaz preserved his depraved spirit in the hilt of his scimitar. As soon as you pick up the weapon, Vlax attempts to dominate your mind. *Test your Willpower*. If you are unsuccessful,

turn to 386. If you are successful, you drop the sword and your head clears. Return to 190 and make a different decision.



248

The tunnel comes to an end at a door. At first you can see no way to open it, but after a few experimental pushes and pulls you realize that the stone slab pivots about a horizontal central bar. You crawl through the lower opening into a long, low cellar and, having established that there is no immediate danger, you push the door back into place. The walls of the cellar are faced with stone slabs, and it is now almost impossible to differentiate the door you have just come through from the other slabs. The rectangular cellar has a normal door in the centre of the short wall at its other end, and a door in the centre of each of the long walls on your right and left – although you cannot see these two doors at first, as they are obscured by the two lines of huge barrels that occupy the length of the cellar. You walk between the rows of barrels, each of which has a tap and a small cup on a string. You decide to taste some of the contents of Baron Tholdur's cellar, but the barrels all look alike. You have to take pot luck. Roll one die. If you roll:

1 or 2

Turn to 166

3 or 4

Turn to 84

5 or 6

Turn to 197

249

The waiting-room is square and contains no furniture. The door through which you entered is in the centre of the only plain wall; each of the other three walls is covered with a tapestry. You are immediately struck by the artistry of the pictures. You can scarcely detect the individual stitches of needlework, and the colours are so vivid and the scenes so lifelike that when the heavy cloth moves slightly you could almost believe that you were looking through windows. In fact – surely that man in that crowd scene turned his head? *He is looking at you!*

Soldiers are approaching. You hear marching feet outside the door. The words 'STEP INTO THE PICTURE' are painted on the ceiling above each tapestry. You can think of no better way to escape from this room. Which tapestry will you try to walk into: a pastoral landscape showing a view of the roof-tops of Neuburg and the countryside beyond (turn to 152), a gloomy interior scene, possibly an empty cellar below the Keep (turn to 177), or a mass of people walking up an immense stone ramp towards a temple under a burning sun (turn to 393)?

250

You cannot bring yourself to touch the loathsome object that has attached itself to your hair. In demented fear you jump up and down and shake your head, but the bulbous shape clings on and swings against your shoulders with soft thuds. Its suckers mouth mindlessly, waiting for an opportunity to touch the exposed skin of your face and give you the

kiss of death. Inevitably, as your frantic twitching becomes wilder and wilder, a sucker touches your flesh and holds fast. The sac of the creature's body nestles against your face and begins to turn a dull pink as it draws out your blood. If you still have 6 or more points of WILLPOWER, turn to 93. If you now have less than 6 points, turn to 348.

251

The metal shaft fits perfectly into the three-pointed spear-head. Before you can inspect this strange weapon more closely, you are appalled to see that the skeleton is moving. With many creaks and clicks it stands upright in the coffin, moves its jaws in a gruesome parody of speech and lurches towards you. You thrust at it with your newly acquired weapon, and are surprised and delighted to find that as soon as the points touch it, the skeleton begins to fall apart. Within seconds there is nothing left but dust. There are no further disturbances while you examine the remarkable weapon. Turn to 182.

252

You are nearing the open double doors when a noise behind you makes you spin round. A wall of fire has sprouted right across the passage. You cannot see beyond the raging tongues of flame that reach up to lick the curved roof. You are now halfway between the fire and the doors. Do you decide to continue to the open doors (turn to 81) or to turn back to try to find a way through the flames (turn to 145)?

253

It is just as well that you had no time to consider your attackers. They are two horribly unnatural, misshapen Blood-Lurchers, and they attack you one at a time.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First BLOOD-LURCHER	10	7
Second BLOOD-LURCHER	8	9

Blood-Lurchers are hairless, eyeless beasts with razor-sharp talons on all four paws. They have no teeth: their gaping red mouths are a mass of writhing tentacles. If they kill you, they will tear your body to ribbons and drain your blood through the suckers on their tentacles. If you kill them, turn to 8.



254

The dazzling ray that bursts from the Talisman has little effect on the horribly mutated young woman. She does notice it, however, and after fumbling at a thong around her neck she produces a pendant – a large black gem. The light from the Talisman seems to concentrate itself on the gem, which enlarges and pulsates under the concentrated glare. Soon, both you and the woman realize that something is amiss,

but the Talisman and the gem are held together by an unbreakable force. You are unable to move. Light from the Talisman pours into the gem, which grows as large as a fist, and then suddenly shatters into tiny fragments. The woman is unhurt, and the Talisman is no longer shining. Its power has gone; it is useless. You discard it and attack the woman. Turn to 128.

255

A short dark tunnel leads into a chamber carved out of the rock. There is no floor: instead there is a deep pool of still liquid, in the depths of which shines a pale luminescence which begins to rise to the surface while you watch. Around the perimeter of the pool is a narrow ledge, and hanging on hooks on the wall opposite you are two sets of keys on iron rings. Will you:

Stay where you are and await developments?

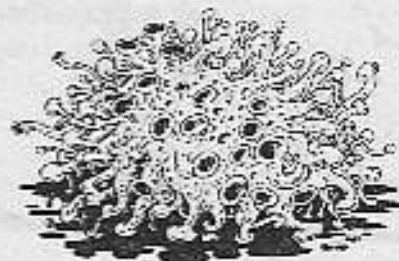
Turn to 287

Start to edge along the side of the pool?

Turn to 10

Agitate the liquid with your hand?

Turn to 305



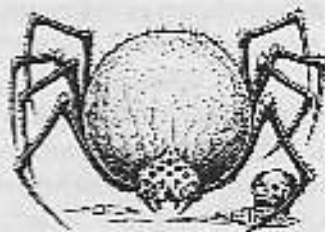


256

You are paralysed with fear and disgust as you watch the spiders crawling across your body. You feel a slight pain, like a pinch, on the back of your hand, and you realize that one of them has sunk its mandibles into your skin. These spiders are poisonous: deduct 2 points of STAMINA. The burning sensation of the venom flowing in your veins brings you to your senses, and you react at last. Turn to 204.

257

If you now have less than 6 points of WILLPOWER, your sanity has snapped under the onslaught of the horrors you have witnessed while in Neuburg. You do not care what happens to you now. Even if you are still sane, you are temporarily petrified with fear and unable to resist as a slug-like creature slides slowly out of the suit of armour, curls its glistening bulk around your body, and drags you through the doorway into the next room – where your meeting with the grotesquely deformed conglomerate being Xakhaz delivers a further shock to your deranged senses. Sane or insane, you are used in Xakhaz's surgical experiments.



258

Before the echoes of your cry have died away, the staircase is flooded with light. Small crystals set in crevices in the rock wall are glowing brightly. There is one very near you, level with your left shoulder. If you want to try to prise it from its place, turn to 34. If you would rather continue down the steps, turn to 109.

259

There is something very strange about this crate. At first, you are not sure what it is. An unpleasant odour emanates from it; as you lean over it, the smell overpowers even the stench of the river and you feel quite sick. You crouch next to the crate, and you suddenly hear noises from inside. You press your ear to the wooden boards, and you can definitely hear movement – scratching, slithering, flapping. You look at every side of the crate, but you can find no air-holes. If there is an animal – or a person – inside, it will suffocate before long.

If you want to look inside the crate, turn to 199. If you decide to push it off the jetty and into the water, turn to 294. If you would rather leave the crate alone and explore a different part of the town, turn to 377.

260

The bloody body of the Vlodblad lies in steaming chunks at your feet. There seems to be nothing of interest in this room apart from the rich furnishings. There are two doors, side by side; you entered

through the left-hand one. If you leave through this door, turn to 140. If you leave through the right-hand door, turn to 371.

261

The Margrave gestures vaguely and begins to mumble about having you taken away. You interrupt. 'Tholdur!' you shout. 'Recover your senses, man! You remember me. We fought side by side at Helm Hill, and we defeated a horde of barbarians not unlike this rabble infesting your Keep. Wake up! Think!' Outraged murmuring ripples around the hall. A guard knocks you down from behind, and you stagger to your feet to see Baron Tholdur and the red-robed figure in the midst of a furious yet whispered argument. The Margrave seems to have recovered some of his wits, and he obliges his mysterious adviser to accept a compromise. He addresses you in a clear voice. 'My memory is failing me these days,' he says, 'but there may be some truth in your story. Do you have any proof of these strange allegations of yours? If you are who you say you are, I seem to remember giving you a gift, or a token . . .' If you have not yet given it away, you have a bejewelled gold ring given to you by Tholdur many years ago. If you want to show it to the Margrave, turn to 70. Otherwise, turn to 392.



262

A roughly hewn tunnel descends steeply before you. Brushing aside cobwebs, you follow it downwards. Daylight creeps in through cracks between rocks on the right-hand side; the passage must be running alongside the cleft that separates the monolithic crag which forms the foundation of the Keep from the smaller rock on which the gatehouse has been built. When light ceases to seep in, you assume that the descending tunnel has passed the bottom of the ravine. It levels out, and you can just make out that there is a side-tunnel leading in from the right. However, it is blocked by an iron grille; and the main passage turns sharply to the left and disappears into darkness. You decide to follow it. Turn to 332.

263

As you approach the forbidding temple entrance, the old man begins to walk unsteadily to meet you. Although he looks as ancient as the temple statues, he has brilliant blue eyes that assess you keenly. His voice, too, has no hint of frailty – and you are sure you recognize it from somewhere.

'You have just destroyed some of the vermin that are infecting this town. My thanks to you, my friend. I am Huw, Neuburg's sole remaining priest of Oiden. On behalf of the Great Lord of Battle and Madness, please accept this gift for slaying our enemies.' Huw hands you a small stoppered bottle, and adds: 'This is a Potion of Berserk Rage. After

you have consumed it, you must fight your next battle to the death, and berserker strength will flow in your veins.' Record this potion on your *Adventure Sheet*. You may use it once only, at any time except during a fight. Once you have drunk it, your **SKILL** will increase by 4 points, for the duration of your next fight only.

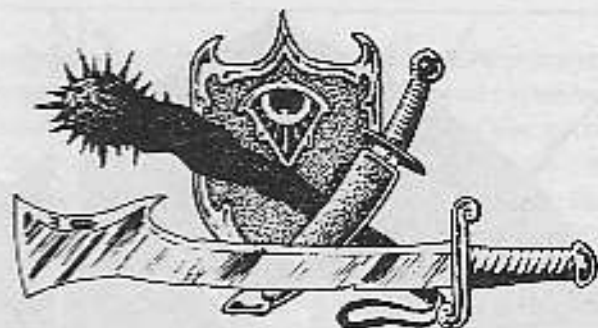
Huw continues: 'I think you may be the warrior I seek. Please enter the temple. You can rest, eat, and talk further.' If you accept this invitation, turn to 398. If you would rather retrace your steps and explore another part of town, turn to 108.

264

The shaft very soon begins to curve and widen, and before long you are able to turn round and crawl forwards, and then finally to stand upright and walk, when the vertical shaft has become a horizontal tunnel. Ahead you see an orange glow, almost like firelight, and you advance cautiously. The tunnel you are in leads into a wider passage, the very walls of which are pulsating with the ghastly fiery glow. The passage is completely deserted and silent. Turn to 170.



The Trident of Skarlos is crackling with energy and burning with blue radiance. By its light you see things differently: the chair in which you are sitting is made of pulsating leathery flesh, for instance. You leap to your feet and escape from the amorphous engulfing creature. It is a Vloddblad, a stealer of STAMINA, a creation of the resurrected sorcerer from the depths below. It was about to enfold you in its deadly embrace. Senya, too, is different. Although still smiling, albeit bitterly, and still dressed as a serving-girl, she now appears tall and regal. The Trident seems keen to attack her. 'You have done well to find me,' she sneers, 'and to see through my little illusions. I am Senyakhaz. It has been a pleasure to meet you, but now I must leave. I have to protect my master below, and I fear that strange blue weapon. Farewell.' The room fills with smoke. A door opens and closes. Coughing, you make your way to the side of the room, where you remember seeing two doors side by side. One of them leads to the anteroom through which you were led. Will you try to leave through the left door (turn to 94) or the right (turn to 115)?



You wake up in a cavernous, vaulted dungeon. You are spreadeagled on a cold stone slab. There are manacles around your limbs and tight straps across your body. All you can do is watch the wildly dancing shadows cast by the light of flaring cressets.

Eventually, your solitary confinement ends. A crowd of silent, barely human forms enter the chamber. Their hideous deformities are so repellent that you cry out in disgust. They are carrying a selection of very sharp knives. They kill you slowly, and take ecstatic pleasure in your agonized writhings. You go completely insane before you die.





267

The corridor turns to the left, and from this point on there are arrow-slits on both sides. You are walking inside a wall, towards an isolated tower. The corridor ends at a small door, in front of which sits the biggest and ugliest Orc you have ever had the misfortune to meet. He sees you approach. If you are carrying a tray and a pot, turn to 285. If not, turn to 113.

268

Standing by the body of the slain Dwarf, you take stock of your surroundings. The room is large and rectangular, with a door behind you and another in the opposite wall. Each of the other two walls has a large window; the shutters are open, and you can see down to your left the steps leading from the garden to the castle's inner bailey, while to your right the ground slopes away in a tumble of rocks to the curtain wall of the fortress. You calculate that the door opposite you will give access to the battlements of the inner defensive wall, and possibly a way into the central Keep itself. This room is light, airy, ordered and tranquil. It seems like a good place to have a rest, and perhaps to eat some provisions. You unstrap your backpack and place it on a bench in front of you. You unbuckle it and lift the leather flap. Among the objects that you might have in your pack are food and a section of tentacle sliced from the mouth of a Blood-Lurcher. If you do not have a piece of tentacle, turn to 136. If you have a tentacle but no food, turn to 295. If you have both food and a piece of tentacle, turn to 185.

269

You stand watching in horror as the disintegrating Chrabats lurch towards you. As their flaking fingers search for your face you turn and run. Without a backward glance you scramble up the steps, into the glowing passage, and along the side-tunnel back to your dungeon cell. Prostrate and shivering in the darkness, you attempt to recover your wits. If your **WILLPOWER** is now less than 6, you fail. You remain in the desolate squalor of your cell, afraid of the slightest noise, unresponsive to any approach. Within a few days you starve to death. If you still have 6 or more points of **WILLPOWER**, you recover from your ordeal – but you have no desire for any further exploration below the dungeons. Turn to 206.

270

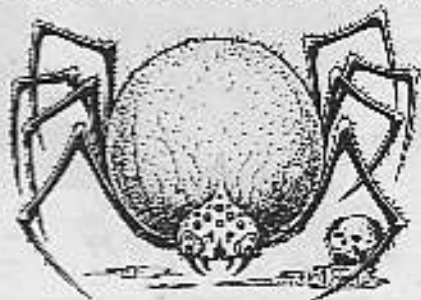
For many minutes you stare in horrified fascination at the transformed being. It seems to be talking to you: there is a voice in your head telling you that life as a tree is green and peaceful and painless. It is a very attractive prospect.

Your adventures in Neuburg have proved too terrifying – you have gone completely insane. But you know what you have to do: you return to the statue, pull down the arm lever and wait in calm anticipation as the stone basin fills with green liquid. You lower your head and drink. Turn to 380.



271

Among the blood-soaked remains you find Xakhaz's head. At close quarters it is clear that even this part of the creature is a mongrel creation, welded together from parts of several men and women and at least two animals. It is still alive, and hurls slurred insults at you until you cleave it in two. Inside the monstrous cranium you find a jumble of several brains and a tiny metal box. You pull out the box and keep it in your backpack. You pace slowly and unsteadily back to the magical mirror, which you find has a single lever set into the frame. You pull it, watch the colours swirl across the mirror's surface, and then step through. Turn to 400.





272

You follow the winding path downwards; the high-pitched noise is getting painfully loud. The tunnel opens into a natural rock chamber and, as you hesitate on the threshold, a strange being enters the pool of light cast by your lantern. It has the rough size and shape of a Dwarf, but in all other respects is like nothing you have seen before. Its body is covered with dense black fur; each of its four limbs ends in a talon-tipped claw, but while its legs are short and stocky, its arms are grotesquely elongated and many-jointed and support sail-like wings of flexible membrane. Its torso is small, but its human-looking head is enormous and bears two vast flapping ears and two blank, saucer-like eyes. Beneath its tiny nostril slits it has a small mouth filled with pointed fangs. It is a Bakk-Ruman, a legendary monster from subterranean caves. It is completely blind, but can accurately detect your presence by listening to the varying echoes of its continuous piercing call. This shriek is now so loud that you can scarcely bear the pain, and your **SKILL** is temporarily reduced by 2 points. This is unfortunate, as the creature decides to launch an attack.

BAKK-RUMAN

SKILL 7

STAMINA 9

If you kill it, turn to 146.



273

Back in the rubescent passage you inspect the keys. It is obvious that the set of three heavy keys on a thick iron ring must fit the massive metal door near the cavern you have just left; the single key should, therefore, give access to the wooden door at the other end of the passage. You can use these keys to open either of the two doors, but you must choose to open a door that you have not already been through. If you unlock the metal door, turn to 190. If you unlock the wooden door at the other end of the passage, turn to 7. If you have already been through both doors, or do not want to go through either of them, you must return to your dungeon cell: turn to 206.

274

You step out of the mirror into Senyakhaz's chamber – and come face to face with Senyakhaz herself. Both of you stand frozen with shock for several moments, since she is as surprised to see you emerging from her magic portal as you are to meet a woman you killed only minutes ago. Your mind fumbles for an explanation, and you reach a conclusion which is, in fact, close to the truth: the portal has malfunctioned and thrown you back in time. And then you have no more time to think, as Senyakhaz attacks. Return to 160 and relive your past!



275

You reach a corner of the overgrown garden. Ahead of you the path continues to follow the enclosing wall. To your left there is a squat tower; its upper storey is part of the castle's outer battlements and is inaccessible from the garden, but a large jagged hole provides an entrance to the lower section. To your right a narrow path leads directly to the centre of the garden, and through the dense foliage you can make out a statue in a clearing. Will you:

Continue to follow the perimeter path?

Turn to 11

Enter the tower through the broken wall?

Turn to 350

Cut your way to the central clearing? Turn to 319

276

You close the door, find a set of keys on a peg behind it, and set to work unlocking locks and unbuckling buckles. Soon the young man is free of his chains and of the confining headgear. Not surprisingly, his face is swollen and he speaks as if his mouth were full of dry bread. 'Thank you. Thank you. Hurry please. You must release . . . my sister.' He is very agitated, holds his jaw in both hands and glances repeatedly at the door. If you decide to leave now, turn to 354. If you stay to unshackle the young woman, turn to 50.

277

Do you have any food in your backpack? If you do, turn to 188. If not, turn to 292.

278

The sounds of your struggle attract the rest of the guards, and you soon find yourself once again hemmed within a circle of gleaming swords. You throw down your weapon and try to endure the pain and indignity, as the soldiers beat you, deprive you of your weapon and bind your legs and arms. Reduce your *Initial SKILL* by 2 points until you can find another weapon. The guards drag you the rest of the way to the dungeons. Turn to 64.

279

You look through the open doorway and stare at a slaughterhouse scene that revolts all your senses. The overpowering stench of blood and decaying flesh washes over you. The cavernous chamber is lit by lurid blobs of luminous slime that crawl across the walls. Everywhere there are piles of corpses and bits of corpses. Some half-dismembered creatures are moving; others are not only unidentifiable, they are also wrong – blasphemous, unnatural abominations. And all the time you stand staring in horror, a shrill, tittering voice taunts you. You try to force yourself to listen and to discover the source of the infuriating voice. Turn to 389.

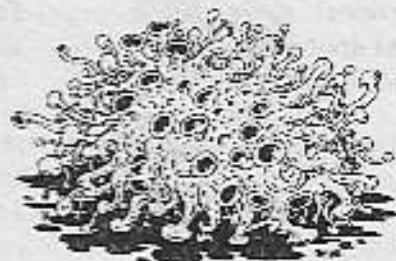


280

As you make your way through the crowds back towards the market-square, you notice a tiny, rickety stall that appears to be laden with junk, rags and useless knick-knacks. The proprietor, also tiny and rickety, is small and bearded enough to be a Dwarf; but then again, he's ugly enough to be a Goblin . . .

He notices you staring at him. You glance away, and see the two robed swordsmen again, still shadowing you at a distance. You look up at Neuburg Keep, shrouded in grey mist above the roof-tops. And when you look again at the aged stall-holder, he is smiling at you in a curiously knowing way. He beckons you with one spindly digit.

'If you have money to spend, my friend,' he says, 'I have an antique curio which may help you, if you are having difficulties with our southern neighbours.' If you are interested in buying a piece of old junk from this street-trader, turn to 129. If you have no money, or would rather not spend what little you have, you continue on to the market-square (turn to 337).



281

The young man's lifeless eyes stare up at the vaulted ceiling, the rough stonework of which is visible for the first time since its long-forgotten construction – it is lit by the fountain of light issuing from the pendant that rests on the youth's bloodstained chest. You carefully remove the Talisman, on its leather thong, from around his neck. The light dances madly in all directions. Shielding your eyes and squinting, you examine the small disc: on the reverse the word **LOTH** has been engraved in plain letters. If you decide to keep it, you can slip the thong over your neck and conceal the Talisman beneath your tunic. You can, of course, choose to leave it with the dead body.

The door to your cell is behind you. There are three other doors leading from this hallway: the one in front of you is open, the ones to your right and left are closed and locked. There are three keys on a ring hanging from the belt of the dead youth. You correctly assume that one of the them unlocked your cell, and that the other two will unlock the two closed doors. Will you go through:

The open door?

The locked door to your right?

The locked door to your left?



Turn to 376

Turn to 165

Turn to 96

282

The door opens on to the battlements of the castle's inner defensive wall. Through the arrow-slits on your right you can see part of the outer bailey: a jumble of rocky outcrops sloping down to the castle's perimeter wall. To your left is the inner bailey which surrounds the central Keep, the black bulk of which looms over you. You feel very exposed on the high walkway, but you can see no guards and no one challenges you. You set off towards the next tower. Turn to 31.

283

Still smiling in death, the girl sinks to the floor. Stricken with remorse, you stare down at the corpse. You raise your eyes to meet those of the remaining two dancers; they smile radiantly and begin to dance again. Your weariness amazes you; you gaze at the young women. *Test your Willpower.* If you are successful, turn to 58. If not, turn to 246.



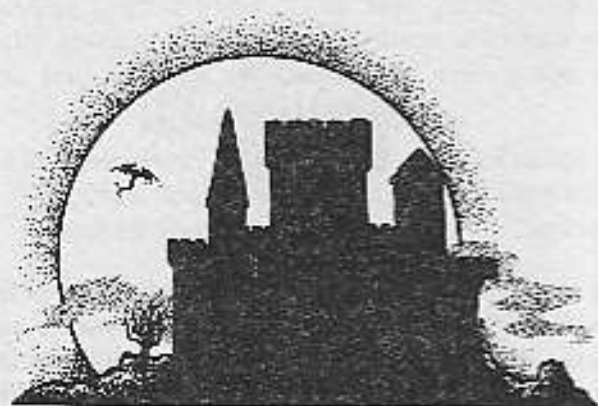
284

You step into the darkness of the ground floor of the tower, and you notice that the air is warm and musty. As your eyes become accustomed to the gloom, you realize that this room is used to store the

garden compost. Everywhere there are vast heaps of decaying leaves and rotting vegetables. There is no sign of any other door from the room, or any access to the upper floors of the tower. You can investigate the compost heaps with the tip of your sword (turn to 122), or you can leave the tower and continue towards the next corner of the garden (turn to 44).

285

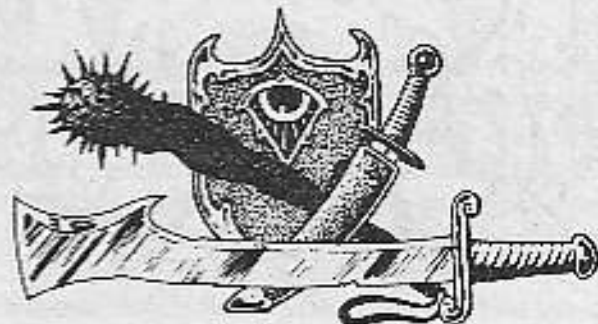
The Orc scarcely looks at you as you approach with his lunch – he has eyes only for the stew-pot. 'Bring that here quick!' he growls. 'I'm so hungry I could eat three of them. I hope it's hot today.' You are now very close to him. If you decide to throw the tray and the pot at the Orc, and attack him while he is distracted, turn to 342. If you hand the tray to him and watch him eat, turn to 216.

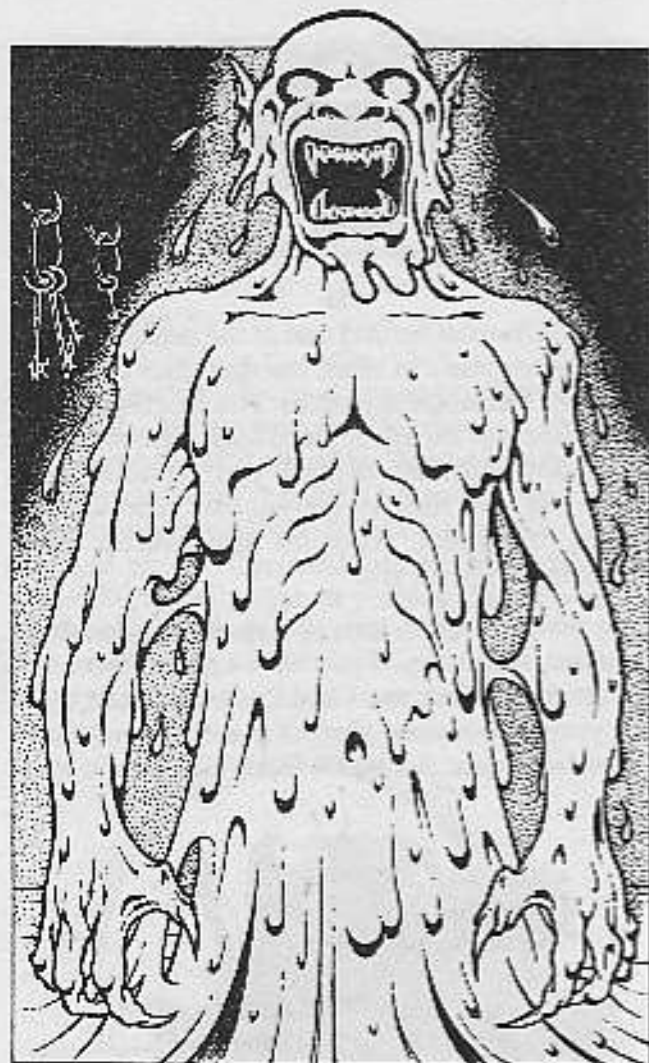


286

You hear a footfall behind one of the cellar's middle doors. Before you can react, the door flies open and four robed swordsmen rush in. You face them, with your weapon at the ready, and back away between the rows of barrels. Behind you, another door opens, and you turn to see another four soldiers entering the cellar. You are surrounded; eight swords converge on you.

If you want to fight, turn to 239. If you decide to surrender, turn to 49. If you have a jewel-encrusted ring, an emerald, or any Gold Pieces, you can try to bribe your opponents. Deduct the item you decide to offer from your *Adventure Sheet*, and turn to 97.





287

You watch the glowing blob rising through the liquid. It fills the cavern with weirdly rippling red light. It reaches the surface, assuming humanoid shape, and then erupts into a dripping, shivering form, hovering above the surface of the pool. The Vitriol Essence bares his vulpine fangs, flexes his vast, claw-tipped hands, and hisses: 'Who dares disturb my centuries of slumber?' Without waiting for a reply, he attacks.

VITRIOL ESSENCE SKILL 8 STAMINA 6

If he manages to wound you, turn to 230. When you have reduced him to 2 points of STAMINA, turn to 112.

288

You move the rod towards 'X' and watch the mirror. Cloudy shapes form in the glass, and within seconds the mirror's frame contains a swirling mass of colours. You walk up to it, take a deep breath and step into the rainbow maelstrom. Turn to 335.

289

The road winds up Castle Hill towards the brooding bulk of Neuburg Keep. The few townspeople you meet shake their heads and avert their eyes; they obviously believe you are either recklessly brave or completely senseless. The path becomes steeper, the houses are fewer and are little more than stone-fronted caves, and the black towers of the Keep's curtain wall loom above you. The path you are on

appears to lead directly to the castle's main gatehouse. There is a smaller, overgrown path that leads off to the right. If you want to stay on the main path, turn to 2. If you would rather take the right-hand trail, turn to 95.

290

You cannot bring yourself to touch the loathsome object that has attached itself to your hair. In demented fear you jump up and down and shake your head, but the bulbous shape clings on and swings against your shoulders with soft thuds. Its suckers mouth mindlessly, waiting for an opportunity to touch the exposed skin of your face and give you the kiss of death. Inevitably, as your frantic twitching becomes wilder and wilder, a sucker touches your flesh and holds fast. The sac of the creature's body nestles against your face and begins to turn a dull pink as it draws out your blood. If you still have 6 or more points of WILLPOWER, turn to 33. If you now have less than 6 points, turn to 348.

291

Your kicking was sufficiently vigorous to slow the progress of the slime, and you scramble back to the surface, encouraged by a burning sensation all over your feet and ankles. The courtyard is still deserted when you re-emerge, and you study the damage to your feet: several layers of skin have been dissolved away. Reduce your STAMINA by 2 points. You can go down another hole, head first this time (turn to 184); or you can go through the door in the wall at the end of this courtyard (turn to 157).

292

As you open your pack your nostrils are assailed by a stomach-churning stench. The strip of rubbery flesh that you cut from the mouth of the Blood-Lurcher has decayed into a semi-liquid blob of evil-smelling slime. None of the other contents of your pack are damaged, and you clean them as best you can and carry on. Turn to 139.

293

Standing in a shadowed nook of the corridor, you have a view towards the guarded double doors and along the wide corridor that leads back to the stairways. It is from this latter direction that you eventually hear the sound of footsteps. You listen intently. Two people are approaching, you are sure: one is marching quickly and is much nearer now than the other, who is dragging his feet. You dart from cover and race towards the stairways, looking for another recess from which to spring an ambush. You find one and pull yourself behind a rock outcrop just as the first marcher – a brisk southern swordsman – comes into sight. When he draws level with you, you attack.

SOUTHERN

SWORDSMAN

SKILL 8

STAMINA 8

If you have the Talisman of Loth, its dazzling brilliance will reduce your opponent's SKILL by 2 points. If you kill him, turn to 126.



294

The crate is very heavy, and the foul smell combined with the agitated scraping noises from within make the task horribly unpleasant. But at last you have it teetering on the edge of the jetty and you give it one final shove into the murky waters of the river. It sinks soundlessly.

Unwittingly, you have destroyed a nest of vile abominations – unnatural creations of ancient sorcery – and you have done it without endangering yourself. Add 1 LUCK point.

You recover from your exertions and survey the dismal riverside scene. There is nothing happening and no one in sight. You decide to walk back into the centre of town and from there explore a different part of Neuburg. Turn to 377.

295

When you open your pack, your nostrils are assailed by a stomach-churning stench. The strip of rubbery flesh that you cut from the mouth of the Blood-Lurcher has decayed into a semi-liquid blob of evil-smelling slime. None of the other contents are damaged, and you clean them and the interior of your pack as best you can. Turn to 136.



296

The narrow uphill tunnel does not seem to have been used for centuries. It meanders for some distance, but eventually ends – blocked by an iron grille. You put your weight against the barrier and it crumbles into flakes of rust. The corridor you are in now is scarcely larger than the one you have left. To your left it narrows and heads steeply upwards through swathes of ancient cobwebs. You are at a bend in the corridor, and the way straight ahead of you is wider and looks as though it might actually have been used within the last hundred years. You go straight ahead. Turn to 332.

297

The sloping floor is treacherously slippery, but by throwing yourself backwards you manage to avoid sliding into the pool. You pick yourself up from the mud and find yourself staring into a pair of unblinking eyes that have just broken the surface of the dirty water. You draw your sword as the eyes are followed by a mottled, warty body from which a mass of lengthening tentacles are snaking across the water towards you. *Test your Willpower.* If you make a successful roll, turn to 385. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 141.

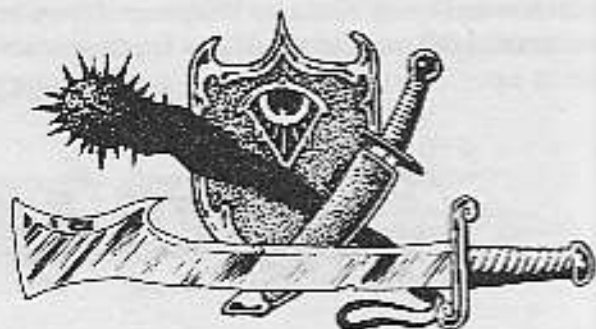


298

You find yourself lying on the stone floor, curled around the trunk of the tree. You spring to your feet, marvelling at the feeling of well-being that flows through your body and the sense of calm, fearless purpose that fills your head. Your *Initial* STAMINA and WILLPOWER are increased by 1 point each, and you can add up to 2 points of STAMINA and WILLPOWER to your current scores – but you cannot exceed your new *Initial* values, of course. Record these changes on your *Adventure Sheet*. 'Oiden has rewarded your fortitude,' says Huw. 'Now you must leave and accomplish your mission.' Turn to 368.

299

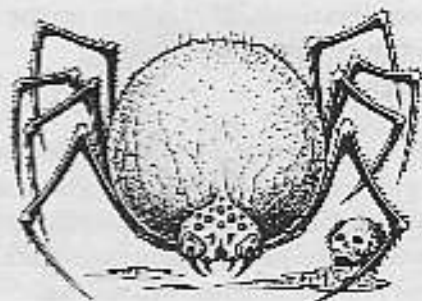
As you open your pack your nostrils are assailed by a stomach-churning stench. The strip of rubbery flesh that you cut from the mouth of the Blood-Lurcher has decayed into a semi-liquid blob of evil-smelling slime. None of the other contents of your pack are damaged, and you clean them as best you can and carry on. Turn to 132.



300

Your descent of the stairway is long but uneventful. You emerge at the end of a wide corridor, where several other dark flights of steps descend to the same point. Ahead of you the corridor is a little less dim, since it is illuminated by occasional cressets on the stone walls. You walk along the corridor. It bends to the left, then straightens again, and you see that ahead of you it forks into two passages of similar sizes. You draw closer and peer along each one.

The left-hand passage is featureless, apart from the double doors that you can just make out at its far end. The doors appear to be open; light is streaming out, and you think you can just see a table laden with coloured objects – perhaps food? – in the room beyond. The right-hand passage is equally featureless and equally long. It too terminates in a pair of doors, which are closed. Two robed warriors stand on guard. Will you slink down the left passage (turn to 252) or the right one (turn to 155)?



301

Despite your reticence about yourself, the innkeeper turns out to be an affable fellow, and before long he is regaling you with local stories and jokes. He denies having noticed anything wrong in the town, and his beaming bearded face and the fine ale he serves combine to make you question your first assumptions. Maybe you have been imagining things. How could anything be wrong in a quiet town like this? Feeling rested and reassured, you decide to go to bed. The innkeeper shows you to your room and bids you good night. Turn to 179.

302

The dead Chrabats' flesh smells putrid. The foulness of the stench makes you retch and you are desperate to leave, but you remember to retrieve the blue metal shaft – at the very least it will light your way back to the dungeon cell. If you have the head of a three-pointed spear, you find that it matches this shaft, which is in fact the weapon's handle and power source (turn to 182). If you do not have the spear-head, the handle is useful only as a temporary lantern. It fades completely within an hour of its removal from this room. You return up the stairway to the glowing passage (turn to 240).

303

You can do nothing but stare in horror at the deformed vegetable remnant of a fellow human. Its weirdly moving branches seem to reach out towards you, and with a cry you turn and bolt back past the statue to the perimeter path. Turn to 11.



304

You force yourself to watch as the Orc slobbers his way through the pot of stew. He finishes, sucks the spoon, belches and looks straight at you. 'You still here?' he grunts. 'Who are you, anyway? Where's that pipsqueak Bindebol? What's going on?' He rises to his feet, one hand closing around the haft of his battle-axe, while the other pulls taut a rope that hangs through the ceiling. You are surprised that no alarm sounds, but you have no time to think about it: you have to fight.

ORC GUARD

SKILL 9

STAMINA 13

If you defeat him, turn to 69.



305

You dip your hand in the liquid – and a wild scream escapes your lips. You jerk it out again, too late: the acid has gone to work. Smoking flesh is peeling off your fingers, and you are still crouched by the pool, whimpering in agony, when the Vitriol Essence rises out of the liquid a few moments later. You are in no state to defend yourself against his cruel claws. He lacerates your body and then pulls you into the pool.

306

You undo the latch at one end of the box and, before you can move, the panel is pushed open from inside and a creature hurtles out at you. It is just as well that you have no time to consider your attacker. It is a horribly and unnaturally misshapen parody of a dog.

BLOOD-LURCHER SKILL 8 STAMINA 9

Blood-Lurchers are hairless, eyeless beasts with razor-sharp talons on all four paws. They have no teeth: their gaping red mouths are a mass of writhing tentacles. If this one kills you, it will tear your body to ribbons and drain your blood through the suckers on its tentacles. If you kill it, you realize that the boxes all around you are the kennels in which the Blood-Lurchers spend each day. At night they are released to terrorize Neuburg. You cannot kill them all, so you continue along the path to the far wall of the courtyard. Turn to 92.

307

Roll one die. If you roll:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Turn to 274

Turn to 4

Turn to 53

Turn to 61

Turn to 335

Turn to 148

308

The massive door seems to be jammed, but with a final muscle-wrenching heave you manage to move it. You drop the huge bars into place. When you hear the mass of soldiers crash into the doors, you allow yourself a triumphant grin. Safe, for the moment, behind barred doors and stone walls, you survey the inner courtyard. Turn to 212.



309

The metal weapon-shaft is of no use to you. You wonder why it has been laid to rest so carefully. Your ruminations are interrupted by the skeleton, which is creaking into an upright position within the sarcophagus. It turns its empty eye-sockets towards you, its jaws clatter together in a parody of speech, and it advances towards you with its arms outstretched. You must fight it. Each time you succeed in wounding it, you subtract only half the STAMINA that you would for a normal opponent, since the skeleton feels no pain.

SKELETON

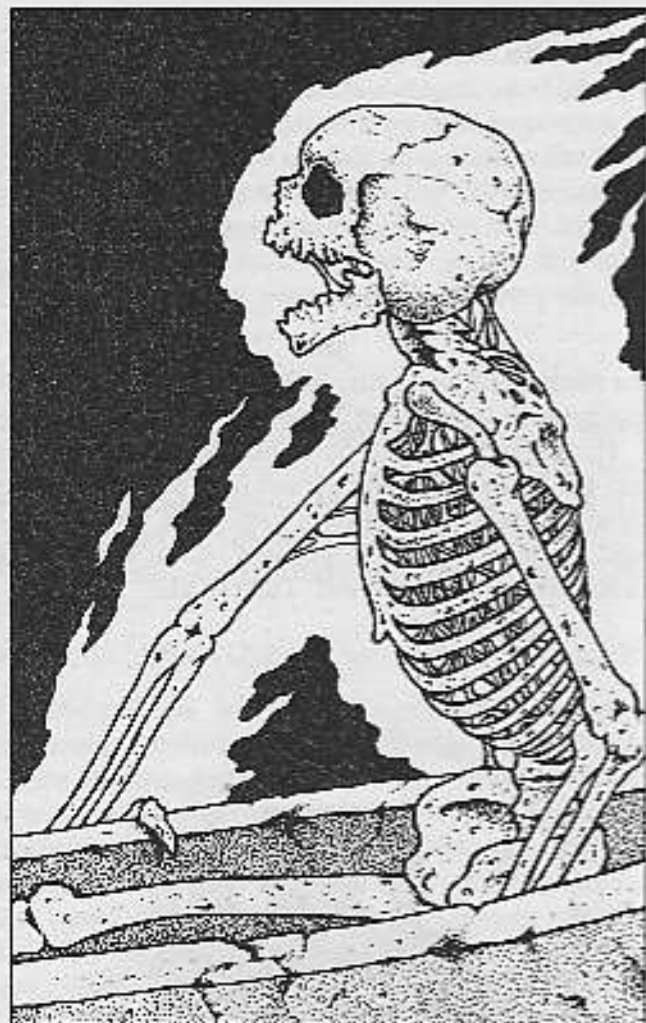
SKILL 4

STAMINA 10

If you manage to reduce it to a small heap of shattered bones, you do not have long to enjoy your victory. Three of the small chamber's walls are false, and more opponents are breaking through the thin plaster. Turn to 46.

310

Numb with horror and despair, you cannot react as Xakhaz's hideous body approaches. A hairy arm with two elbows reaches out for you, and the purple-veined star-shaped appendage at its end grips you by the shoulder, lifts you and hurls you against a wall. If you now have less than 6 points of WILLPOWER, turn to 338. If you still have 6 points or more, turn to 365.





311

Several minutes pass before the door opens slowly. Two figures greet you. A large, robed sentry glares at you as he towers over a grey-bearded Dwarf – presumably one of the Margrave's servants – who looks up at you in some surprise and says merely, 'Yes?'

If you tell the Dwarf merely that you would like to see Baron Tholdur, turn to 205. If you add that you are an old friend of the Margrave and are anxious to help him out of his current difficulties, turn to 45.

312

Having taken a deep breath and a precautionary hold on the pommel of your sword, you tell the Dwarf gardener about your old friendship with the Margrave of Neuburg Keep and your mission to cleanse the town of evil. The old Dwarf ponders for several minutes and finally sighs: 'Very well. I believe you. I can't think why anyone should tell such a story unless it were true. And anyway, even if you are a villain and an impostor, I don't see how you could make things worse than they are already. I'll help you, if I can. Sit yourself down. Eat, if you have food – I've none myself.'

It's been a long time since you last had a chance to relax. You have found a temporary haven and an ally. Recover 1 LUCK point. If you have no provisions in your pack, you rest for a few minutes and then ask the Dwarf for information (turn to 396). If you have some food, turn to 3. If your pack contains

both food and a piece of Blood-Lurcher tentacle, turn instead to 222.

313

Your throw was not quite good enough. The globe, burning with a fierce light, strikes Xakhaz but tumbles through a criss-cross of arms and tentacles and falls to the floor. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to 83. If you are Unlucky, turn to 211.

314

Transfixed with horror and loathing, you do not resist as a multitude of decaying hands wriggle up towards you, clutch your clothing and begin to haul you into the crate. As the gruesome limbs begin to claw and batter you, you come to your senses. Luckily, you are still holding your sword. You lash out frenziedly. This will be a difficult fight: each individual limb can do little damage, but it can be destroyed only if you slice it into tiny pieces. Fight the limbs as one monster. After two Attack Rounds you can *Escape*.

CRATE OF LIMBS SKILL 6 STAMINA 18

If you survive, you hurriedly slam the lid over the appalling mess in the crate and slump to the ground in exhaustion. When you recover, you return to the centre of town to decide which part of Neuburg to explore next. Turn to 377.



315

Stepping over the bloody corpses of your felled opponents, you leave the gatehouse and stand in its shadow at the edge of the town. You need somewhere to rest, eat and nurse your wounds. You remember that the Southern Star tavern, in a prominent position on Neuburg's market-square, was a busy and friendly establishment. Turn to 119.

316

You manage to cling to the greasy ledge. One foot slips into the moist and rubbery Protoplasmic Slime, but you pull it back sharply as you feel the acidic digestive juices beginning to work. You crawl to the side of the cavern and stand up. You cannot leave the cavern via the steep and well-oiled chute that ends on the ledge; but there is a narrow passage that also leads away from the ledge. You have no choice but to try it. Turn to 9.

317

The cellar is cold and smells so noxious that you feel sick. A tickling sensation runs all over the surface of your skin. Nothing attacks you, however, and you are able to retrieve the glowing object. It is a globe of green glass, and it feels warm as you cup it in the palm of your hand. Carrying it carefully, you hoist yourself back through the hole in the tower floor and you stroll into the garden where, glancing downwards, you realize that your body is covered with hairy spiders. Some are as large as your hand. *Test your Willpower*. If you make a successful roll, turn to 204. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 353.

318

Claws glinting metallically, the girl launches herself at you with animal ferocity. This is going to be a dangerous fight.

SPIKED MAIDEN **SKILL 10** **STAMINA 8**

Even as she lashes at you with her deadly hands, she seems to be shouting and screaming. Her face is a tear-stained mask of desperation. You cannot hear any of her utterances, however, because of the ear-plugs.

If you have the Talisman of Loth, you can reveal it after one round of combat – but the girl's attack is so persistent that to do so you must accept the loss of 2 points of **STAMINA** as her talons rake you. The Talisman reduces her **SKILL** by only 1 point – she can hardly see you anyway through her tears.

Unless you have the Runic Axe, you can *Escape* after one round; you then leave the dungeon area through the open door (turn to 376). If you kill the girl, turn to 63.

319

Hacking at undergrowth and overhanging branches, you force your way to the centre of the garden. In a clearing stands a metal statue in the form of an Elven warrior maid. Her uplifted, sword-wielding right hand appears to be hinged at the shoulder, and in the crook of her left arm, instead of a shield, she is carrying a narrow-necked urn. At her feet is an empty stone basin. You also see that beyond this



statue the overgrown path continues to the far corner of the garden – but the path is blocked by dense undergrowth and a strangely shaped tree. Will you:

- Attempt to move the statue's right arm? Turn to 111
- Investigate the path beyond the statue? Turn to 232
- Return to the perimeter path? Turn to 11

320

Despite your mindless agonized writhings, you contrive to keep your precarious balance on the poolside ledge. You are defenceless against the next attack of the Vitriol Essence. He lunges at you with one of his gleaming fluid arms; his claws sink deep. Turn to 351.

321

You have never been attacked by an opponent quite as unnerving as this young woman, who looks perfectly normal up to her neck, but whose head is folded back at an impossible angle. A forest of wriggling tongues sprout from her gaping throat. You shudder and prepare to fight. If you have the Talisman of Loth and want to reveal it, turn to 254. Otherwise, turn to 128.

322

The ruined temple is set on a rocky outcrop halfway up Castle Hill. The path to it is steep and narrow, and you can almost feel the watching presence of

the ominous, windowless edifice as you clamber up towards it. The dark stone facing of the temple is pitted and crumbling, but a long line of enormous grim-faced statues of weapon-wielding kings and queens is still standing. The only entrance is a small dark hole in the middle of this line of guardians. Standing in the doorway, apparently dozing, is a wizened old man. If you decide to approach the old man, turn to 47. If you would rather hide in the rocks and watch the temple entrance, turn to 144.

323

You are sure that the serving-girls have fled to raise the alarm; you must hurry. The room you are in has two doors, side by side, and you cannot tell which one the women used to leave. You entered the room through the left-hand door. Do you leave through this door (turn to 94) or the right-hand door (turn to 115)?

324

Test your luck. If you are Lucky, turn to 193. If you are Unlucky, turn to 23.

325

A close inspection of the door reveals that between the battered wooden panels there are gaps through which you can insert your sword. With a little experimentation, you are able to locate the bar and lift it out of its sockets. The door swings open – about an inch. There is still a weighty obstruction on the other side. Turn to 116.

326

The little Gnome hurriedly puts down his tray and backs away as you emerge from behind the curtain. You hold up your hands to show that you mean him no harm, and ask him why he is so unhappy. 'It happens every day,' he wails. 'That Ugbilya's got it in for me. She's the head cook and she's got a temper like a dragon with indigestion. Every day she picks on me to carry a pot of stew up to Kulgob. He's another Orc like Ugbilya - even bigger, in fact, and with a worse temper. He stands guard outside the Treasury, down this corridor. He always gives me a clout when I take his lunch, and then I get another one from Ugbilya for coming back late. You could do it for me today! Kulgob wouldn't dare to clout you. I'll sit here until you get back!' Do you ignore this suggestion and set off along the corridor (turn to 267), or do you pick up the tray and inspect its contents a little way down the corridor (turn to 384)?

327

You begin your search of the room at the end opposite the door through which you entered. Near the door, which you suspect leads out on to the battlements, you pull aside a cobwebbed collection of bean-poles, trellises and bales of straw and reveal a grimy fireplace. There is nothing but soot in the grate, but your thorough inspection of the filthy orifice is rewarded when you find that in addition to the chimney leading straight upwards, there is also a narrow gap beside the grate. You can make out the

first few steps of a staircase leading downwards in the thickness of the wall. Award yourself 1 LUCK point: you have discovered a secret entrance to the cellars of Neuburg Keep. You abandon your search, as you are impatient to enter the Keep. If you decide to use the secret staircase, turn to 25. If you would rather leave by the nearby door, turn to 282.

328

The girl's smile becomes a derisive laugh as she dances away from your blow. 'Congratulations!' she sneers. 'You have unmasked Senyakhaz, first sorceress of ancient Zagoula. Now I must take my leave.' You make to pursue her, but she runs quickly, tracing symbols in the air with her fingers. The room fills with dense smoke. You can see nothing, but you hear a door open and close. As the smoke clears, you make your way to the side of the room where two doors stand side by side. Do you try to go through the left-hand door (turn to 94) or the right-hand one (turn to 115)?

329

Within seconds the globe is too bright to look at and is producing as much heat as a furnace. You are beginning to think that you are perhaps much too close to it when it explodes. Your last sensations are the force of a massive concussion and an impossibly loud roar, and then your body is ripped into hundreds of charred fragments.



330

You leave the globe glowing ever more brightly on the ground behind you. As you walk away, you can feel its radiant heat on your back. The globe explodes. You hear a tremendous crash, and then a surge of turbulent air throws you to the ground, singeing your hair. Stones and broken branches hurtle all around you. Lose 2 points of STAMINA. You pick yourself up and survey a scene of devastation: the trees are stripped, the tower is a pile of shattered masonry. You continue on your way towards the next corner of the garden. Turn to 44.

331

You shuffle awkwardly to the right, encouraged by the mysterious voice: 'That's right, my friend, that's right, just a little further now, but please hurry: I dare not be found here. I am in mortal fear for my life, but perhaps you are the one we are expecting, and I cannot let those Southerners take you. That's it, that's it; I have your ropes now - so!' And you feel the bonds falling from your wrists.

You tear off your blindfold and wrench the ropes from your ankles. You are in a cellar; a little light enters from an open door at the top of a steep flight of narrow stairs. Of your rescuer there is no sign. There appears to be no other door. Do you want to search the cellar (turn to 59), or will you escape up the staircase (turn to 215)?

332

You turn a corner and see light ahead of you. You soon reach a landing, lit by a single cresset. You lean over the balustrade and see the staircase wind steeply down from the corridor and disappear into darkness. From the landing, the corridor continues featurelessly, and also disappears into gloom. If you decide to go down the stairs, turn to 300. If you would rather continue straight along the corridor, turn to 40.

333

Deduct 1 point from your SKILL while you are using the mace, it is less easy to strike with than a sword or a battle-axe. The silver-tipped spikes, however, are a particularly effective example of fiendish sorcery. Whenever you wound an opponent you do 4 points of damage to his STAMINA. You now leave the armoury. Turn to 359.

334

The Dwarf gardener has eaten very little recently, and he relishes his portion of rations as if it were a banquet. 'I thank you again, soldier,' he says. 'That's the second service you've done me and I don't know how I can repay you. Ask away, though - some of these herbs have stange properties, and I know a little about the goings-on in the Keep. I'd let you have my axe, Bokhorbhil, but she's getting temperamental these days. She'd have me attacking



you, if I weren't careful!' He seems to find this idea very amusing, and chuckles for some time. 'Ah, dear me, dear me. Where was I? I remember – ask me for something, soldier!' Will you ask for:

A preparation to bolster your WILL-POWER?

Turn to 151

Information about potential allies in the Keep?

Turn to 225

The Dwarf's opinions about the three-pronged spear-head (if you have it)?

Turn to 375

335

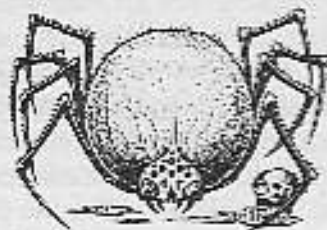
You step out of a mirror set into a wall of an empty room. The swirling colours behind you are the only source of light, and as the room is large you can barely make out the only exit – an open doorway in the opposite wall. When the mirror's surface returns to normal you are left in complete darkness, and you gain the impression that this stone-walled chamber must be deep underground. Straining your eyes, you see that the open doorway is now visible, touched by a pale luminescence; and then through it moves the source of the light – a huge warrior in a complete suit of plate-armour and an enclosed helmet. The ghostly light is emanating from his body: it is gleaming through the cracks between the metal plates and streaming through the slats in his visor. His voluminous surcoat reaches to the floor and trails after him. He addresses you in a flat, dull voice: 'I am Skarlos. Be gone or die.' If you have the Talisman of Loth and want to reveal it, turn to 27. Otherwise, turn to 91.

336

You pull yourself into a narrow gap between two derelict warehouses opposite one of the few usable jetties. A barge is tied up here, and you guess – correctly – that the cart is making for this jetty. When the cart comes into sight, you see that it bears the coat of arms of Baron Tholdur; and, in addition to four of the southern warriors, it carries a number of casks and boxes. It seems that a consignment of goods from Neuburg Keep is about to leave town by river.

The soldiers pull whips and clubs from their belts and proceed to collect a team of labourers from nearby cottages. With much cursing and groaning, punctuated by the occasional crack of a whip, the small riverside men manage to unload the crates from the cart and carry them on to the waiting barge. This takes a long time, and you are becoming very impatient. The soldiers are impatient too, and start to use their whips and clubs more frequently.

Are you going to continue to wait and watch? If so, turn to 114. If you would rather leap from your hiding-place to attack the robed bullies, turn to 78.

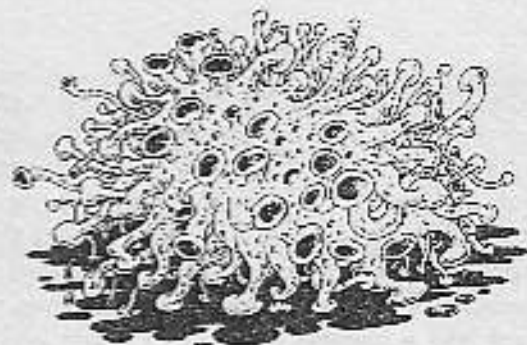


337

With one blow you sever the skull, sending shards of bone in all directions. The skeleton remains motionless, but the walls begin to crumble. Three of the small chamber's walls are false, and consist of only thin layers of plaster. You watch aghast as they are demolished by undead creatures that were walled into their tombs centuries ago. Turn to 46.

338

You have no spirit for a fight. You offer no resistance as Xakhaz toys with you, juggling your broken body in his varied limbs and throwing you against walls, giggling insanely all the while. Xakhaz will use the less damaged parts of you in his sorcerous surgery, whose results he will continue to send through the magic portal to terrorize Neuburg.



339

You are transfixed with horror as slimy tentacles encircle your legs and pull you gently into the pool. The appalling sight of the creature's beak-like lips opening above the water brings you to your senses. You still have your sword in your hand and you begin to fight. Turn to 183.

340

Your visitor's response to your statement takes you by surprise. He pulls aside his tunic and a ray of brilliant light bursts from something on his chest. You stagger backwards, momentarily blinded. You hear the door slam shut, the key turn in the lock and the man's desperate voice, saying: 'You are not, then, the one I await. If you are Tholdur's man, you must live or die according to Tholdur's justice.' He scurries away, ignoring your shouts for help. No one else visits you. You starve in this cell.

341

You prise the axe from the dead Dwarf's green hands, marvelling at the workmanship that forged it. You cannot decipher the runes that run along the haft, but you sense that the weapon has magical properties. It is not just that it is so well made that it will improve your fighting prowess – you also find that merely hefting it in your hands fills you with bloodlust and a fearless craving to maim and kill your enemies.

If you want to keep it, you will have to unbuckle your sword and leave it here. When using the Runic

Axe, your *Initial* SKILL is increased by 2 points; but your belligerence is increased too. Whenever you are given the option to fight anyone or anything, you must always choose that option; and you can never decide to *Escape* from a fight. You can, of course, decide to leave the axe here and continue to use your sword. Turn to 268.

342

The Orc roars with surprise and anger. He dodges the flying pot and wipes steaming stew from his face with one hand while the other closes around the haft of his battle-axe. He rises to his feet and you fight.

ORC GUARD

SKILL 9

STAMINA 13

If you defeat him, you find a key on a ring at his waist. It fits the lock of the small door. You open the door and step through. Turn to 374.

343

'A pretty gift indeed! The Margrave plainly thinks highly of you.' The innkeeper's hearty manner disappears and he addresses you earnestly. 'It is clear you are a mighty warrior. I beg you, in memory of your friendship with Baron Tholdur, to rid this town of evil. Why our Margrave does not help us I cannot guess – no doubt he has good reason. We are afraid of strangers these days. The Baron returned from his last trip south with a retinue of foreign swordsmen. They treat the town as if it belonged to them. But, worst of all, people are simply disappearing; and at night, there are *things* roaming the

streets. No one knows what they are. But if anyone wanders outside after nightfall, he never returns home. Sometimes we find pools of blood, and the tracks of a large beast.

'I can offer you little advice. Above all, do not venture outside after dark. Do not even open the shutters in your room. Tomorrow, you should seek our Old Huw at the ruined temple to Oiden. He is the oldest man in Neuburg. People say he is half mad, but I have found that his words contain much wisdom. Now you should sleep. Remember what I have told you, and please help us if you can.' The innkeeper shows you to your room. Turn to 179.

344

The old priest cannot disguise his joy as he beholds the gem-encrusted gold ring resting on the palm of your hand. He snatches it from you and exults: 'Just as Oiden foretold! Neuburg has found its champion at last! My friend, I can help to prepare you for the trials you must endure; but first, I suggest you fortify yourself with a square meal. Follow me!'

Surprisingly, the temple is stocked with provisions. You eat well in a cavernous kitchen. You can restore up to 4 points of STAMINA, and you may put in your backpack enough food for another three meals. If you do so, add them to your *Adventure Sheet*. While you eat, Huw gives you information. Turn to 22.



345

As you inch along the narrow ledge, you glance into the pool and notice with horror that the fiery glow of the Vitriol Essence is beginning to rise slowly from the depths. Snatching the keys and completing your perilous circuit of the pool before the creature reaches the surface will require nimble footwork and good fortune. Add together your current SKILL and LUCK points. Roll five dice. If your total is less than your combined SKILL and LUCK, turn to 43. Otherwise, turn to 224.

346

'New orders from the Margrave!' you shout as you approach. 'You are to report to your commander immediately! I will take over here.' The southern swordsmen have difficulty understanding you. They appear suspicious and confused. One of them watches you while the other knocks on the doors. After some time one of the doors opens a fraction, and a small figure in a red robe peers through the crack and carries on a whispered conversation with the guard. The door closes, the guard beckons to his comrade, and without another word they march away. Somewhat astounded, you are left standing outside the closed double doors. Turn to 391.



347

You have lost 2 points of STAMINA, but you have saved your life. A horde of swordsmen charge from the two gatehouse towers and chase you along the entrance passage. Fleeing desperately, you emerge into a large courtyard surrounded by high walls. Ahead of you there is a set of large double doors, one of which is ajar. To your right there is a small gate in the wall; the gate is closed. To your left is a similar gate, wide open. The soldiers are at your heels. You have to decide immediately which doorway you want to run to. Will you choose:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| The double doors ahead? | Turn to 159 |
| The closed gate to your right? | Turn to 397 |
| The open gate to your left? | Turn to 242 |

348

You run, weeping, in circles. You flap your arms helplessly and utter gasping screams. The horror of this latest experience has sent you completely insane. The thing on your face bulges larger and redder as it drains you of blood, and soon you are reduced to a staggering, mewling, shrivelled travesty of a human being. You stumble and fall, satiated, the Kiss of Death Protoplasm flops off your bloodless corpse.



349

You lower yourself into the opening and wriggle downwards. Soon you are in complete darkness, but it makes little difference – even though the hole gets wider as you descend, there is not enough room for you to twist round and see where your feet are going. The hole is almost vertical now, and the problem is no longer how to move forward, but how to prevent yourself falling. Then you hear a slithering noise. There is a gust of noxious air from below, a pale green light fills the tunnel and you feel your feet being enveloped in sticky, stinging slime. All you can do is kick violently and try to scramble back up the hole. Roll two dice three times. If the total is less than your SKILL on two or three out of the three attempts, turn to 291. Otherwise, turn to 15.

350

The inside of the tower is gloomy. The air is damp and fetid. When your eyesight is accustomed to the darkness, you see that the floor slopes steeply down to a muddy pool. The walls and floor are slick with moisture. If you want to slide down to the edge of the pool, turn to 66. If you would rather leave the tower, you can continue to follow the perimeter path (turn to 11) or cut a way to the central clearing (turn to 319).



351

The talons of the Vitriol Essence rake your body, scoring your flesh and depositing streams of acid. Deduct 4 points from your **STAMINA**. Such a wound is not only deep and serious; it is also cripplingly painful. Can you stand the agony? *Test your Willpower*. If you make a successful roll, you will yourself to continue: return to 10 and resume your fight. If you are unsuccessful, turn to 214.

352

The flames do not radiate any heat. You are able to walk up to them, and, after a little experimentation, you conclude that they are perfectly harmless. This is an illusory wall of fire, and you confidently step through it. Unfortunately, the pit that has opened on the other side is completely real. Turn to 105.

353

If you still have 6 or more points of **WILLPOWER**, turn to 256. If you have less than 6 points, turn to 395.

354

The young man rushes to the door ahead of you and tries to prevent you leaving. He stops holding his jaw and shouts at you, and you are repelled when you see that he has more than one tongue – in fact he seems to have a mouthful. You push him aside and leave, locking the door behind you. Turn to 79.

355

Do you have any food in your backpack? If you do, turn to 181. If not, turn to 299.

356

You have uttered the name of a rival divinity in a shrine dedicated to the Howling Gods of the southern peoples. You will suffer for your sacrilege. Reduce your **LUCK** and **WILLPOWER** by 1 point each, and your **STAMINA** by 3 points, until you leave this unholy place by returning to the passage at the top of the stairs. Feeling dispirited and lethargic, you are dimly aware that you have made an error and fallen under a curse. Turn to 379.

357

You pull aside your tunic and reveal the Talisman of Loth. Senyakhaz recoils from its dazzling brilliance, but then recovers slightly and, shielding her eyes, calls out to you to stop. 'Don't slay me yet, soldier,' she continues. 'I recognize that shining trinket. Perhaps I know it better than you. It seems that no one has told you of its fatal flaw: never use it in front of a mirror. Die, you fool!' She sidesteps nimbly, and for an instant you see yourself reflected in the tall mirror. Then the light from the Talisman strikes you, filling your vision, burning your brain, shrivelling your eyes, searing the skin on your face. Even Senyakhaz is a little perturbed by the manner of your death – particularly the letters 'LOTH' branded across your face.



358

The girl darts into one of the tiny alleyways that wind down to squalid riverside hovels. You race after her, slipping on the rotting refuse strewn all over the cobbles, and skid to a halt when you realize that your quarry has disappeared. A shrill voice yells 'Get 'im!' – and from half a dozen dingy doorways ragged children emerge and surround you. They are small and half-starved, but they are waving sharp knives and they mean business. Three move closer, and attack you simultaneously.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First MURDEROUS URCHIN	3	3
Second MURDEROUS URCHIN	4	2
Third MURDEROUS URCHIN	4	4

All three attack you in each Attack Round, but you can attack only one. You choose which one, and fight him in the usual way. You roll for your Attack Strength against the other two as well, but you cannot wound them even if your Attack Strength is greater. If any of the urchins has an Attack Strength greater than yours, he wounds you in the normal way. If you win, you have a chance to *Escape* (turn to 149); if you would rather stay to fight the second group of homicidal children, turn to 156.



359

You leave the armoury, return to the redly glowing passage, and decide where to go next. At this end of the corridor is the smaller of the two wooden doors. It has no lock, and if you have not already done so, you can try to open it (turn to 373). At the other end of the passage is the larger wooden door with the large metal lock. If you have not already opened this door and you have a key, you can use the key to open it (turn to 7). Otherwise, there seems to be no other choice but to return along the side-tunnel to your dungeon cell (turn to 206).

360

The door leads not to another battlemented wall-top walkway but to an enclosed corridor. Arrow-slits on both sides reveal that the passage is set in the thickness of the wall. Another door at its far end opens into the empty ground-floor chamber of one of the gatehouse towers of the Keep. Through arrow-slits in the opposite wall you can see that the entrance to the Keep itself is unguarded. The portcullis is raised and the drawbridge is in place over the ravine that separates the gatehouse from the Keep itself. Within minutes you locate the exit from the tower, cross the drawbridge and find yourself in front of the main entrance to the Keep – at Baron Tholdur's front door. Will you hammer on the timbers and demand entrance (turn to 311), or will you look for a way to break in surreptitiously (turn to 28)?

361

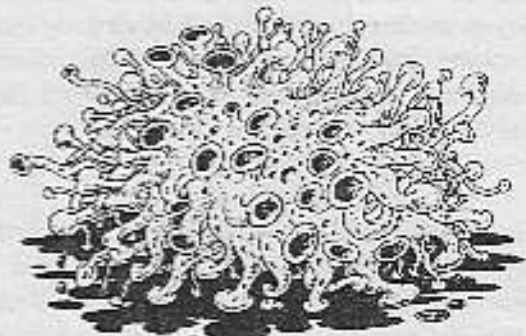
When he sees you emerge from behind the curtain, the little Gnome hurriedly puts down his tray and backs away nervously towards the door. He opens his mouth to cry out and you decide to finish him quickly.

PAGE-BOY GNOME SKILL 4 STAMINA 4

By the end of one Attack Round the noise of your fight has attracted the attention of the owner of the harsh guttural voice. The door swings open to reveal a mountainous female Orc, dressed in blood-stained white overalls and wielding a meat-cleaver. The Gnome runs away, and you have just enough time to see that the room beyond the Orc is a smoke-filled kitchen before she attacks.

ORC COOK SKILL 8 STAMINA 10

If you defeat her, turn to 24.



362

You are amazed to find that a faint blue luminescence is flickering along the barbs of the strange three-pronged weapon. You scrape off some of the encrusted dirt and rust, and there is enough light to see by. The light weakens as you point the spear-head to the ceiling, but strengthens if you direct it towards the floor. You kick aside the mouldy straw and notice that several of the flagstones are ill-fitting and could, with some effort, be prised up. Perhaps the trident is indicating a possible escape-route? If you decide to try to raise some flagstones, turn to 80. If you would rather sit in your cell and wait for something to happen, turn to 206.

363

Senyakhaz has set the mirror to destroy itself. You try to step into the reflective surface, and find yourself pushing into a viscous, clinging swirl of colours. Your intrusion speeds the process of destruction: the frame turns white-hot and then bursts asunder in molten blobs. Only half of your charred body is later found on the floor of this room; the other half is lost in limbo, or perhaps it followed Senyakhaz to her safe refuge.

364

You run. With shouts of 'Stop him! He's a thief!' echoing about your head you push your way through the milling crowds. As you try to escape from the scene of your crime, you are tripped, grabbed, pushed and punched. You lose all sense of

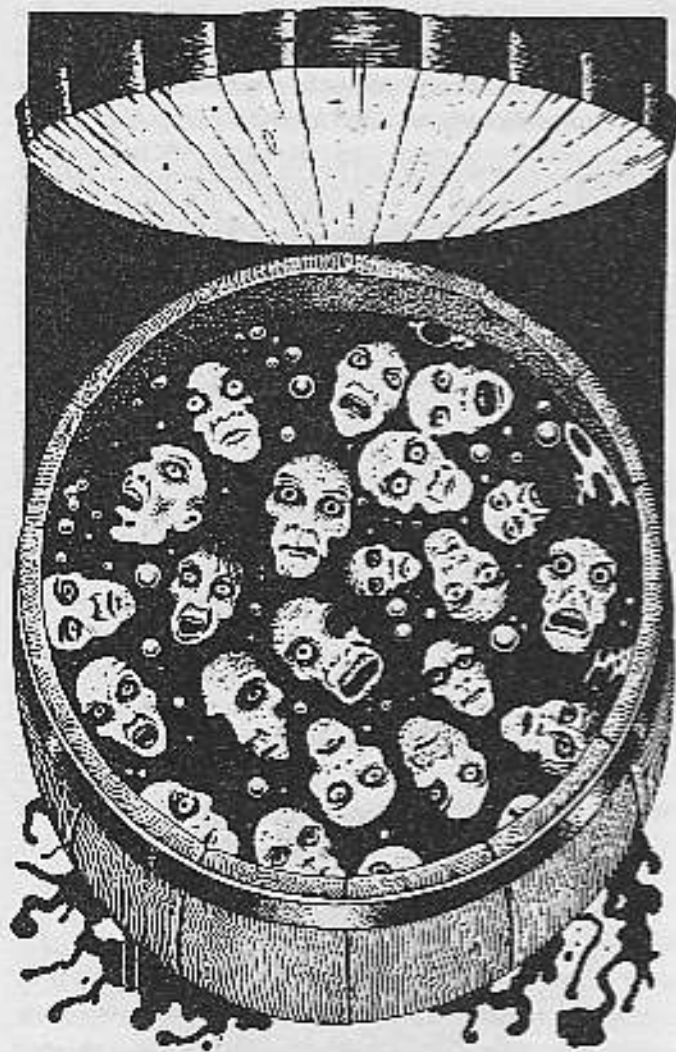
direction and 2 points of STAMINA, but you finally emerge into the open space of the market-square. You race across it and pause in a side-street; the hue and cry seems to have died away.

You will not be welcomed in the Merchants' Quarter again! You decide to investigate a different part of town. You can go anywhere you have not already visited. If you climb Castle Hill to Neuburg Keep, turn to 289. If you go down to the wharves and warehouses at the river, turn to 90. If you wander into the Temple Quarter, turn to 195.

365

Being thrown against a wall costs you 3 points of STAMINA, but the shock restores your wits. You are angry now. Xakhaz, with his repulsive home-made body, has a fight on his hands. Turn to 167.





366

Using the thick iron hoops as finger and toe holds, you climb the side of the great barrel. You grasp the leather handle of the lid and pull mightily. Throwing the lid to one side, you look down into the barrel – to find your horrified gaze met by the lifeless stare of dozens of pairs of unblinking eyes. The barrel is full of heads, floating like shrivelled balloons in acrid brown preserving-fluid. You lose 1 point of **WILLPOWER** as the full implications of your recent drink sink in. If you now have less than 6 points of **WILLPOWER**, turn to 30. If you still have 6 points or more, turn to 286.

367

Swallowing your revulsion, you attack the decaying Chrabats. Their movement is inexorable but ponderous, and you can face them one at a time. As they are already dead they feel no pain and must be dismembered: therefore each wound you inflict reduces your opponent's **STAMINA** by half the usual amount.

	SKILL	STAMINA
First ZOMBIE CHRABAT	5	7
Second ZOMBIE CHRABAT		
Third ZOMBIE CHRABAT	4	6
	6	7

Each time a Chrabat wounds you, roll two dice. If the total is higher than your current **SKILL**, you have failed to evade the Chrabat's tentacular tongue and it hinders your movement. Your next successful

attack on the creature will sever its tongue, and that particular Chrabat will not be able to entangle you again. However, until you succeed in this attack your SKILL is reduced by 2 points. If you destroy them all, turn to 302.

368

The old priest leads you to the door of the temple and bids you farewell. 'There is little point in delaying your perilous quest; somewhere in Neuburg is a broken fragment of a once potent weapon, and I would not be at all surprised if it were buried among the wares of some curio dealer. The Merchants' Quarter is nothing but a den of thieves. Avoid the riverside, it is an unsavoury place. Return to the centre of town, and go to face the dangers of the Keep. Oiden's blessings go with you.' Turn to 108.

369

The sentry lies dead at your feet. The old Dwarf has run away, perhaps because he heard the noise you are now suddenly aware of: the marching feet of a contingent of soldiers. You can step into the waiting-room that the Dwarf wanted you to enter (turn to 249), or you can scurry along the narrow corridor near the main door (turn to 87).



370

You hurtle along the corridor – into absolute darkness. A few painful collisions with rock walls persuade you to moderate your speed, and you make your way forward as best you can with your arms outstretched in front of you. And then you take a step – and the floor has gone. You topple into a chasm, and as you fall you know that the impact of your landing will kill you. You are wrong. You land on a soft, viscous surface, a bit like thick mud, and you have just enough time to offer thanks to your gods before the awful realization that the ooze is creeping over you and that your extremities are being eroded by the digestive juices of the subterranean jelly-creature on which you have landed. It enjoys its unexpected meal.

371

You have found the inner sanctum of the red-robed wizard – leader of the southern troops, enchanter of Baron Tholdur, resurrector of ancient evil in the deep caverns below Neuburg Keep. She is Senyakhaz, a sorceress from old Zagoula – and you have arrived too late to prevent her escape. As you enter, she picks up a small box, steps towards a tall mirror, waves at you, walks into the mirror and disappears. The frame of the mirror begins to glow and lose its shape. If you try to follow her through the mirror, turn to 363. If you decide to leave the room, turn to 169.

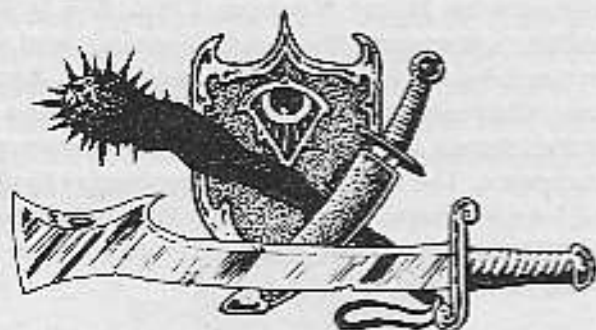
372

You wake up. What time is it? It is still dark; no daylight fills the cracks in the shutters. You shudder as you remember; you were dreaming, a terrible nightmare of horrors lurking in dark places deep below the ground.

And then, like an echo of your dream, an appalling yelping rends the quiet of the night – right outside your window! Silence follows; and then the sound of a cumbersome creature slinking away. You lie awake, but hear nothing more. Eventually you sleep again. Turn to 245.

373

As soon as you touch it, the little wooden door swings open. You stoop to peer into the room beyond, but can see very little. Gripping your weapon, you advance through the doorway. Turn to 255.



374

You are in a circular room criss-crossed with racks and shelves. It is the Margrave's treasury, and it has been ransacked. Boxes have been broken open and scrolls lie all over the floor. You can find no valuables; all the papers are maps, letters, title-deeds and records of rent payments. At the side of the room you find the entrance and exit used by the thieves – a narrow spiral staircase corkscrewing downwards. Near by is the wooden cover that, when in position, conceals the entrance to the stairway. The only thing of immediate value that has been left in the room is a small barrel bearing a label saying 'POTION'; it was left behind presumably only because it is secured to the wall.

If you take a swig from the potion barrel, turn to 98. If you decide to go straight down the stairs, you find yourself spiralling downwards for what seems like an eternity until you crash into a door. Dizzy and in complete darkness, you pull the door open and step into a dimly lit corridor. You walk towards the brighter end. Turn to 40.

375

The old Dwarf turns the three-pronged spear-head over and over in his hands. 'I do believe,' he says, 'that what you have here is the sharp end of the Trident of Skarlos. Whether it's of any use to you depends on whether you can find the handle – which is somewhere in the depths of the Keep, by all accounts. You'll recognize it easily enough: it's

not a proper spear-shaft, but a short squat affair with hand grips. Made of metal, with a blue sheen like the head, and covered in carvings like it, too. Strange device it is, but effective? I should say so! That was a real battle we fought up here before this castle was built . . . ! The Dwarf stares into the distance, remembering – but suddenly recalls that he has more information for you. Turn to 396.

376

A short corridor leads you to a landing, lit by a single cresset. You lean over the balustrade and see the staircase wind steeply down from the corridor and disappear into darkness. From the landing, the corridor continues featurelessly, and also disappears into gloom. If you decide to go down the stairs, turn to 300. If you would rather continue straight along the corridor, turn to 40.

377

Having spent as much time as you think necessary in the riverside section of Neuburg, you can now explore any other part of the town that you have not already visited:

The Temple Quarter	Turn to 195
The Merchants' Quarter	Turn to 32
Neuburg Keep	Turn to 289

378

As the bearer of the Trident of Skarlos, you know a little about the legendary hero, and you do not think that your bulky opponent resembles him. The real

Skarlos would in any case recognize his own weapon, would he not? The Trident, meanwhile, is pulsing with energy and is thrusting forward of its own accord, apparently keen to get to grips with the strange warrior. If you decide to evade the warrior's advance and taunt him in the hope of obtaining more information, turn to 180. Otherwise, you fight (turn to 241).

379

You are not challenged again as you tread carefully from step to step towards the pale blue light at the bottom of the stairway. The twenty-third stair felt like all the others when you tested it with your foot; but when you put your weight on it, it collapses. *Test your Luck.* If you are Lucky, turn to 142. If you are Unlucky, turn to 60.

380

The green liquid is almost tasteless and seems very refreshing. Unfortunately it is concentrated magical fertilizer. You watch in helpless horror as roots sprout through your boots and hungrily penetrate the soil. You feel no pain as green-leaved shoots emerge from your arms and torso. Your thoughts become strange, disturbed, and no longer truly human. You are a very healthy young tree and, unless someone chops you down or sets fire to you, you will grow in this garden for hundreds of years.



381

You break the box under your heel. It contains a diamond, several fragments of glass, a twisted piece of metal, and some fine white sand. It was the control mechanism which transformed Senyakhaz's mirror into a magical portal connected to her southern homeland and to the abysmal caverns below Neuburg Keep where she has resurrected the insane and aeons-old sorcerer Xakhaz. Now that you have destroyed the box, Xakhaz is safe to pursue his horrific experiments and to plot the subjugation of Neuburg. You have merely postponed the day of reckoning.

382

Back inside your pack, the glass globe cools rapidly. You decide to try to open one of the doors. Will you choose the massive metal one (turn to 243), the small wooden one (turn to 373), or the larger wooden door to your right (turn to 55)?

383

'Best meat pies this side of Kelther!' the burly shopkeeper assures you, as he wraps your selection in a scrap of parchment. You hand over 1 Gold Piece and place the three meals in your backpack. Make a note of this exchange on your *Adventure Sheet*, and turn to 280.

384

You rest the tray on a ledge and lift the lid from the earthenware pot. Inside you find a thick, steaming meat stew and a wooden spoon. You taste it care-

fully; you decide that the meat is mutton. It tastes very good. You can now leave the stew and the tray; or you can eat the stew - it will restore up to 4 points of STAMINA - and leave the tray; or you can carry the tray and the pot along the corridor; or if you have any Orcsbane, you can season the stew with this powerful poison and then set off with it along the corridor. Make a note of your decision. Whichever course of action you choose, you walk along the corridor away from the large wooden door. Turn to 267.

385

You back away in horror. Remember to deduct 1 point of WILLPOWER from your *Adventure Sheet*. You scramble up the semi-liquid slope with slithering limbs clutching at your ankles. The creature in the pool cannot leave its watery lair, and you are able to drag your mud-covered body on to drier ground. You emerge from the tower into the garden, and you can choose to continue to follow the perimeter path (turn to 11) or to cut a path to the central clearing (turn to 319).

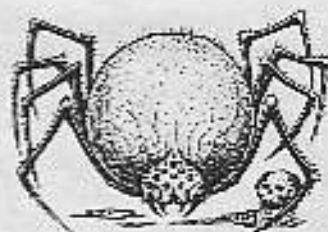


386

You despise your pitiful ambition to assist the people of Neuburg. They are puny fools who are unworthy of your attention and are fit only to be slaves. You have greater concerns: an army to raise, enemies to slaughter, an empire to reconquer. Images of revenge, bloodshed and hatred fill your thoughts. You are Vrax the Slayer, and if you manage to extricate yourself from this dungeon you will bathe your sword in blood until entire continents kneel before you. But your previous adventure ends here.

387

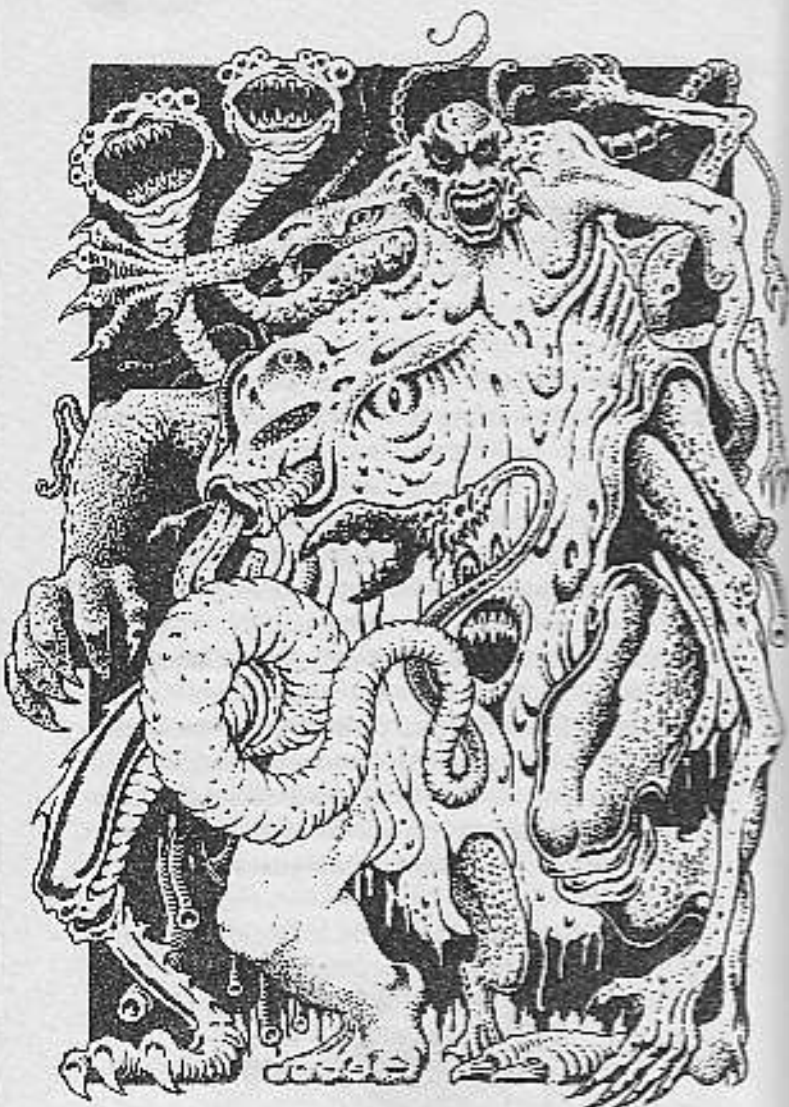
The door swings open and you are looking into a long storeroom. Boxes and barrels are stacked along the walls, and there are quantities of foodstuffs lying on a wooden table. There is another door, alongside the one you are looking through. You enter and examine the contents of the room. Most of the boxes and barrels contain food, and there are also some bundles of cloth. If you want to eat some of the available provisions, you find that the food is of excellent quality. Restore up to 4 points of STAMINA, if you need to. If you now decide to try to go through the other door from this room, turn to 115. If you would rather go back out to the anteroom and try the right-hand door from there, turn to 6.



388

The wedges are difficult to remove and you are worried about the amount of noise you are making, but finally you pull them free and listen. You can hear nothing at all from either end of the main passage, or from behind the door. You pull the door open and walk through. The side-tunnel is dark and soon narrows. In some places you have to squeeze between its rocky sides. Increasingly, the way slopes downwards, and although the walls are still very damp, the air is now warm and humid. Unidentifiable odours drift up from the depths ahead, as does an irritatingly high-pitched squeaking. If you want to turn back and continue along the main passage, turn to 248. If you decide to continue down towards the warm smells and the squeaking, turn to 272.





389

'Congratulations! You have found Xakhaz, the immortal, the invincible, lord of this miserable ant-hill and soon to be lord of all Khul. Do you like my little workroom? Come in, come in, you look a healthy specimen and I can always use an extra pair of hands . . .' The voice trails off into demented giggling. You are sure it comes from near the enormous heap of limbs, some of which are twitching. You step towards the towering pile. 'I have slept for many centuries, but have forgotten nothing. The descendants of those who imprisoned me here will all die – quickly, if they grovel for mercy. All will make a useful contribution, however – they are the raw material for my army of conquest. You have probably met some of my creations. Ingenious, are they not? Practice makes perfect! And ever since Senyakhaz woke me I have followed a programme of intensive self-improvement!' You have found Xakhaz at last – his wild-eyed head is nodding at you over the huge pile of limbs. Or can it be . . . ? You groan and cover your eyes as you realize that the heap of twitching limbs is Xakhaz. It begins to scuttle towards you on an assortment of legs. *Test your Willpower.* The Talisman of Loth, if you have it, helps you in your hour of need. Its pure light gives you courage – add 2 points to your WILLPOWER for this test only. If you are successful, turn to 201. If not, turn to 310.



390

Two robed warriors, looking impassive and very out of place, are standing in a clear space on a nearby street corner – and they are staring straight at you.

But you don't have time to worry about them: you glance down and see a hand closing around the purse hanging from your belt, and another hand, holding a short sharp knife, about to cut the drawstring. You spin round, drawing your sword, and face the sneak-thief. It is a waif-like little girl, no more than nine years old! You are at a loss to know what to do; and the girl lunges at you with the knife. You are taken by surprise, and she cuts you: lose 1 point of STAMINA. You must fight her:

GAMINE THIEF SKILL 4 STAMINA 3

After one round of combat, the girl escapes into the crowd. Looking around, you realize that the two warriors are no longer in sight. Do you want to try to follow the girl (turn to 358)? Or will you continue your quest for food (turn to 149)?

391

Some time passes, and then one of the doors begins to open. You ready your weapon, but standing in the doorway is an unarmed serving-maiden, who recoils on seeing your aggressive stance. In a hesitant, southern-accented voice, she murmurs: 'My name is Senya. The Margrave's chief adviser has been expecting you and is anxious to meet you. Please follow me to the reception room.' With a

jingle of jewellery and a flurry of fragrant silks she turns; you follow. In a small anteroom two other serving-girls smile at you as you pass. There are doors to the left and right. You follow Senya through the right-hand doorway and into a luxurious chamber. Senya gently pushes you into a comfortable chair and kneels before you, smiling beautifully. She is wearing a silver necklace from which hangs a magnificent ruby pendant. 'You are very tired,' she says sympathetically. 'You need to relax. Stay here for a while. You don't need to move.' If you are holding the Trident of Skarlos, turn to 238. If not, turn to 174.

392

The mysterious red-robed figure continues to prompt Baron Tholdur, who rapidly finds the subject boring. He readily agrees that you should be taken down to the dungeons, and makes it clear that he has no interest in what happens to you after that. Ten guards escort you from the Great Hall and down a series of narrow staircases. At one point you reach a dark underground gallery; half of the escort contingent has already started down the next set of spiral stairs, and the other half is coming down stairs behind you. You have a slim chance to escape, although you do not know how far you will get in the darkness. If you want to sprint along the passage into the dark, turn to 88. If you continue to follow your captors, turn to 227.



393

As easily as walking through a doorway, you take one step and join the horde of people dragging themselves towards the temple under a mercilessly hot sun. Most of the crowd are swarthy, robed Southerners, but you see another figure wearing armour like yours, and you push your way towards him. 'I was a captain in the Margrave's guard,' he tells you. 'I fell for the tapestry trick too - trying to escape from those foreign devils the Baron brought back with him, and here I am surrounded by 'em! This is the Temple of Dolod, in the desert outside Zagoula. Don't even think of getting away - you'd be cut down by this mob in seconds, and anyway we're surrounded by desert. We've got to go along with the crowd, although from what I've heard we'll be lucky not to be chosen as one of the sacrifices. The priests of Dolod know that picking on outsiders is popular.' Even if you avoid being chosen as a sacrifice, you are a long way from Neuburg and in the midst of hostile people. Your adventure ends here.

394

You step into the tower's dark interior and the door slams shut behind you. You spin round, drawing your sword, and with a gurgling roar a ferocious creature attacks you. There is no source of light in this room, and you have no idea what you are fighting. Luckily, it keeps up a constant throaty growl which helps you to locate it. Its weapon

seems to be a heavy blunt object, and it is hindered by the darkness almost as much as you.

UNKNOWN

ASSAILANT

SKILL 5

STAMINA 8

If you defeat it, you pull open the door to throw some light on the dead body. It is a very ugly Ogre, dressed in rags and wearing a huge white bonnet or turban on its relatively small head. There is nothing else in the room except for a flight of stone steps leading up to a small door. Will you:

Try on the oversized headgear?

Turn to 133

Inspect the headgear first?

Turn to 209

Climb the stairs?

Turn to 51

395

You are paralysed with fear and disgust. You take a detached interest in the progress of the spiders over your body. You are aware that they are searching for exposed flesh into which to sink their mandibles, but this does not seem particularly important. The shocks you have experienced since arriving in Neuburg have robbed you of your sanity, and you feel a sense of liberation as the spiders' lethal venom begins to burn in your veins. You collapse to the ground and stare skywards as you die.

396

Pushing aside a cobwebbed collection of beanpoles, trellises and bales of straw, the Dwarf reveals

a grimy fireplace in a corner. He calls you over, and shows you that as well as a chimney leading straight upwards, there is also a narrow gap at the side of the grate. You can just make out the first few steps of a staircase leading downwards in the thickness of the tower wall.

'This'll take you into the cellars,' says the Dwarf. 'It's probably the only way you'll get into the Keep without someone else knowing about it. But you can go through the other door and try getting across on the battlements if you want to.'

If you want to use the secret passage to the cellars, turn to 25. If you decide to go through the door and out on to the battlements, turn to 282.

397

You race across the courtyard and throw yourself at the gate. It doesn't budge. In a frenzy, you charge at it again; you tug at the iron hinges in desperation. You are unable to open the gate. You turn to face your pursuers and make a heroic last stand against insuperable odds.

398

Huw leads you into a circular hall where he genuflects at the trunk of a spindly white-branched tree that twists upwards from the centre of the stone floor. He then ushers you into a cramped side-chamber. You sit on a low stool, and find Huw standing beside you - holding a knife to your throat. 'Be still and listen!' he hisses. 'I rescued you from

the dungeon of the East Gate because I suspect you may be the warrior that Oiden has foretold will arrive to challenge the evil in this town. If you are the prophesied hero, you have with you a valuable treasure that links you to Neuburg. You must donate the treasure to this temple in order to obtain Oiden's assistance. If you are indeed the chosen one, *give me the item now!* Neuburg's peril increases hourly!' Concealed in your belt you have a jewel-encrusted gold ring given to you many years ago by Baron Tholdur. It is your most valued possession. Huw turns away. Will you:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Offer him Baron Tholdur's ring? | Turn to 344 |
| Say that you have no such treasure? | Turn to 191 |
| Attack him with your sword? | Turn to 86 |

399

You attack the door with your shoulder and your sword. Suddenly it opens. You stagger through the doorway and slump to the dusty ground to catch your breath in the shadow of the dilapidated tower. You realize that your captors could return at any moment, and you decide to try to find shelter in the town. Picking yourself up, you head straight for the Southern Star tavern, which you remember as a large, hospitable establishment in a prominent position on the market-square. Turn to 119.



You step out into the chamber of the sorceress Senyakhaz. This room and the others in the suite are deserted, and you take the opportunity to rest, eat and recover your strength. Then you make your way through the corridors of the dungeons and cellars to the main floor of the Keep, where you find Baron Tholdur, no longer under an enchantment, energetically ejecting the demoralized southern soldiers from his castle. Between tears and laughter he overwhelms you with praise and thanks, and insists on escorting you to the Temple of Oiden so that the old priest Huw can share in the good news. When you have recounted your story, Huw merely smiles. He asks for the small metal box, which he says contains the immortal part of Xakhaz. You hand it over with alacrity, and Huw assures the Margrave that this time Xakhaz will be imprisoned in a place from which he will never escape. Whether or not you found it during the course of your adventure, Huw tells you that the Trident of Skarlos is now yours by right. And at a public celebration attended by all the townsfolk of Neuburg, Baron Tholdur announces to terrific cheers that he appoints you to be his heir in all things: on his death you will inherit the Keep, the freehold of the town, most of the surrounding farmland, forests and hunting estates in the hills to the east, and the title of Margrave.

At last you have your chance to enjoy the comforts of town living. But, of course, after only a few days of banquets and soft beds, you find yourself getting bored. It's time to set off on another adventure . . .

